

EPHESIANS

blessed to be a blessing

WEEK EIGHT

Ephesians 5.14b

If you are reading this, then you are not dead. Each of us may be living at various levels of aliveness and acuity to Christ's rescue operation in our lives, however. The verse we read today was pieced together at some point using material from the Hebrew Scriptures and the developing New Testament. It was probably used as a hymn in early Christian liturgy to highlight the baptismal event. Isn't it awesome that we, too, joined with the saints who came before us and sang part of this hymn recently in our service?: "*Come awake, come awake, come and rise up from the grave.*" (Matt Maher). It's like Someone is trying to stir us awake from our forgetfulness of what Christ has done to conquer death and be raised up to blaze a trail into eternal life for us (1 Corinthians 15.20). But, living in immorality is like we are hitting the snooze button and falling back to sleep in-between alarms. If we dabble in immorality, then we are putting our faith aside, and that can't be good.

If you were baptized in a pool, then you probably changed your clothes. Symbolically, you were cleansed from your sins after having shared in Christ's burial and resurrection by being dunked and raised up out of the water. Then you changed clothes, both literally and figuratively. The old, wet garments weighed down by sin were cast aside and fresh, clean coverings became your new identity. The reality of being cleansed, however, depended on God's action in Christ to rescue us more than 2000 years ago, and then we responded in favor of this gospel reality.

One of our most significant responses to the gospel is to "repent...to have a radically new 'mind-set,' to face the opposite way as the necessary precondition for being able to recognize the new reality..."¹ Let us not, then, continue to hit the snooze button and slumber, turning away from Christ's sacrifice, allowing fear, worldly concerns, and immorality swallow up our hearts until we are spiritually moribund. Awaken, O Sleeper, to your new life in Christ, Who *is* the Light of Life.

¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 6.

Ephesians 5.15-18

Have you ever been to a gathering such as a dinner party or wedding celebration as a Christ-follower? Everything seems to be going wonderfully: great food, great conversation, and just a fun time all-around. After a couple hours, however, you begin to notice that the music has gotten quite loud, people seem to be laughing louder and are way "happier" and talkative than before. And don't get me started on the dancing! People, it is impossible to dance to AC~DC's "You Shook Me All Night Long" without looking like Elaine Benis from *Seinfeld*, no matter how many shots you've had! And the pictures! They speak volumes of the downward spiral the night before (and they don't necessarily stay in Vegas, my friends!).

The problem is, for many of us, it is very easy to get swept up into the revelry of this kind of scenario. Admit it, it can be fun and exciting, and everyone is doing it, and after a couple of Mojitos, you're feeling loose for a nice change-of-pace. There's no doubt, however, that our language gets courser, the touching and our thoughts become more inappropriate, and we begin to do things that we would not do otherwise because self-control goes out the door.

Something must be said of our internal life as well. Engaging in behavior that is not God-honoring as a Christ-follower does something deep in our soul. We may be able to suppress our consciences for a time, but eventually (and hopefully) they will leak truth to our spirit. Additionally, others who are in Christ may be watching and feel compelled to behave similarly because of what they see in us (1 Corinthians 8.9-13). There's no doubt that the Lord's will is probably not in that next drink, and wisdom will not be found in certain unhealthy associations. So, "*Be careful, then, how you live...*"

Ephesians 5.18-20

Paul is writing to people who were accustomed to a world where partaking in drunken ecstasy as part of worship of a Greek god was encouraged. Dionysus was the god of wine and parties, and as his worshipers would become intoxicated, they would get stirred up into a disturbing frenzy and become "outside" of themselves in wild dancing and out-of-control excesses. This was their worship service. Besides the obvious incompatibilities with the Christlike conduct that we have been studying in Ephesians and attempting to apply to our lives, the end product of Dionysus worship was morally corrosive and wasteful (this is not even taking into consideration the hangover!), a far cry from the life of fullness that was promised.

The imperative to "*Instead, be filled with the Spirit,*" then is a completely different way to think and be, to say the least. An important question to ask ourselves is, what are we allowing to control us? Or, what are we under the influence of? If it is the Holy Spirit of God, then our lives will be characterized by thanksgiving, uplifting worship, and encouragement of others through singing, prayers, and music which glorify the Lord – even if "only" in our hearts. Strength and joy will typify our lives overall because the Spirit is none other than the presence of the One True God among us and in us. Power and life and self-control are end products of the indwelling Spirit because He Himself is real power and life and the God of order. Ongoing attentiveness to our surrendering to the Spirit is the imperative that we are being called to here. Write down ways in which you believe you surrendered to the Spirit this week. What was the outcome of this surrendering in your spirit or life?

Resources:

G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich (Ed.). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 2.* (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-. 451-454.

G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley & G. Friedrich (Ed.). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 4.* (electronic ed.). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-. 547-548.

Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993, 404-405.

Ephesians 5.21-33, Part I

Likeness is a very important concept in this section. Think about how Christ is head of the Church: He is Protector, Provider, Nurturer, and Savior by which He has given up His life for this highly valued body. He also has the power and divine authority to guide the Church, resulting from His alignment with the Father. So, for a husband to be "head" of the wife would mean that he, too, is her protector, provider, nurturer, and sacrifices his needs and desires if needed for her and the sake of their marital union. And, the husband is given the divine power and authority to guide the wife *as he is aligned with Christ*. If Christ were not aligned with His Father, then His headship would not be authenticated. But, praise be to God that Christ is perfectly aligned with God and is operating fully from the power and wisdom of this divine connection (John 4.34, 5.26-27, 30, 6.38, 8.16)!

Husbands, if we were to distill this passage to its most basic idea, the take-away phrase for you would be "loving headship."¹ Yes, in the divine order of things, you have been placed as leader of the "one flesh" union between you and your wife. And, your motivation to fulfill this significant leadership role is Christ. He is to be your role model. And, Christ's overarching motivation for *His* headship is love – a sacrificial love for His body, the Church.

Because you, husbands, have been appointed by God Himself to be in the leadership role of your wives, you will also be held to a greater level of accountability to Christ for the outcome of your marriage. But do not be dismayed or overwhelmed. God would not ordain you for such a role if He did not also want to grow you and equip you for such a task. Stay connected to the Vine (John 15.4), then, and trust that God wants to do amazing things through you in your marriage.

Lincoln, A. T. (2002). *Vol. 42: Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians.* Word Biblical Commentary (353–394). Dallas: Word, Incorporated.

Ephesians 5.21-33, Part II

To further attempt to put things into perspective on the role of husbands in their marriages, there are about 58 words dedicated to teaching the wife about her relationship to her husband, but almost three times as many words (154 in the English translation) devoted to the husband's responsibility. Special care has been taken, therefore, to outline this very significant role of husbands in marriage

As the husband, your loving headship role is not to be taken lightly or arrogantly but with much reflection, reverence, surrender, and humility. The author of this letter is likening your intimate unity with your wife with the "*profound mystery*" of that between Christ and the Church. Does your marriage look like an expression of the special unity which is intended to be present between Christ and the Church? How are the wellbeing, order, and growth of your marriage overall? God is calling you to a way of conducting your life in marriage with much care, wisdom, love, and sacrifice. Just as the world's weather patterns are dictated by the solar power being initiated in the equatorial areas, it is the husband's love and self-sacrifice which act as the power that infuses the marriage to create systems of unity and harmony throughout the marriage as he is submitted to Christ.

Of course, mutual submission is to be a priority in every relationship (v21). But, there will be times when God wants to supply abundant benefit to you and your wife and to onlookers through your loving headship role. Pray fervently that you would be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5.14b), Who enables you and equips you with support to carry out such a task. Under these circumstances outlined, most every believing wife would consider it an immense privilege to submit to her husband.