

Spirit-controlled Relationships

LESSON 11

Topic

Spirit filling

Theme

Spirit-controlled believers build loving relationships that reflect the Lord's relationship with them.

Desired Response

The learner will be more loving in every relationship.

Materials

- Visual 25.
- Bottle of colored liquid.
- Empty glass.
- Remote controlled car.
- Paper and pencils.

Scripture Focus

Ephesians 5:18–33

Summary

This lesson discusses the meaning of being filled with the Spirit and shows how Spirit filling affects relationships in positive ways.

Outline

I. The Command to be Spirit Filled (Eph. 5:18–21)

- A. Meaning of Spirit filling (5:18)
- B. Results of Spirit filling (5:19–21)
 1. Joy (5:19)
 2. Thanksgiving (5:20)
 3. Mutual submission (5:21)

II. The Spirit-controlled Marriage (Eph. 5:22–33)

- A. The Spirit-controlled wife (5:22–24)
- B. The Spirit-controlled husband (5:25–33)

Memory Verses

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit. . . . Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:18, 21).

GETTING STARTED

Filling Illustration

Display a bottle of colored liquid, an empty glass, and a remote-control car. Pour the liquid to the top of the glass. Then drive the car around the classroom using the remote control.

ASK: Does filling the glass or controlling the car illustrate the filling ministry of the Spirit? Explain. *The remote-controlled the car. Similarly, the Holy Spirit controls a Spirit-filled believer.*

The Holy Spirit lives in every Christian. Therefore, we cannot receive more of Him. Rather, we should assign more of ourselves to His control. Paul wrote about every believer being filled with the Spirit. We will further examine what it means to be filled, introduce the benefits of such filling, and consider the effects being Spirit filled has on relationships.

Caffeine Poll

ASK: On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely important, how important for you is a cup of caffeinated coffee in the morning? (Q1)

ASK: Describe how caffeine affects your day. (Q2)

Paul wrote about being filled and controlled—but not with caffeine of course. He wrote about every believer being filled with the Spirit. We will examine what it means to be filled, the benefits of such filling, and the effects it has on relationships.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

I. The Command to be Spirit Filled (Eph. 5:18–21)

A. Meaning of Spirit filling (5:18)

Drunkenness plagued first-century culture, as it does ours today. Paul exhorted the Ephesian believers to shun drunkenness. He wrote, “Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.” The whole tenor of Biblical teaching indicates that believers should lead disciplined lives. We should take care of our bodies as well as our souls. Our bodies are, after all, temples of the Holy Spirit. We should be as unwilling to expose our bodies to the damaging effects of alcohol as we are to expose our church building to a wrecking ball.

Instead of being filled with wine, we should be filled with the Spirit. The filling speaks of control.

ASK: What does excessive alcohol do to a person? What parts of the person does the alcohol control? (Q3) *Alcohol impairs a person's ability to think and react; it affects the person's bodily movement, walk, speech, and personality.*

Alcohol takes negative control of a person. The Holy Spirit, by contrast, takes positive and productive control of us as believers, pouring God's love into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). A Spirit-controlled believer loves God and other people.

READ: 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. **ASK:** What characteristics of a Spirit-controlled love have other believers shown toward you? (Q4)

“Be filled” is a present imperative and therefore identifies a continual process. We may be filled, or controlled, by the Spirit but later relax our spiritual vigilance and fall into sin. Then we need to yield ourselves to His control again.

B. Results of Spirit filling (5:19–21)

1. Joy (5:19)

Paul informed the Ephesians about three manifestations of the Spirit-filled life. The first is joyful fellowship in song: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Paul may have been referring to Old Testament psalms that the early church used. Some of our songs today are based on Old Testament psalms. “Hymns” were early Christian songs of praise. “Spiritual songs” may refer to impromptu songs. In each case, the singing was to come from the heart, not merely the lips.

ASK: What truths about the Lord have caused a Spirit-controlled song in your heart? (Q5)

ASK: How would a relationship be affected if both people were filled with joy and had a song to the Lord in their hearts? (Q6) *The relationship would flourish; disagreements would be handled correctly; there would be mutual encouragement.*

2. Thanksgiving (5:20)

The second manifestation of a Spirit-filled life is “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:20).

ASK: What does having thankful spirits do to a relationship? (Q7) *It helps both people focus on the positive; it leads to complements and expresses of appreciation; it focuses both people on the benefits and help that God offers them in tough times.*

A spirit-controlled life exudes gratitude to God for all His many blessings. This gratitude ascends to the Father “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:20). We pray in Jesus’ name because His death made it possible for us to approach the Father (Heb. 4:14–16). Also, our prayers carry no authority apart from the authority Jesus gives us to pray. Finally, praying in Jesus’ name involves offering to the Father praises and petitions that Jesus endorses.

TESTIMONY: When have you experienced a Spirit-empowered thankfulness in the middle of a difficult trial? (Q8)

3. Mutual submission (5:21)

The third manifestation of a Spirit-filled life is mutual submission. Paul wrote “[Submit] yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:21). Submission is unnatural. Our old nature bristles at the very thought of submitting to someone. We want to be first, and we want to have the final say. We want to make decisions. But if we are Spirit-controlled, we will put others’ interests ahead of our own.

READ: John 13:3–17. **ASK:** What can we learn from Christ’s example of submission? (Q9) *One’s position of authority doesn’t exempt him or her from submitting to others; no one has to give up his or her authority when submitting to others; submission is for everyone.*

People in authority will use their positions to benefit those under their direction. We should mutually submit to one another in the “fear of God” (Eph. 5:21). To fear God is to respect Him and His commands. We submit in the fear of God because refusing to do so means we are disobeying God. To disobey God is to put ourselves under His discipline and chastening hand. God loves us too much to let us get away with refusing to submit to others.

ASK: What will submitting to one another do for a relationship? (Q10) *Cause the relationship to grow; virtually eliminate arguments; bring glory to God; make both people in the relationship feel special.*

II. The Spirit-controlled Marriage (Eph. 5:22–33)

Paul appropriately transitioned from the Spirit-controlled life to the Spirit-controlled marriage, giving specific instructions to the husband and wife.

A. The Spirit-controlled wife (5:22–24)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,” Paul exhorted in Ephesians 5:22. The Biblical concept of submission suggests a low ranking. But it does not assign a lesser value to the person who ranks under another person. A corporal ranks under a captain, but he may be as intelligent, personable, and talented as the captain. Nevertheless, for the sake of order in the military, the corporal submits to his captain. Similarly, a wife may be as intelligent, personable, and talented as her husband—or even outdistance him in these categories. But for the sake of honoring the order God established for marriage, she voluntarily ranks under her husband. She respects his leadership responsibility.

ASK: Why does submitting to Christ first make a wife’s submission to her husband attainable? (Q11) *Christ provides the grace and wisdom necessary to submit to her husband.*

At times, a wife might find it difficult to submit to her husband, but she should submit to him even then “as unto the Lord.” By submitting to her husband, she is in fact showing her devotion to God, acknowledging that this arrangement reflects His will.

Paul continued, writing that “the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church” (5:23). The wife is to submit to her husband because he is the head of the home. He bears the same relationship to the wife

that Christ bears to the church. However, Christ bears an additional relationship to the church, for “he is the saviour of the body” (5:23). Christ’s relationship to the church is much more profound than that of a husband to his wife.

As the church is subject to Christ, even so wives must be to their husbands in all things within the marriage. Notice that wives are summoned to submit to their own husbands. Some men seem to want to assume leadership over all the women with whom they come into contact. The Bible does not give them this authority.

B. The Spirit-controlled husband (5:25–33)

Marriage is a partnership. Ephesians 5:25 exhorts, “Husbands, love your wives.” The Greek word for “love” in this verse is “agape,” the highest form of love. Agape love is divine love produced in the heart of every believer (Rom. 5:5) and manifested by those who are controlled by the Spirit. A husband’s duty is to give his wife unfailing, ongoing, heavenly, self-sacrificing love.

First, a husband ought to love his wife “even as Christ also loved the church” (Eph. 5:25). Christ loved the church with a great love. He expressed this love by giving Himself for the church. He laid down His life for the church. A husband who truly loves his wife as Christ loved the church is willing to place her interests above his own and even die for her if necessary.

Christ gave His life for the church “that he might sanctify and cleanse it” (5:26). To “sanctify” means to “make holy.” Christ makes the church holy by cleansing it with the Word. Christ uses the teachings of Scripture to make us pure.

Christ sanctifies the church in order “that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (5:27). When Christ presents the church to Himself, it will be a glorious church. It will be the church triumphant, free from any spot or wrinkle of sin.

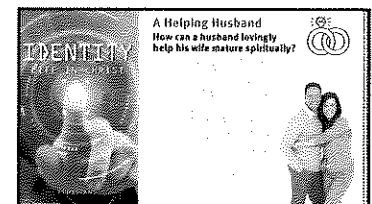
DISPLAY: Visual 25—A Helping Husband. **ASK:** Christ’s purpose in loving the church was to sanctify it and help it to grow. How can a husband lovingly help his wife mature spiritually? (Q12) *Pray with and for her, lead her in studying God’s Word, communicate with her about spiritual things, submit to her by loving her.*

Returning to the relationship of husbands to wives, Paul wrote that husbands should love their wives “as their own bodies” (5:28). “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it” (5:29). No man in his right mind hates his body; rather, he feeds it and takes care of it.

ASK: What will happen to any selfish desires a husband has as he begins to meet his wife’s needs? (Q13) *They will fade because he will realize the joy of loving and helping his wife.*

Returning to the thought of Christ and the church, Paul offered a parallel example: Christ nourishes and cherishes (literally, “keeps warm”) the church because we are members of His body (5:29, 30). As Christ feeds and takes care of us, so a husband ought to love his wife.

ASK: How does Christ nourish and cherish the church? (Q14) *He supplies what it needs to grow, maintain health, and develop; He makes the church secure and at peace.*



Continuing his theme of a husband's love for his wife, Paul wrote, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (5:31). This statement quotes Genesis 2:24, which shows the vital unity into which marriage brings husband and wife. When a man marries, he leaves his father and mother in the sense that he establishes his own home and assumes responsibility for the management of that home. As the head of a new family unit, he is to cleave to his wife, and they become one flesh. He must love his wife "even as himself" (Eph. 5:33).

Many problems in marriages today arise because couples do not "leave" and "cleave." The minute a problem arises in the new home, one spouse or the other goes back to Mom and Dad instead of staying home and resolving the problem. Many more do not cleave, meaning they do not stick with each other through "thick and thin." Others do not remain faithful to the marriage partner. Leaving and cleaving would solve many problems in marriages.

ASK: How does deeply depending on one's parents affect the person's relationship with his or her spouse? (Q15) *It short circuits communication, puts the person's spouse on the "opposing team," allows problems to fester instead of resolve.*

ASK: Why must we keep Ephesians 5:18 in mind when seeking to live out verses 22–33? (Q16) *No one can be an exemplary husband or wife without the Spirit's enabling power.*

Paul assured the Ephesians that "this is a great mystery" (5:32). How the heavenly, most glorious Christ-church relationship can be reflected in the earthly, husband-wife relationship is a mystery indeed. Submission, love, and unity are high ideals for every husband and wife to strive for.

After reminding every husband once more to love his wife, Paul exhorted, "And the wife see that she reverence her husband" (5:33). The wife must consistently respect her husband. As both do their part, both will be encouraged to continue doing their part.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Recipe for a Happy Marriage

Ask the learners to divide into groups. Distribute a sheet of paper and a pencil to each group. Instruct the groups to each write a recipe for a successful marriage, thinking about what characteristics and actions combine to create a successful marriage. (Q17)

I Submit to You

Challenge learners who are married to plan three ways to submit to their spouses in the coming week. Those who are single can plan three ways to submit to a friend by meeting his or her needs in creative ways. (Q18)

Memory Verses

Encourage your learners to memorize Ephesians 5:18 and 21. Give them an opportunity to say the verses in class next week.