



Time to Reflect

- How can we grow further as Christians who are praising and thankful people? What might be holding us back from experiencing such growth?
- Take a few moments to read 1st Corinthians 13:4-8a. What strikes you most about this incredible definition of love?

Last week we reflected on Christian living as we considered Paul's challenge to follow God's example, live as children of light, and avoid the fruitless deeds of darkness. We also discussed some ways in which we can reflect God's love in our daily lives. This week we continue to focus on Christian living and our attention is drawn to the context of a family home.

“When home is ruled according to God’s Word,’ said Charles Haddon Spurgeon, ‘angels might be asked to stay with us, and they would not find themselves out of their element.’”

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p147)

Specifics

- Ephesians continually challenges us to focus on Christian living. This week there are clear instructions for Christian households. From the very outset, Paul made it clear that it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in harmony with those nearest and dearest to us.
- In (v18-20) Paul knowingly contrasts the lasting spiritual joy that is experienced by believers and the temporal pursuit of pleasure and escapism that defines the drunkard.
- Note how Paul issued a clear warning against drunkenness and encouraged the Ephesians to “...be filled with the Spirit” (v18). He wanted the Ephesians to experience the only real joy and contentment that will ever last. Paul was speaking about true Christian joy.
- Wiersbe suggests, “...Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us...This kind of joy is not a thermometer but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances.¹”
- Note the wonderful expressions of joy that Paul mentioned in (v19-20). These are indicators of spiritual richness and, when evident in a family home, are reflective of the living out of Christian faith.
- Think about Paul and Silas when they were found to be singing in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:25). Their singing reflected the God-given peace and joy that overflowed from their hearts.
- Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit are a praising people and a thankful people, just as Paul told the Ephesians.
- (v21-33) call our attention to Christian households. There are important teachings contained in these verses, yet it is important that we pause to reflect on exactly what Paul was teaching.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p149.

- For example, the word ‘submit’ is used twice in (v21-22). Wiersbe helps us unpack exactly what was being communicated in this section as he writes, “Submission has nothing to do with the order of authority, how it is given and how it is received.”²
- On several occasions, Jesus taught his disciples to practice humility as opposed to seeking positions of authority. This was, perhaps, most notably modelled by Jesus when he washed the disciples’ feet.
- In (v21) we see how Paul called the Ephesians to “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” This meant that they were to respect and honour each other, in the light of their Christian faith. They were to see the goodness in each person and respect the dignity of every man, woman and child.
- (v22-24) speaks directly into marriage relationships. These verses need to be carefully understood. Wiersbe reflects, “Headship is not dictatorship. ‘Each for the other, both for the Lord.’ The Christian husband and wife should pray together and spend time in the Word, so that they might know God’s will for their individual lives and for their home.”³
- Paul was not suggesting that a wife is inferior to her husband, or that women should be in subjection to men. Rather, everything he said in this section is communicated within the context and definition of the lordship of Christ.
- It is also worth noting that “Paul has much more to say to the Christian husbands than to the wives. He set for them a very high standard.”⁴
- Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church (v25). Note the reference to the sacrifice of Jesus in (v25). True love is sacrificial. It does not issue conditions or demands, and doesn’t insist on its own way. A marriage is a partnership and it needs to be grounded in true love.
- (v26-27) call our attention to what we could refer to as ‘sanctifying love.’ The word *sanctify* means to be set apart and is often used in association with holiness.
- The relationship between a husband and wife is one that should be focused on the pursuit of holiness – an experience which is “...one of constant growth when Christ is the Lord of the home. Love always enlarges and enriches, while selfishness does just the opposite.”⁵
- This relationship must also be a caring one. A husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body (v28). This speaks of diligence, attentiveness and cherishing.
- Paul also called the Ephesians to recognise the need for an unbreakable love to exist between a husband and wife (v31). This reminds us of permanency and unity.
- Much of what was taught by Paul in this passage was foundational in the writing of *The Introduction in the Marriage Service*⁶.
- This section speaks much about love and respect, and these are central building blocks for any Christian home. They are also indicators of mature and sound Christian living.
- William Barclay concludes, “In the Christian home Jesus is an ever-remembered...guest.”⁷
- May our relationships be defined by Christian love, glorify the Lord we serve, and encourage other people to turn to Christ as their Saviour.

² Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p152.

³ *Ibid*, p153.

⁴ *Ibid*, p154.

⁵ *Ibid*, p155.

⁶ see the Church of Ireland *Book of Common Prayer*, pp416-417.

⁷ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Saint Andrew Press, 1976), pp174-175.