

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS – CHAPTER FIVE

In chapter four Paul began his explanation of what the grace of Christ in us will look like in life with two every day illustrations. His first picture was of children pushed around by the wind and waves of false teaching. He looked initially at Christ's earthly body, the church, which at all costs should not be divided because otherwise people would not see Him in action in the world. The best safeguard against division is our growth through teaching that builds our knowledge of who Jesus wants to be in us. His second picture imagined us exchanging the dirty worn old clothes of a self run life for the beautiful new clothes of a Christ run life. He reminded us that growing to maturity needs new behaviour which draws others to Christ rather than pushing them away.

To begin chapter five he picked up again the picture first used at the beginning of the previous chapter,(4:1,17) of the Christian life as a walk, one step at a time, through all kinds of strange and difficult territory. We are first to walk lovingly, because we are loved by God. Jesus on the cross was the proof of the Father's love for us, His children. Paul warned how what passes for love in our modern world will ruin our witness to the true love of God. Sexual immorality, not just in action but even in thought and conversation, takes instead of giving, in our relationships. For others their love affairs are with money and, again, their desire is to take not to give. The starting point for immorality or greed is in loving the wrong god, a god who takes from us. Paul called it idolatry. These false loves have no place in the kingdom of Christ. Walk away from them!(5:1-7)

Next Paul encouraged his readers to walk with the light on, which is much safer than staggering around in the dark. For those who are sharing the grace of God, the light will shine first on the inside as He is allowed to be the light of the world in and through us. Light is silent. Life often speaks louder than words. Light gets rid of darkness. The light of Christ through Christians shows up the dirtiness of selfishness without a word being spoken. Our responsibility is a simple choice, light on or light off, which needs to be made again and again through every day. It is hard to stay asleep when the sun rises and light streams in the window. Our Christ-illuminated lives are intended to wake up those asleep to the danger that threatens them.(5:8-14)

Finally, having the light on allows us to walk carefully looking where we place each foot. We are to walk wisely, making the most of every fleeting opportunity in our very temporary existence on earth. The wise path is the one God planned however difficult it looks. It involves constant choices between, for example, staying clear headed or getting drunk, between trusting the Holy Spirit with our lives or trusting ourselves, between music which reminds us how much we should be thankful for His grace or the ugly alternatives which pretend to be music, between lifting each other up in respect or putting one another down. 'Being filled with the Spirit' means to have our lives controlled by all we have learned of Christ like a sail filled with wind not a bucket full of water. Here and in Col.3:16 Paul spelt out the way Christian music can be integrated with Bible teaching so that each strengthens the other. 'Be subject to' refers not to taking orders from

someone else but to the respect we have for them and the value we place upon their needs before our own. The key to such an attitude is in our attitude of Godly fear, which first values Him.(5:15-21)

In the rest of the book Paul explored this new way of 'walking' in a variety of human relationships. The first to be examined was marriage. Verse 22 has so often been quoted out of context to stand on its own. Notice that Paul was only repeating verse 21 which applies to all relationships. He reminded wives that their new walk involved a respect for their own husbands not someone else's. He used the example of the relationship between Christ and the church. Wives are to respect their own husbands as much as the church is intended to respect Jesus Christ, her head. Remember however what kind of head Jesus is to the church, lovingly and sacrificially serving us, not dominating or demanding. The new walk for husbands is so much harder than that for wives to which so much emphasis is given. They are to love like Jesus who was willing to die for the church. Such love from Jesus keeps His church sanctified, clean from sin because of the work of the word of God. Husbands loving like this will encourage wives in their Christian walk in such a way that they will stay beautiful and grow younger every day! To complete his picture, Paul went back to the original purpose of God in marriage in Gen.2:24. The very simple secret of a good marriage is to 'leave' and to 'cleave', to be absolutely faithful to our wives in thought, word, attitude and action. Loved like that most wives will have no trouble giving respect back.(5:22-33)

#### QUESTIONS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION ON CHAPTER SIX

1. What will our new walk look like as children or parents? What is the difference between obeying your parents in the Lord and obeying your parents? What was promised to children in the Ten Commandments if they did what God said? Did it really mean they would have long lives on earth? How do fathers provoke their children to anger? Does this mean we should not tell them what to do if they do not want our advice? Why are mothers not mentioned here?(6:1-4)
2. What will the new walk look like for workers and their bosses? How would following these principles solve so many problems in employment? Was Paul saying that slavery was OK? How did his teaching eventually lead to Christians taking the lead in abolishing slavery?(6:5-9)
3. What are we to wear on our new walk? Are we to submit to the Devil? How does each part of the armour protect us? Think it through in relation to a difficult time you have had in your life when the Devil has really got at you. What is the one weapon we have as Christians?(6:10-17)
4. Why is prayer vital in the effective use of our Christian armour? How are we to pray for each other? What did Paul want the Ephesians to pray for him? Would it get him out of jail? What effect would their prayer have on themselves?(6:18-20)
5. What was Tychicus' role to be when he came to Ephesus? How can we be like him without being gossips? What final wish did Paul have for the Ephesian Christians? How did he sum up his message in this letter?(6:21-24)