

Walk Wisely by the Spirit

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[0 : 0 0] Let me begin though by asking you where you go for wisdom to live life and not just to live life but also to relate in our various kinds of relationships including marriage for example for those for whom that applies. Well I went where most people go these days. I went to Google or as someone in my Bible study group said Dr. Google and I found some advice on love and marriage from some children. Here's what they had to say. Kirsten aged 10 said God decides who you marry way before then you find out later who you're stuck with. When asked when it's okay to kiss someone Pam aged 7 said when they're rich. I'm a bit worried about her and when asked why people date Lynette aged 8 said people use dates to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough. Well as we return to the next part of Ephesians this morning we're told how to live or walk carefully as wise people. How to walk wisely if you like and we're given wisdom about how to do that including marriage. Now I realize not everyone listening is married but even if you're not it's good to know what the Bible says about it in case you ever find yourself in a position to be married or that you have family and friends who are married and so that you know how to encourage and pray for them. But first let me remind you of the big picture so far. The first half of Ephesians is about showing our privileged place in God's Christ-centered plan especially for us Gentiles who are non-Jews remember. Remember we were once no hopers but now we are family members with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Then the second half of Ephesians is about how we're to live in response to that privileged calling. And so remember on your screen chapter 4 verse 1 Paul urges them to live or walk in a manner worthy of the calling you have received. Which as we've seen means no longer walking as the Gentiles do but instead walking in love like Christ. That is with God's help we are to put off the old life and to put on the new life that God has given us in Christ. We also saw that it meant walking as children of the light. You know not having anything to do with the deeds of darkness like sexual immorality among other things. And now it means walking carefully as wise people. So point one verse 15. Paul writes be very careful then how you live or walk not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish but understand what the Lord's will is. You see there we're to walk or live carefully as wise people. You know walk wisely. And the way to walk wisely is by understanding the Lord's will and living in light of it. I don't know if you noticed but verse 15 and verse 17 kind of parallel each other as you can see there. Unwise matches foolish and wise matches understanding the Lord's will. In other words if we want to walk wisely then we need to understand the Lord's will and live in light of it. So where do we find the Lord's will? Well you know don't you? Right here in the Bible. So rather than you know Dr. Google where to go to the Bible for wisdom. To walk carefully in life. And in this letter of Ephesians in the Bible God has told us his big will or plan for us in this world. And so do you remember from chapter 1 God's will is to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. That's God's big plan. That's what he's on about in our world. Bringing people together in Christ and us living under Christ's loving Lordship. And so to walk carefully with wisdom means living in light of this will. You know living under Christ's loving Lordship ourselves and helping others to do the same. Whether that's helping them to become Christians by praying for them or sharing the good news of Jesus with them. Or whether it's helping Christians to grow in Christ. Praying for them and encouraging them.

This is what it means to walk wisely. And this also helps us to know what verse 16 means. Because there we were told to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil.

[5 : 3 0] But every opportunity to do what? To eat chocolate because the days are evil and chocolate might run out like toilet paper did. Or take every opportunity to enjoy life because the days are evil and life might get harder. Well given the verse is either side. I take it it means to make

the most of every opportunity to live wisely. To live out the Lord's will. That is to live under Christ's loving Lordship and help others to do the same. Whether becoming Christians or encouraging them to follow Christ as Christians.

You see because the days are evil then we are bombarded with things from the world. Aren't we? That push us to live against the Lord's will. To not believe in Jesus. And to not follow Jesus's way but the world's way instead. These evil days seek to push us away from Christ. Back to our old Gentile way. It's kind of like salmon jumping upstream. Have you ever seen salmon do that? Have a look in the video.

So if we didn't take every opportunity to kind of jump against the current of the world what happens? Well like the salmon it seeks to push us away. Downstream away from Christ.

That's why we're to take every opportunity to live Christ's way and to help others do the same. So that we're not pushed downstream by the evil days we live in. And so walk carefully not as unwise but wise. Making the most of every opportunity to live under Christ's loving Lordship. Because the days are evil and seek to push us downstream. But it's not always easy is it? Yet the great news is it's not all up to us.

We have God's help by his spirit. Point to verse 18. Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery.

[8 : 07] Instead be filled by the spirit. And now the Bible is not against alcohol. Jesus turned water into wine you know. And the Apostle Paul told Timothy to drink some wine for his stomach. But it is against getting drunk. Why? Well because drunk people don't generally act wisely. Do they? You hear all sorts of stories of the crazy things people do when drunk. Don't you? Or you see in movies how people wake up and regret what they did last night while drunk. And I know drunkenness takes away our self-control and leads to debauchery. That is unrestrained behavior. Now I know alcohol can be addictive and so if it's something you struggle with then please do feel free to talk to me and I can help you get some help.

But here we're to be filled not with wine but with God's spirit. Or perhaps better by God's spirit. You see when we believe in Jesus we receive God's spirit. And so we're already filled with the spirit. But the spirit can then fill us with other things like boldness to speak the gospel or strength to endure persecution. Or joy when we hear answered prayer and so on. And so the times we need those things the spirit works to fill us with those things. But the spirit is always working to fill us with something else. And that is God's character. Godliness. We've seen this earlier in Ephesians. So on your screens chapter 3 verse 19. Paul prays that they may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. That is God's character. And so the spirit helps us to grow in godliness. To grow up into Christ our head or to grow into that new self created to be like God. And to be filled with the fruit of the spirit means to be filled with joy, peace, patience, those characteristics of God. The point is we are to be filled by the spirit with God's character. How? Well by letting the spirit do his work. For example by reading the Bible for that's primarily how the spirit speaks. And as we read the Bible the spirit speaks to our hearts and conscience and encourages us to grow in godliness. But if we don't read the Bible then we're not letting the spirit work as much as he could. Or we can listen to the spirit speak through our conscience.

Cartoons often represent it a bit like this. You know with the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other which is not quite right. But it captures a similar idea. The spirit speaks by prompting our conscience to do the right thing. But if we ignore our conscience and persist in doing that particular sin. Well then we heard in Ephesians that we are grieving the Holy Spirit. You see to be filled with God's character by the spirit means letting the spirit do his work. Whether by reading the Bible or prayer or listening to our conscience. But the bigger point here is that we're not alone when it comes to walking wisely. We have the spirit's help if we're open to it. And if we are then the spirit will help us walk wisely. Doing the Lord's will. Living a godly life under Christ's loving lordship. Including verse 19.

Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the spirit. Singing and making music from your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. You see here being filled by the spirit will lead us to speaking, singing, making, giving and submitting. We looked at singing and giving thanks last Sunday. So let me just unpack verse 21. Here living wisely by the spirit means we'll submit to one another.

[12:51] To submit means to voluntarily obey someone. Which is a bit different to the kids in chapter 6 verse 1 who have no choice but to obey. That's why it's a different word in our Bibles. But in verse 21 we're adults who do have a choice and yet we're to choose to voluntarily submit ourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ. Now that doesn't mean when two Christians come to a doorway they stand there all day saying after you. No after you. No after you. We're not meant to submit to each other exactly the same way. Rather it's talking about submitting in the various roles we play out of reverence for Christ.

So this could mean we submit to one person in one role and then they to us in a different role. For example when we come back here to church and the welcomer is serving at the door and asked to see your check-in or vaccination certificate or whatever then we submit to them and show them because they are serving us to obey the law.

But later on we might be serving morning tea to them and when they come up we say no we have to pour your milk for you and they submit by saying okay. And then we're in the service both the morning tea person and the welcomer submit to the service leader. The service leader says please stand and we all stand and then we sit and so on. That's how we're to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

It's got to do with roles of serving and submitting. And that actually makes things work. I know our world does not like the word submit. It's a dirty word for our world. But that's because it's been misused.

When done rightly it works for our good. I mean if people don't submit to the road rules you know what happens? Cars crash and there's chaos. Or when you play a game you know if the kids or grandkids don't submit to the rules the game kind of dissipates into chaos doesn't it? It doesn't work.

[15:13] No submission is actually a good thing and it makes our world work and it's the same in church. It just changes depending on what roles we have. The problem is our world is confused.

They say that all people are equal but then they attach our worth to our role such that we have different roles and suddenly we have a different worth. I mean when you meet a new person at dinner at a dinner party or something one of the first questions they ask you is what do you do? What's your role in society? And if you say I'm a doctor they respond with oh wow and they treat you with great respect. You see they tie your worth to your role.

And perhaps they even show you a mole. Hey can you just check this out? Is this okay? But if you say I'm a church minister they respond with oh interesting which is code for get me out of here. And they suddenly find someone else to talk to. Yes that's happened to me.

But our role does not determine our worth. Rather we're all of equal worth in God's sight. We are all made in God's image. Both husband and wife as our first reading said bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, flesh of my flesh, equal. Rather we just have different roles where we sometimes serve and sometimes submit. Now I'm assuming where you can you can see where I'm going with this because verse 22 follows closely from verse 21. It's as though Paul double clicks on verse 21 and up pops some examples of submitting. Now we'll look at the other two next week, kids and slaves.

[17:09] But Paul begins with wives and husbands because it's the same kind of voluntary submission on view as opposed to the kids and slaves who have no choice but to simply obey. So point three verse 22 wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church his body of which he is the savior. Now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Now don't switch off.

I know you may be feeling uncomfortable at this point because sadly this passage has been misapplied. Let me tell you what it's not saying firstly. It's not saying husbands are to tell their wives to submit.

Notice Paul is addressing wives here not husbands. I remember messing up big time when Michelle and I were first married. Like most newlyweds we're going through a teething process and I pulled out this passage and said you have to submit. I can't believe I still shake my head every time I think about it.

Terrible. Because it's not my job to get my wife to submit. Rather Paul is addressing wives here. And it's certainly not saying wives are to submit when their husbands say something contrary to the Lord. You know like oh why don't you go next door and steal that plant from our neighbor and use it in our garden. No no you don't submit then. We submit to Christ above all. Nor are wives to submit

to violence and abuse. Can I say very clearly this passage is never to be used to justify domestic violence or abuse. And if you are in a marriage like that then get out. Get out now and seek help. Talk to me and I'll help you get help. Get help for both you and your spouse. For God has called us to live in peace. And it's not saying wives cannot express opinions or make decisions or run things. [19 : 27] They can and often better. Nor is it saying wives are inferior. My wife Michelle did much better at the VCE than I did. Rather it is saying we have equal worth but different roles like a church. Only for marriage the different roles are meant to complement each other and reflect the marriage between Christ and the church. And so wives it means verse 24 as the church submits to Christ so wives submit to their husbands. Even if the husband is not a Christian. Even if the husband is grumpy that day. Even if he gets things wrong. Or even when you sometimes disagree. Because it's about respecting his role as head and letting him serve you. And for husbands it means having that type of servant headship that serves for your wife's good. So verse 25. Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy. Cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.

And to present her to himself as a radiant church. Without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish. But holy and blameless. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. And how did Christ love the church?

Well we were told he gave himself up for her at the cross. He sacrificially served us the church for our good to make us to make us holy.

So husbands are to have a servant headship that sacrificially serves for their wife's good. Her physical, emotional and especially her spiritual good.

And as heads God will hold us husbands accountable for how we've served our wife for her good. And if we end up dying for our wife's good in the process then we're not a hero. We're simply doing our job. Our role.

[21 : 53] On the 15th of August last year a husband jumps on a great white shark to save his wife. Take a look. He came face to face with a juvenile great white repeatedly punching it to save his wife's life.

But whatever you do don't call Mark Rapley a hero. The brave husband is tonight counting his blessings as his wife Chantel recovers from surgery after she was mauled at Portna Quarry.

To Mark Rapley what he did was simple. You see the mother of your child and your support everything that's who you are and so you just react.

You see Mark got it even though I don't think he's a Christian. He wasn't a hero he says. He was just doing his job of servant headship.

Out of love he sacrificially served his wife for her good and for her life. And as one woman said to me once if a husband uses his headship to serve like that then it's not hard to submit to him.

[23 : 02] Because of that time we might just skip over some of these verses and then talk about what this looks like for us today. Well it means a husband saying to his wife let me do the dishes and the wife submitting by saying okay husband serving sacrificially wife submitting.

Or last night we had to pick my daughter up from a late night shift at McDonald's and so I said to Michelle you stay I'll pick her up and she submitted by saying okay.

No I didn't do that just so I could use it today in an illustration well not this time. Or it means a husband not taking control of everything but making sure everything is under control.

And so instead of disappearing to our man cave or disengaging from family life after work asking what can we do to help? Or how about I do this?

And then the wife submits by answering and telling us what to do to help. Or it means talking to each other about decisions. The husband out of a desire to serve his wife and the wife out of respect for her husband's headship.

[24 : 17] It may look different for different couples but the principle is husband sacrificially serving for her good and wives submitting to let him.

Now I suspect most couples do all this without even realising that it's serving and submitting. But the question of course is what happens when you disagree? What do you do then?

Well again the husband is to serve sacrificially for her good which sometimes means giving up what he wants for her good. You know like where to go on holidays or helping the kids with kids church so that she can tune in to online church.

But sometimes it may mean the wife submits as I said before even when she disagrees. And so if the husband is convinced even after speaking with her that this is for her good then the wife is to submit.

Maybe he's done more research and knows what property is worth. Or maybe he knows that despite the wife's you know understandably not wanting to battle the kids to get them to church he knows it's too easy to be pushed downstream.

[25 : 30] And so he insists that they go. And then does everything of course to help get them there. Now I doubt disagreements happen a lot in reality but I did hear from another couple in our church where the wife said for her it's not about having the final say but having a say being heard being valued.

That's what was most important for her. And so if the husband seriously considers her opinion then she was happy to submit even if they disagreed. That's what she said.

Because she knows that their marriage is to reflect the marriage between Christ and the church which is for her good. But again the principle is husbands serving sacrificially for their good and wives submitting to let them.

Well there are loads of advice on Google about how to live life and how to relate to others especially in marriage. But here is God's advice. Actually it's more than that.

It's his wisdom for our good that actually makes things work. And so let's pray we might walk wisely by the Spirit in a manner worthy of our calling.

[26 : 46] Let's pray. Our gracious Heavenly Father we do thank you even for this controversial passage in your word. And we pray Father that you would help us all to walk wisely under Christ's loving Lordship.

Help us to be open to your Spirit working our lives to fill us with godliness. And for those who are married help us to play our roles out of reverence for Christ that we may reflect the marriage between Christ and the church.

We pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.