

FOUR CHOICES EVERY SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER SHOULD MAKE

EPHESIANS 5:18

As we open to Ephesians 5, God is offering to every believer in Christ's Church: the joys and delights of a Spirit-Filled Family. We are each a part of a family.

We are each given by God the power and prompting of the Holy Spirit, to transform every relationship in our lives. We are called and invited to be constantly transformed into more godly, submissive, winsome, and gracious: husbands, sons, and fathers; and wives, daughters, and mothers.

God wants to revolutionize every relationship in each of our lives. He does that through the simple truth of Ephesians 5:18. Spirit-Filled relationships in our families flow from Ephesians 5:18.

All our relationships are shaped by the godly choices we can now make as grace partaking sons and daughters of God. Spirit-filled believers understand that:

Grace Does Not Demand: Grace Offers and Waits

Yes, grace means that God does not demand: He offers.

God has offered to each of us the power of His Spirit to shape every relationship in our personal lives, our marriages, and our families.

God asks each of us to be tools for His Glory in the lives of all we know and touch. How are you doing at staying filled with the Spirit? Please stand with me as we read our passage this morning. Ephesians 5:18-6:1.

Ephesians 5:18-6:1 (NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit**, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 **submitting to one another** in the fear of God. 22 **Wives**, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. 25 **Husbands**, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse

her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects *her* husband. 6:1 **Children**, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Following the Spirit's plan, as laid down in His Word is the key to unleashing the power of Spirit-Energized Parenting. Lesson one:

Point One: God Offers us Spirit-Empowered & Transformed Relationships

From Ephesians 5:18 onward are the evidences of the Spirit filling our lives.

The Holy Spirit wants to transform every relationship in our lives.

- First, every believer is to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart in Eph. 5:21;
- Then, in Eph. 5:22 wives are to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart;
- Then, in Eph. 5:25 husbands are to be transformed by a Spirit-prompted submissive heart;
- Finally, in Eph. 6:1-4 the Spirit of God wants to transform: fathers and children.

Every relationship in life is magnificently altered, by surrendering to the Spirit-Filled Life. So, point one is, God offers us Spirit-Empowered and Transformed Relationships.

The next truth we should notice is:

Point Two: God Gives Us Portraits of Spirit-Filled Families in His Word

The Biblical Family is not subjective. It isn't up for discussion. God has given His pattern. He has clearly expressed His desires. We are left with the choice to respond and become instruments that carry out His plan.

Remember, God's plan works even when your husband, wife, children, or parents are NOT in step with His will. Let me repeat that: ***God's plan works even when your husband, wife, children, or parents are NOT in step with His will.***

In our Bibles we see a wife that is never said to be in agreement with her godly husband. In fact the only words Mrs. Job is remembered as saying is why don't you "curse God and die". That doesn't sound like a Spirit-filled wife or mother. Maybe that is why Job prayed so much. **God's plan works even when your husband, wife, children, or parents are NOT in step with His will.**

We see that Samuel as a dad was a sensitive and godly servant of the Lord, yet his children were not in step following the Lord. The same is true about David, Noah, and many other families we see described in God's Word. **God's plan works even when your husband, wife, children, or parents are NOT in step with His will.**

Another great family in God's Word was spiritually led by a mom married to a lost, and pagan husband. Timothy's mom Lois and grandmother Eunice were believers but Timothy's dad was not. Look how God used that godly mom and grandmother to produce one of the First Century's finest missionary pastor. **God's plan works even when your husband, wife, children, or parents are NOT in step with His will.**

All we are asked to do is personally respond to God's plan. He does not force us. God invites us. Once we "log on" to His power through the Spirit, He fills us, leads us, and empowers us to be all He designed us to be.

So what should we look for? Good choices that show up in the great dads of God's Word!

First, as we turn to the Book of Job, what is the key truth about Job, the godly dad? Job was a man of prayer.

Point Three: God Explains the Choices that Spirit-Filled Believers Make

Job is our first portrait of what a Spirit-Filled believer and parent chooses to do: they allow the Holy Spirit to empower their life and home.

From Job's life we can see choices that allowed God to transform his family; and by the power of God's Spirit we can also choose to start making these choices characteristic of our life!

Here are the choices Job made, and that all Spirit-Prompted family members can also make.

Choice #1: Spirit-Filled Believers Are Given to Godly Praying Like Job

What is the key truth about Job, the godly dad? Job was a man of prayer.

The Book of Job is perhaps the oldest book in the world. It is also perhaps the clearest

view into the spirit world, the spiritual side of parenting and the cosmic proportion of conflicts we face as we parent and lead as dads. Look at Job 1:5:

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." **Thus Job did regularly.** (NKJV)

Notice this section is called "given to prayer". That term is well defined in the NT. Look with me for a moment at Acts 6:4.

How to Cultivate Spirit-Filled Praying

In just eight words, the disciples summed up everything Jesus taught them about: prayer, priorities, and in just seven more words, the basis for the entire ministry of the Gospel.

For anyone who is involved in ministry: this is our priority and starting place. The Lord tells us what should be the first place we go each day in ministry. For all of us, the true source of power for lasting ministry is defined here.

Please read along in your Bibles with me this verse, Acts 6:4. Join me standing to revere the Word, and with a heart to hear from God, please do something that will drill this verse down deep into your heart: right where you're standing, look down and slowly, deliberately and softly read this verse, emphasizing each word.

Acts 6:4 (NKJV) but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

What was the most important lesson, drawn from 3 1/2 years with Christ? The necessity of clinging to a daily lifestyle of prayer and the Word.

- First the grammar of this word: this verb used speaks of what the action of prayer, that God desires, looks like: **proskartereo** is a future, active, indicative meaning, "from now on we will not stop doing this"¹.
- Second the meaning of this word: this word used by the Apostles, was chosen by the Spirit (used 10x in the New Testament), and means: "to stick, adhere, persevere in constant readiness". I like to think of this as super-glue. Jesus taught them to stick to these two things: prayer and the ministry of the Word.

¹ Other uses in the New Testament are: Mark 3:9, keep the boat on hand for Christ; Acts 1:14, for prayer in the Upper Room; Acts 2:42 for the early church's desire for prayer and fellowship; also Acts 8:13, 10:7, 12:12, 13:6; and Col. 4:2 devote to prayer.

- Third, note the priority: prayer comes first. We stick to the habit of praying first, before all else; and we persevere, glued to prayer, given to prayer, constantly seeking God's power.

Can we learn something about how to allow the Spirit to empower our prayers for our families from Job's life? Yes, some powerful habits he had. There are five distinct elements of Job's parenting habits. You may want to even note these in your Bibles.

1. Spirit-Filled Prayers Follow the Lives of our Families

Job prayerfully followed the daily life of his children. Note the words, "when the days of feasting".

Job 1:5 **So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course**, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

He knew what was going on in his children's lives.

He knew their cycle of house visits, parties, their gatherings, and so on.

He was in touch on a daily basis with where they were and where they were headed.

He followed his children around in his heart because he had a godly concern and love for them. ARE YOU FOLLOWING YOUR CHILDRENS LIVES?

You and I will never pray effectively for those who are not regularly on our hearts. Do you jot notes on areas to remember to pray for in their lives? Do you have a list of their challenges, that you ask them about, that you pray for, and that you check with them about?

Start praying for someone regularly, and then ask them about those areas, and the most frequent response from them is: amazement. Most people can't believe we remember and care. So, make the choice today to prayerfully track with the lives of those you love in consistent prayer. Secondly:

2. Spirit-Filled Prayers for Sanctification in our families

Job prayerfully sought the personal consecration of each member of his family.

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, **that Job would send and sanctify them**, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly.

(NKJV)

Note the words, "Job would send and sanctify them". This speaks of his high priestly role at the head of his family. He went to God seeking their purity before the Lord.

In a practical way dads, it is you that needs to know well your boys and girls so that you can stand with them in prayer, seeking their sanctification. Sanctification is a big word for being useful to the Lord. As dads, we need to pray, seek, and ask the Lord to make our children instruments He can use. That is our constant prayer.

It is a godly dad, who prays constantly for his children, that needs to tell them when they are out of line, when they are immodest, when they are heading toward sin and so on!

We are as Paul said in Ephesians 5, to seek the sanctification of those we love, through God's Word! We should care about our family member's spiritual status and be prayerfully seeking their growth toward Christlikeness. Do you pray regularly for the personal sanctification work of God in your family member's lives?

In the middle of v. 5 we see another truth about godly prayers:

3. Spirit-Filled Prayers Intercede for Family Members

Job prayerfully offered himself to God as an intercessor for his family, before God.

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, **and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all.** For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

It wasn't talk it was work! Have you ever offered yourself to God as an intercessor? Prayer is much like holding something for someone you love. You just make sure that you guard it. Next:

3. Spirit-Filled Prayers are offered from God's Perspective

Note the words "in their hearts". He was so vitally concerned about their inner spiritual life that he cried out to God for them. Have you started doing this?

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. **For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts."** Thus Job did regularly. (NKJV)

Job was so aware of the constant pressure of the world, the flesh and the devil. He

wanted pure children, holy families and strong worshipers of God Almighty. So he was looking over the lives of his family members trying to see them from the inside out.

What a challenge, what an opportunity, what an encouragement this can be dads. Sometimes we just need to look at them, as they will be instead of only as they are.

Remember God says we are seated with Christ. That is our future glorified condition. And He relates to us on that basis. Never overlooking sin, but always seeing us, as we shall be by His grace. Finally:

4. Spirit-Filled Prayers are Never to Quit

He was a great and godly dad because he kept on. It wasn't just when they were little. He prayed through their growing years and never stopped.

You know the key to success in any endeavor is to get started and not quit.

Job 1:5 So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings [according to] the number of them all. For Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." **Thus Job did regularly.** (NKJV)

"Continually" He started following their lives. He started to offer prayers for his family as their intercessor, and wouldn't stop. He was ready for the unexpected death of his children. He prepared them for it every day!

A Godly parent, full of the Spirit, and in tune with the Scriptures will: know his children deeply, personally and directly; get involved in making sure they keep pure; stands ready to seek their repentance and restoration; looks at heart attitudes; and won't stop!

How to Get Started with Spirit-Filled Praying for Those we Love

We have a biblical obligation to pray for those that we love in our families.

There is a tiny pocket-sized card in the rack at the Media Center, and also a full-sized booklet of the same material as what I am sharing with you now.

It is in every visitor gift bag, it is posted as a printable PDF on our Calvary website called: "How to Pray for Those you Love".

Here is why we should allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to pray:

Listen to Samuel in 1 Samuel 12:23 (NKJV)

"Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but teach you the good and the right way.

Here are the types of things we as Spirit-filled believers are asked by God to pray for:

Praying for Spiritual Reality in Their Lives

1. We must pray for Spiritual Reality in the lives of those we love:

Spiritual Reality starts when we see them genuinely SAVED. Acts 26:18 (NKJV) to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' (NKJV)

Spiritual Reality continues when we see them loving God's Word. Job 23:12 (NKJV) I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary [food.]

Spiritual Reality also involves seeing them living in Victory. John 8:32, 36 (NKJV) "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Spiritual Reality also involves seeing them thinking of Heaven. Colossians 3:1-2 (NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Spiritual Reality also involves seeing them Finding Sin Repulsive. Psalm 38:18 (NKJV) For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

Spiritual Reality also involves seeing them stay tender towards God. Psalm 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart -- These, O God, You will not despise. (NKJV)

Please stand, and invite God's Spirit to start filling your life with Spirit –prompted prayers: "Spirit of the Living God Fall Fresh on Me"