

# E P H E S I A N S

## Week Six: Ephesians 4:17-5:21: “The Blessings of the Spirit-Filled Life”

Study Guide for the week of July 11, 2021

**Study Ephesians 4:17-5:21**, Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. What do you do with your worn-out clothing?
2. In what way does God want Christians to change? ([4:22-24](#))
3. How are Christians to imitate God? ([5:1-2](#))
4. From what practices should Christians abstain? ([5:3-6](#))
5. Since becoming a Christian, what old habits have you discarded?
6. What evidence do you see that your life is controlled by the Holy Spirit?
7. What would be the first step for you in changing an old pattern of behavior?

### Life Application Bible Notes

[4:17](#) The natural tendency of human beings is to think their way away from God—leaving them "hopelessly confused." Intellectual pride, rationalizations, and excuses all keep people from God. Don't be surprised if people can't grasp the Good News. The Good News will seem foolish to those who forsake faith and rely on their own understanding.

[4:17-24](#) People should be able to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way Christians live. We are to live full of light ([5:8](#)). Paul told the Ephesians to leave behind the old life of sin, since they were followers of Christ. Living the Christian life is a process. Although we have a new nature, we don't automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes when we become new people in Christ. But if we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. As you look back over last year, do you see a process of change for the better in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions? Although change may be slow, it comes as you trust God to change you. For more about our new nature as believers, see [Romans 6:6](#); [8:9](#); [Galatians 5:16-26](#); [Colossians 3:3-8](#).

[4:22-24](#) Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past. We should put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away. When we decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation ([2:8-10](#)), it is both a one time decision, as well as a daily conscious commitment. We are not to be driven by desire and impulse. We must put on the new nature, head in the new direction, and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

[4:25](#) Lying to each other disrupts unity by creating conflicts and destroying trust. It tears down relationships and leads to open warfare in a church.

[4:26, 27](#) The Bible doesn't tell us that we shouldn't feel angry, but it points out that it is important to handle our anger properly. If vented thoughtlessly, anger can hurt others and

destroy relationships. If bottled up inside, it can cause us to become bitter and destroy us from within. Paul tells us to deal with our anger immediately in a way that builds relationships rather than destroys them. If we nurse our anger, we will give the devil an opportunity to divide us. Are you angry with someone right now? What can you do to resolve your differences? Don't let the day end before you begin to work on mending your relationship.

[4:28-32](#) We can bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, improper use of anger, harsh words, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us. Are you bringing sorrow or pleasing God with your attitudes and actions? Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

[4:30](#) The Holy Spirit within us is a guarantee that we belong to God.

[4:32](#) This is Christ's law of forgiveness as taught in the Gospels ([Matthew 6:14, 15](#); [18:35](#); [Mark 11:25](#)). We also see it in the Lord's Prayer—"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us" ([Luke 11:4](#)). God forgives us, not because we forgive others, but solely because of his great mercy. As we come to understand his mercy, however, we will want to be like him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others. Those who are unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified him ([Luke 23:34](#)).

[5:1, 2](#) Just as children imitate their parents, we should follow God's example. His great love for us led him to sacrifice himself so that we might live. Our love for others should be of the same kind—a love that goes beyond affection to self-sacrificing service.

[5:4](#) Obscene stories and coarse jokes are so common that we begin to take them for granted. Paul cautions, however, that improper language should have no place in the Christian's conversation because it does not reflect God's gracious presence in us. How can we praise God and remind others of his goodness when we are speaking coarsely?

[5:5-7](#) Paul does not forbid all contact with unbelievers. Jesus taught his followers to befriend sinners and lead them to him ([Luke 5:30-32](#)). Instead, Paul writes against the lifestyle of people who make excuses for bad behavior and recommend its practice to others—whether they are in the church or outside of it. Such people quickly pollute the church and endanger its unity and purpose. We must befriend unbelievers if we are to lead them to Christ, but we must be wary of those who are viciously evil, immoral, or opposed to all that Christianity stands for. Such people are more likely to influence us for evil than we are to influence them for good.

[5:8](#) As people who have light from the Lord, our actions should reflect our faith. We should live above reproach morally so that we will reflect God's goodness to others. Jesus stressed this truth in the Sermon on the Mount ([Matthew 5:15, 16](#)).

[5:10-14](#) It is important to avoid the "worthless deeds of evil and darkness" (any pleasure or activity that results in sin), but we must go even further. Paul instructs us to expose these deeds, because our silence may be interpreted as approval. God needs people who will take a stand for what is right. Christians must lovingly speak out for what is true and right.

[5:14](#) This is not a direct quote from Scripture but was probably taken from a hymn well known to the Ephesians. The hymn seems to have been based on [Isaiah 26:19](#); [51:17](#); [52:1](#); [60:1](#); and

[Malachi 4:2](#). Paul was appealing to the Ephesians to wake up and realize the dangerous condition into which some of them had been slipping.

[5:15, 16](#) By referring to these days as evil, Paul was communicating his sense of urgency because of evil's pervasiveness. We need the same sense of urgency because our days are also difficult. We must keep our standards high, act wisely, and do good whenever we can.

[5:18](#) Paul contrasts getting drunk with wine, which produces a temporary "high," to being filled with the Spirit, which produces lasting joy. Getting drunk with wine is associated with the old way of life and its selfish desires. In Christ, we have a better joy, higher and longer lasting, to cure our depression, monotony, or tension. We should not be concerned with how much of the Holy Spirit we have but with how much of us the Holy Spirit has. Submit yourself daily to his leading and draw constantly on his power.

[5:18, 19](#) The effects of alcohol are obvious, but what happens when we are under the influence of the Holy Spirit? In these verses, Paul lists three byproducts of the Spirit's influence in our lives: singing, making music, and giving thanks. Paul did not intend to suggest that believers only discuss religious matters, but that whatever we do or say should be permeated with an attitude of joy, thankfulness to God, and encouragement of others. Instead of whining and complaining—which our culture has raised to an art form—we are to focus on the goodness of God and his mercies toward us. How would others characterize your words and attitudes?

[5:20](#) When you feel down, you may find it difficult to give thanks. Take heart—in all things God works for our good if we love him and are called by him ([Romans 8:28](#)). Thank God, not for your problems but for the strength he is building in you through the difficult experiences of your life. You can be sure that God's perfect love will see you through.

[5:21, 22](#) Submitting to another person is an often misunderstood concept. It does not mean becoming a doormat. Christ—at whose name "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" ([Philippians 2:10](#))—submitted his will to the Father, and we honor Christ by following his example. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs. In a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are called to submit. For the wife, this means willingly following her husband's leadership in Christ. For the husband, it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Christ and where each is concerned for the happiness of the other.

*Ephesians Study Guide questions and notes are from*



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