

# DIGGING DEEPER

## Ephesians 5

Link to sermon: [https://youtu.be/JRLrWFeZ\\_SU](https://youtu.be/JRLrWFeZ_SU)

Chapter 5 begins with the command, “Therefore, be imitators of God,...” (5:1). This entire chapter is a fleshing out of what it does mean and does not mean to be an imitator of God. Paul understands the battle these believers face daily. It is a battle that comes with trying to live differently than those who do not know Christ. If the battle they face, and the battle we face, could only be fought in their own strength, it would be hopeless. But here, Paul connects them to the power source that will be necessary in waging this battle.

This passage contains a call to holiness with a particular focus on sexual purity, and God-honoring speech.

Jesus wants to free us from the power of sin in our lives so we can walk with him in holiness. He believes that the gospel is true and therefore his readers are children of light. They just need to live out their new natures.

His basic approach as summarized in v. 8 is two-fold. One, he reminds us of the change Jesus produced in our life “you once were darkness, now you are light in the Lord.” And two, he calls us to take hold of the new life God has given us. “Live as children of light.” Being in Christ, we have both the desire: “new attitude of your minds” (4:23), and the resources: “every spiritual blessing in Christ” (1:3-14) to obey God’s instructions here.

This verse is a great summary of the book of Ephesians and Paul’s entire theology. It describes our old condition (darkness), our new condition (light in the Lord) and the resulting obligation.

Notice for instance that the self-indulgence of v. 3 stands in stark contrast to Jesus’ self-giving in v. 2. If we are in Him and identify with Him then our new self will naturally follow His self-sacrificial nature, not our former self’s tendency toward self-gratification.

Everything Paul says prior to v. 18 is setting the stage for this one command to be filled with the Spirit. All the verbs following it in vv. 19 and 20 are actually participles in Greek. It means that what appear to be verbs in English all relate back to the main verb, be filled. They explain what it looks like when one is filled with the Spirit. Since the command, “be filled with the Spirit” is the centerpiece of this passage let’s take a careful look at.

**“Be filled with the Spirit”** is a present tense verb. This implies that being filled is not a one-time occurrence. We must constantly be filled. It happens moment by moment.

**“Be filled with the Spirit”** is a command. It’s not a suggestion. It is imperative. If we are to live as God wishes, we simply cannot do it apart from being filled. Therefore, Paul does not suggest, or even exhort; he commands.

**“Be filled with the Spirit”** is in the second person plural form meaning “all of you.” That tells us that being filled with the Spirit is not an exclusive privilege for some faction of believers. Paul commanded that it be appropriated by all. It is a divine privilege for all believers.

**“Be filled with the Spirit”** is in the passive voice. That tells us that we cannot fill ourselves. God is the one who grants the filling. He graciously gives us His Spirit. We are passive recipients of His filling.

Now if you want to see what it looks like when we are filled, check out those participles. The four things Paul says should denote the lives of Spirit-filled believers are fellowship, worship, gratitude, and submission.

The overall impression is of a group of people continually seeking to edify each other, and praise God together. Who wouldn’t want to be part of a community where people were filled by the Spirit of God and living like that?

- Think about this: we are commanded to do something we cannot do. What does this tell you about the Christian life?
- According to verse 17, instead of being foolish, what should we do?
- In verse 18, what should we not do, and what should we do instead?
- From verses 19 and 20 what results when we are being filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Am I imitating God?
- Am I living a life of self-giving love like Jesus?
- Do I participate in any behaviors or speech that are improper or out of place for God's people?
- Do I make the most of every opportunity?
- Am I letting the Spirit fill me daily?
- What are the things that come to mind when you think about light? Darkness?
- Why do you think Paul used these terms in this passage?
- What other New Testament passages use light and darkness in this way (Matt 4:14–16; Luke 11:34; John 1:1–14; 3:19–21; 12:46)?
- Why is light a good description of God?
- What does it look like to live as a child of light?
- When have you made the most of an opportunity to shed God's light on a situation?
- When did you miss an opportunity?
- What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit"?
- It is much better to ask "is it wise" than "is it lawful"? In other words, there are many things that are permissible for Christians to do, but not ultimately helpful in light of their personal history, present circumstances, and future hopes and dreams. What are some things in life that you "can do" but would not be "wise" for you to do?
- Part of the reason it is important to live wisely is because our time is limited and "the days are evil" (5:16). What do you think Paul means when he says this?
- In Ephesians 5:17, the antidote to foolishness is to know what the will of the Lord is. How does someone discover the will of the Lord (in order to live a wise life)?
- What can you do to discover the Lord's will/wisdom?
- There are many things that seek to control the life of the Christian. What does it mean for a Christian to be controlled by the Spirit of God?
- One of the things that happens when a person is controlled by the Spirit of God is that they spend time praising God; Ephesians 5:19–20 detail this outcome of the Spirit's controlling influence on our lives. Reflect for a moment on your own heart. Audit the last month of your life. Have you frequently found your heart rejoicing in thankfulness to God? If not, what is preventing you from spending time praising Him?
- How would you counsel someone who is struggling with sexual purity?
- How might we be deceived about sex in our culture?
- Paul is realistic in this passage about the challenge of walking in the light. Where have you let "darkness" get a foothold in your life?
- Describe what it feels like to try to be an imitator of God without being Spirit-filled. What thoughts have you had when you found yourself trying to live this way?
- "Be filled with the Spirit" is in the passive voice. Why would Paul teach that believers are passive recipients of the filling of the Spirit?
- Think about this: we are commanded to do something we cannot do. What does this tell you about the Christian life?
- These verses display beneficial results of being filled with the Spirit. What are they?
- How does thankfulness qualify as an expression of being Spirit filled?
- What does Paul want us to understand about living as an imitator of God?
- What do I need to do to align my life with what these verses say?
- Where do you presently see the greatest need to experience God's empowering presence in your life?