

STUDY NOTES FOR THE MESSAGE: “RE-DEFINE: HUSBANDS AND WIVES”

Ephesians 5:21-33

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In Ephesians 5:18-21, Paul writes:

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In Acts 6:15 Luke writes about Stephen, a man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit filled Stephen in the sense that He controlled him. Therefore, the fullness of the Spirit has reference to His control over the believer yielded to Him. The verb, being filled, is in the present imperative: “Be constantly being filled with the Spirit.” So, the interpretation is, “Be constantly, moment by moment, being controlled by the Spirit.”

1. We are supposed to be filled constantly with the Holy Spirit, to be controlled by Him. What are you controlled by? How can you become more “controlled” or “filled with” the Spirit?

In the ancient world husbands had relatively few obligations outside of providing food and shelter; they were free to do as they please whereas wives were obligated to do household chores or what their husbands requested. Paul’s writings dramatically changed that picture. Rather than being guided by self-interests the husband is asked to love his wife, place the well-being of her first and to give himself to carrying for her.

What does it mean for a husband to “love” his wife in this context? *The word for “love” here is agapoō, referring to the love that God is (1 John 4:8), that God showed by sending Jesus (John 3:16), and the love that the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of those who believe (Gal. 5:22). This is a self-sacrificial love, a love that impels the one loving to give himself in self-sacrifice for the well-being of the one who is loved. The husband has three other kinds of love for his wife, a love of passion (erōs (ἔρως)), a love of complacency and satisfaction (stergō (στεργω)), and a fondness or affection (phileō (φιλεω)). All these are saturated with the agapaō (ἀγαπαω) love of the Spirit-filled husband, purified and made heavenly in character.*¹

2. How does the Bible’s command to love differ from what we see in culture today?

Read Ephesians 5:25-30.

¹ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader* (Eph 5:25). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

A husband is called to **cleanse** his wife's heart **gently** and delicately because the Scripture says she is like porcelain and is precious. See 1 Peter 3:7.

3. How do you care for something that is delicate? How does knowing that a woman's soul is like porcelain help you understand how to care for her?

Klyne Snodgrass, in his commentary on Ephesians², paints an extreme picture of male female relationships in the first century:

The two best days in a woman's life are when someone marries her and when he carries her dead body to the grave." Women were minimally educated, unable to testify in court, completely inferior to man. They were seen as less intelligent and moral, the source of sin, and a continual temptation. Respectable women were kept in private, separated from men, often living in different rooms

"Within the Jewish social world, women were nobodies. The dominate voice disenfranchised women who had few of the rights of men. They couldn't be witness in a court of law or initiate a divorce. They were not to be taught the Torah. They were radically separated from men in public life, almost invisible as they still are in some traditional parts of the middle East. Respectable women did not go out of the house unescorted by a family member. Adult women were to be veiled in public. ... A women's identity was in her father or husband.... In this setting, the role of women in the Jesus movement is striking.

4. How did Jesus treat women differently than other Jewish men in the first century?
See John 4:7-29, Luke 7:36-50.

Ephesians 5:22-24 says:

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

5. Paul relates the man's headship to that of Jesus' headship in the church. How did Jesus treat the church? What did Jesus do for the church? Imagine if Jesus berated the church and treated "her" harshly. Can you imagine the church following Jesus if He didn't sacrifice His life for the church?

Now, how might husbands learn to lead or to be the "head" of the marriage "body" by following the example of Jesus? How might wives learn to follow the lead of their husbands by studying how the church follows the lead of Jesus?

² Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, 1996, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan