

AMITY BIBLE CHURCH

“To Know God and To Make Him Known”

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— May 20, 2018 —

Pastor Leslie Smith

SERIES: Reaffirming the Biblical Foundation of the Family
SERMON: Understanding the Biblical Concept of Submission
TEXT: Ephesians 5:15-21

Central Message:

Christian submission can best be visualized by considering the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. It cannot be properly understood apart from that context. Consequently, it is unwise for us to proclaim the biblical command for wives to submit themselves to their husbands as an achievable standard for those outside the faith community. Further, we cannot adequately convey God’s expectations without clearly articulating that God has commanded that submission for all believers. People without the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit have neither the discernment nor the power to live out submission and authority in a godly manner.

Men have a responsibility to submit too—it’s not just something that’s required of women. EVERY Christian, female or male, has the responsibility to submit to the Lord, and also to the authorities the Lord has placed in his or her life. What’s more, the biblical concepts of submission and authority cannot be disassociated. The two are indivisibly connected. A biblical definition of submission cannot be understood apart from a biblical definition of authority.

In order to grasp the biblical concept of submission as set forth in Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, we have to comprehend the overall context of his message. The Ephesians letter probably went out in the same mailbag as Paul’s letters to the

church at Philippi and Colossae considering that they were all written during his imprisonment in Rome.

Paul’s focus in the Ephesians letter was the “Holiness of God in the Church”. His premise was that the holy calling of the church must be reflected in conduct. The first three chapters of Ephesians lays out the details of that calling and the last three chapters detail the expected conduct of the church. Paul begins chapter four with the admonition to the church to walk worthy of its calling. In chapter 5:15, Paul clarifies that admonition by saying that we should walk (live) as wise men. The rest of chapter 5 and the early portion of chapter 6 are devoted to showing how that wisdom is reflected in three relationships...husband and wife, parents and children, and slave and master. The basis for walking worthy is set forth in Ephesians 5:15-21.

The Summary Statement for the Text

Holiness in relationships is about submission to God and submitting to other believers in deference to your submission to God.

The Key Take-Away for the Lesson

When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the life of a believer, relationships become possible as we yield the control of our lives completely to the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

High Point #1: Living carefully means making scrupulous use of our time.
(Ephesians 5:15-16)

One of the real travesties of a believer’s life is the waste of time. Paul is saying that, in view of our calling to holy conduct, we should use our time as if we had to pay for every minute. He speaks of living as a wise man and living not as unwise. Wise men and women know what they should do and they commit to doing it. Unwise men don’t know what they are supposed to do, so encouragement and

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reminders are the order of the day. Paul is reminding the church of its holy calling and the conduct that should flow out of that calling. He is also saying that we should undertake to understand what the will of God is and commit to obeying it.

High Point #2: Living carefully means allowing the Holy Spirit to direct and control your life, especially in your relationships with other believers. (Ephesians 5:18-20)

Paul begins by using an illustration to convey what the control of the Holy Spirit looks like in the life of a believer. He first states it in the negative and then in the positive. He says that we as believers should not yield ourselves to the control of intoxicating beverages because that only leads to debauchery. In other words, when alcohol controls us, we are unable to control ourselves and we are at the mercy of whatever that drug directs us to do.

By contrast, Paul says that we should be filled with the Spirit. This admonition is passive. It does not say fill yourself with God’s Spirit...it says allow God’s Spirit to “fill” you. I should quickly point out that this does not mean that we get more of the Holy Spirit...on the contrary, the Spirit gets more of us.

He then goes on to give us a barometer to measure the extent to which we have yielded our lives to the control of God’s Spirit. He specifically mentions how we speak to and relate to other believers. If you still struggle with treating other people, especially believers, with dignity and respect, you may not have yet yielded your life to the control of the Spirit of God.

High Point #3: Living carefully means that we are able to freely submit to God and to other believers. (Ephesians 5:21)

The submission of the wife to her husband as commanded in Scripture and the sacrificial love commanded of a husband for his wife rests firmly upon the command for mutual submission under the control of the Holy Spirit (5:21). As teachers, we make a very narrow application of the command for wives to submit if we exclude the husband’s responsibility to provide loving headship.

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As we consider future lessons in the book of Ephesians, we will find that submission in relationships is definitely an authority issue. But, authority cannot be divorced from the responsibility of believers to submit to one another under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Next week, we will look at the command to wives to submit to their own husbands and the command to husbands to provide loving headship for their wives.