Nov. 8, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Ephesians

Alive In Christ: Discovering Our Identity & Purpose

Part 7: "Following the Example of Christ & His Love: A Spiritual Punch List

Ephesians 5:1-6:9

Today we continue our historical and chronological journey through the New Testament with Part 2 of The letter to the Ephesians. This Letter was written by the Apostle Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, around AD 60–62. Paul composed four letters now known as the Prison Epistles: Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians.

Part 7: "Following the Example of Christ & His Love: A Spiritual Punch List

Today Paul takes that call and walks it into every room of your life — your worship, your marriage, your family, your workplace.

The question is no longer *"What has God done?"* \The question is: *"How does the new self actually live?"*

THE HIGHEST STANDARD EVER SET

Two words. That is all it takes for Paul to set the highest standard ever placed before a human being.

Imitate God.

Not *"try to be a little kinder."* Not *"work on your temper."* Not *"be more patient with difficult people."*

Imitate God.

If Paul had stopped there, we might have thrown up our hands in despair. How does a finite, fallen, frail human being imitate an infinite, holy, perfect God?

But Paul does not stop there. He immediately gives us both the model and the motivation.
The model: ***"following the example of Christ."*** The motivation: ***"because you are His dear children."***
A child who has been deeply loved by a good father does not need a rulebook to know how to treat others. They have watched love in action. They have received it at great personal cost to the one who gave it. And now — naturally, organically, joyfully — it flows outward.

Follow the example of Christ and His love.
What does that actually look like — in the real world, in real relationships, on real Monday mornings

Paul gives us four answers.

POINT I: Follow His Example by Living in Purity

(Ephesians 5:1–7)

What Love IS and IS NOT

Ephesians 5:1-7… ***Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are His dear children. [2] Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God. [3] Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. [4] Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. [5] You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. [6] Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey Him. [7] Don't participate in the things these people do.***

The Punch List — What Purity Actually Looks Like:

☑ Guard what you allow into your mind and heart — sexual immorality, impurity, and greed begin not in actions but in appetites. What you feed grows; what you starve dies.

☑ Watch your words — ***"Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes"*** (v. 4) — these are not harmless entertainment. They reveal and reinforce the condition of the heart.

☑ Replace corrupt speech with gratitude — Paul's antidote to coarse talk is not silence but *thanksgiving.* A heart overflowing with gratitude to God has less room for the language of the old life.

☑ Remember who you are — ***"These sins have no place among God's people"*** (v. 3). Purity is not primarily about rule-keeping; it is about identity-keeping. You are God's dear child. Live like it.

☑ Take the warnings seriously — Paul is blunt in verses 5–6: those who practice these things without repentance have no inheritance in the Kingdom. This is not legalism — it is love. A good father warns his children about real dangers.

☑ Don't be deceived by empty arguments — ***"Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins"*** (6). The culture will always offer sophisticated justifications for impurity. The child of God measures everything by the standard of Christ, not the consensus of the crowd.

Look at how Paul frames this section. He does not begin with a list of prohibitions. He begins with a positive identity statement — ***"you are His dear children"*** — and then says: **therefore, these things have no place among you.**

The Greek phrase Paul uses in **verse 3** is *"μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν*, — literally, *"let it not even be named among you."* Not just avoided. Not just minimized. Not even named.

Why such a high standard?

Because purity is not merely a moral preference. It is a testimony.

When the world looks at the church and sees the same patterns of sexual immorality, greed, and corrupt speech that characterize the culture around it — the gospel loses its credibility. But when the world sees a community of people who genuinely live differently — who guard their hearts, honor their bodies, and speak with grace — it raises an unavoidable question:

"What is different about these people?"

And that question is an open door for the gospel.

Takeaway: You are God's dear child. The same love that drove Christ to the cross is the love that now lives in you. Don't drag that love through the mud of the old life. Live worthy of the One who gave everything for you."

POINT II: Follow His Example By Living In The Light (Ephesians 5:8–14)

Shining Where the Darkness Is Deepest

Ephesians 5:8-14… ***8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So, live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. 12 It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. 13 But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, 14 for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."***

The Punch List — What Living in the Light Actually Looks Like:

☑ Remember the contrast — ***"Once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord"*** (v. 8). Paul does not say you were *in* a dark place. He says you were darkness. And he does not say you now have a little more light. He says you are light — *in the Lord.* You are not just *in* the light — you *are* light. The transformation is total, not partial.

☑ Let your life produce its fruit — ***"This light within you produces only what is good and right and true"*** (v. 9).

What is the Fruit of the Light =
Goodness. Righteousness. Truth.

Our job is not to manufacture fruit.

Our job is to stay in the light.

☑ Ask the Daily Question — ***"Carefully determine what pleases the Lord"*** (v. 10). This is an active, ongoing, deliberate process — not a one-time decision but a daily discipline of asking:

"DOES THIS PLEASE CHRIST?"

☑ Don't participate in darkness — expose it — ***"Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them"*** (v. 11).
Children of light do not blend into the shadows. Their very presence is a form of exposure — not through harsh judgment but through the quiet, convicting power of a holy life.

☑ Don't be a secret-keeper for sin — ***"It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret"*** (v. 12). Covering sin — in yourself or others — is not kindness. It is complicity.

☑ Wake up and stay awake — ***"Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light"*** (v. 14).
And then Paul quotes what scholars believe may be an early Christian baptismal hymn — perhaps the very song the Ephesian believers sang the day they were baptized (and possibly alluding to Isaiah 26:19 & 60:1,2)…
"Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Imagine hearing your own baptismal song quoted back to you from the pulpit. This was not abstract theology — it was their story. And it is yours.

The same voice that called Lazarus out of the tomb is calling you out of the shadows today. It is a call to any believer who has drifted back toward the shadows to wake up and return to the light.

Takeaway: Wake up. Step into the light. And shine.

POINT III: FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE BY LIVING IN WISDOM, WORSHIP & THANKFULNESS (Ephesians 5:15–21)

The Spirit-Filled Life Overflows Into Every Moment

Ephesians 5:1-6:9… *15 So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise.*
16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. 17 Don’t act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The Punch List — What Wisdom, Worship & Thankfulness Actually Look Like:

☑ Live carefully, not carelessly — *"Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise"* (v. 15). The wise believer does not drift through life — they navigate it deliberately, with eyes open to what God is doing.

☑ Redeem the time — *"Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days"* (v. 16). The Greek *exagorazo* means to buy up — like a merchant who recognizes a rare opportunity and seizes it before it passes. Every day is a non-renewable resource. Spend it wisely.

☑ Know what God wants — *"Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do"* (v. 17). Wisdom begins not with more information but with the right question: *"Lord, what do You want here?"*

☑ Be filled — and keep being filled — *"Be filled with the Holy Spirit"* (v. 18). Present tense. Passive voice. Plural. Keep on being filled — not a one-time event but a continuous, daily surrender to the Spirit's control.

The command *"be filled"* in the Greek is present tense, passive voice, and plural. That means three things:

- Present tense: This is not a one-time event. It is a continuous, ongoing, daily reality.
- Passive voice: You do not fill yourself. You surrender to be filled. You cannot fill a vessel that is already full of something else.
- Plural: This is not a private, individual experience. It is a community reality — the whole church, together, continuously surrendered to the Spirit's control.

☑ Let worship overflow — *"Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and make music to the Lord in your hearts"* (v. 19). The Spirit-filled life sings. Corporate worship is not a warm-up act — it is the natural overflow of a heart filled with the Spirit.

☑ Give thanks in everything — *"Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (v. 20). Not just for the good days. Everything. The Spirit-filled believer sees the hand of God even in difficulty.

☑ Submit to one another — *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ"* (v. 21). The Spirit-filled life is not self-asserting — it is self-giving. This verse is the hinge that opens every relationship that follows.

A ship's navigator does not simply point the bow toward the destination and walk away. He constantly checks the charts, adjusts for current and wind, and makes deliberate corrections. Paul says: that is how the wise believer navigates life.

Not drifting. Not reacting. Not stumbling from one moment to the next.

Carefully. Deliberately. Intentionally.
And what does the Spirit-filled life look like? Paul gives us three overflow channels:

- It overflows in worship — psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, music in the heart.
- It overflows in gratitude — giving thanks for everything, always, in the name of Christ.
- It overflows in submission — yielding to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Notice that Paul does not say the Spirit-filled life is characterized by dramatic spiritual experiences or extraordinary gifts. He says it is characterized by singing, thanksgiving, and mutual submission.

The most Spirit-filled person in the room may be the one who serves quietly, gives thanks genuinely, and yields graciously — day after day, in the ordinary moments of ordinary life.

"Don't seek the feeling of fullness. Seek the One who fills. Surrender every room of your life to His control — and let the overflow take care of itself."

POINT IV: FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE BY LIVING IN RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER (Ephesians 5:22–6:9)

The Spirit-Filled Life Walks Into Every Room

The Punch List —

What Right Relationships Actually Look Like: IN MARRIAGE (5:22–33):

22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the Head of the church. He is the Savior of His body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. 25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. 27 He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of His body. 31 As the Scriptures say,* "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." *(Gen. 2:24)

[32] This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. [33] So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

☑ Wives — respect and honor your husband — *"as to the Lord"* (v. 22). This is not a statement of inferiority but of order — the same order seen in the Trinity, where the Son submits to the Father without being less than the Father. It is voluntary, grace-motivated, and modeled on the church's relationship to Christ.

☑ Husbands — love your wife sacrificially — *"just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her"* (v. 25). The standard is not authority — it is sacrifice. The husband who demands submission without practicing sacrifice has fundamentally misread the text.

☑ Husbands — nourish and cherish — *"No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it"* (v. 29). The husband's love is not passive — it is actively nurturing, protecting, and investing in the flourishing of his wife.

☑ See your marriage as a living parable — *"This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one"* (v. 32). Your marriage is not merely a personal relationship — it is a public theology, a living sermon preached to your community every day.

IN THE FAMILY (6:1–4):

[1] Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. [2] "Honor your father and mother." **(Exodus 20:12 7 Deut. 5:16)** ***This is the first commandment with a promise: [3] If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth." [4] Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.***

☑ Children — obey your parents — *"because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do"* (v. 1). Obedience is not merely a social expectation — it is a spiritual act rooted in the Fifth Commandment, the first commandment with a promise.

☑ Children — honor, not just obey — Obedience is behavioral; honor is attitudinal. You can comply outwardly while dishonoring inwardly. God calls for both.

☑ Fathers — do not provoke your children — *"Don't make them angry by the way you treat them"* (v. 4). The father's responsibility is not just authority but atmosphere — creating a home environment where children can grow without being crushed.

☑ Fathers — bring them up in the Lord — *"Bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord"* (v. 4). The greatest gift a father gives his children is not financial security or educational opportunity — it is a living example of what it means to follow Christ.

In the Workplace (6:5–9):

☑ Work as unto the Lord — *"Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people"* (v. 7). Every task — however mundane, however unnoticed — becomes an act of worship when done for Christ.

☑ Bring integrity to every assignment — *"Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you"* (v. 6). The Christian worker is the same person whether the boss is in the room or not.

☑ Remember your ultimate employer — *"Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do"* (v. 8). Your paycheck comes from your employer; your reward comes from the Lord.

☑ Employers — treat people with dignity — *"Treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favorites"* (v. 9). Those in authority are not exempt from accountability. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Let's summarize this point with this chart

Every Relationship	The Standard	The Model
Marriage	**Sacrificial Love & Respect**	**Christ & the Church**
Family	**Obedience & Nurture**	**God & His Children**
Workplace	**Integrity & Dignity**	**Servant of Christ**

- Your marriage is preaching a sermon.
- Your parenting is preaching a sermon.
- The way you show up at work every morning is preaching a sermon.

The question is: What Is Your Relationship Saying?

- Is it saying that Christ makes a difference?
- That grace transforms relationships?
- That love is not merely a feeling but a daily, deliberate, sacrificial choice?

Or is it saying that Sunday and Monday are two different worlds — that what happens in the pew has no bearing on what happens in the home?

Paul says: let Christ be Lord of every room. Let the love that drove Him to the cross drive you to the kitchen table, the office desk, and the bedside of your child. That is what it looks like to follow the example of Christ and His love.

CONCLUSION & INVITATION

- In purity — guarding your heart, your words, and your witness
- In the light — shining with goodness, righteousness, and truth in a dark world
- In wisdom, worship, and thankfulness — living carefully, being filled continuously, overflowing in gratitude and song
- In right relationships — loving, honoring, serving, and submitting in every arena of life

To every believer: Which room needs Christ to walk into this week? Is it your marriage? Your relationship with your children? The way you show up at work? The words you speak when no one is watching? Bring that room to Him today. Open the door. Let the light in.

To anyone who has never trusted Christ: The love Paul describes — the love that drove Christ to the cross as a fragrant offering for our sins — that love is reaching toward you right now. You do not have to earn it. You do not have to clean yourself up first. Simply open your hands and receive it.

He is the example. He is the power. He is the life.

Follow Him.

(Closing Prayer)
"Father, we thank You for the staggering standard You have set before us — and for the staggering grace You have provided to meet it. We cannot imitate You in our own strength. But we can be filled with Your Spirit, rooted in Your love, and surrendered to Your lordship in every room of our lives. Take our marriages, our families, our workplaces — and make them living sermons of Your grace. In the name of Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us — a fragrant offering to You. Amen."

Full scripture passage follows

Ephesians 5:1-6:9... [1] *Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are His dear children.* [2] *Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.* [3] *Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people.* [4] *Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.* [5] *You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.* [6] *Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey Him.* [7] *Don't participate in the things these people do.* [8] *For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So, live as people of light!* [9] *For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.* [10] *Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.* [11] *Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them.* [12] *It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.* [13] *But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,* [14] *for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, "Awake, O sleeper,*
rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light."
[15] *So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise.* [16] *Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.* [17] *Don't act thoughtlessly but understand what the Lord wants you to do.* [18] *Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,*
[19] *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts.* [20] *And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* [21] *And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.* [22] *For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord.* [23] *For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the Head of the church. He is the Savior of His body, the church.* [24] *As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.* [25] *For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her* [26] *to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.* [27] *He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault.* [28] *In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself.* [29] *No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.* [30] *And we are members of His body.* [31] *As the Scriptures say,* "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." *(Gen. 2:24)* [32] *This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.* [33] *So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*
Chapter 6... [1] *Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.* [2] *"Honor your father and mother."* (Exodus 20:12 7 Deut. 5:16) *This is the first commandment with a promise:* [3] *If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."* [4] *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*
[5] *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ.* [6] *Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.* [7] *Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.* [8] *Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.* [9] *Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and He has no favorites.*