TODD FULL TO FAIL
IDENTITY THEFT REBOOT
Ephesians 5:27-6:9 // Craig Smith
February 19, 2017

CRAIG: Hey, good morning. Hey, before we jump into God’s word this morning, I’m aware there’s a special birthday we need to acknowledge. Jackie Verstraten [sp] where are you? I know you’re here. Am I missing her? Jackie, and you had a couple of your daughters with you, would you guys all stand up and just let us say happy birthday to you? Thank you. So if you don’t know Jackie, then you’re missing out. But Jackie and her husband were on staff here. Her husband was one of the senior pastors, one of my predecessors here. It’s been a few years. But so grateful for the work that they did in pouring into the foundations of the church here. So I just wanted to say happy birthday there.

Hey, if you’ve got your Bible, why don’t you go ahead and jump with me to Ephesians 5? If you don’t have a Bible, please grab one of the ones from the seatbacks in front of you. We’re going to jump straight into it this morning with no preamble. In part, because we actually have a pretty large section of scripture to deal with this morning. We’re actually going to be looking at 5:17 all the way down to 6:9. You might look at that and go, “Well, why didn’t we break that up into a couple of messages?” The answer is, because this whole section of text really revolves around one central idea.

While it’s very common to break this up and to focus on specific bits of it, I’m afraid that the more that we do that, the more we lose sight of the one clear idea that God has planted here. Because that’s God’s idea, I don’t want to do anything that takes the focus off that. So we’re going to be looking at this whole chunk of material and seeing how it holds together. Paul begins in Verse 17 with a very clear idea. He says, “Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” That’s two sides of the same coin. What he’s saying there is really one idea. He’s saying, “Don’t be foolish, because if you’re foolish, you don’t understand the Lord’s will. On the other hand, if you understand the Lord’s will, then you’re not foolish by definition.”

But I want you to underline the word “understand.” If you’ve got a physical Bible in front of you where you can, underline the word “understand,” because that’s the key word. He doesn’t say “learn the Lord’s will.” He doesn’t say “find out the Lord’s will.” He says “understand,” and that word means “grasp the implications of.” What he’s really saying here is, “Something you already know, I want you to get a hold of it and be able to use it. I want you to understand what this actually means.” He assumes that we already know what the Lord’s will is, that we’ve already discovered it, and that’s been very clear throughout the book of Ephesians up to this point.

The Lord’s will, as described in the book of Ephesians, is that God wants to draw his people together as the church. He wants to draw his people together as the church, and then he wants to use the church to announce to the world his agenda of reconciliation. But that’s what God is all about. He’s about bringing people to himself. He brings his people together as the church, and then the church becomes kind of the billboard that announces to the world, “This is what God is doing. He’s drawing people together.” That’s the agenda.

Now, what Paul says is, “Don’t become foolish. Don’t lose sight of that. But instead, remember or understand what the Lord’s will is. Begin to see what this means in practice.” See, the problem is, ever since sin entered into the world, our natural tendency is not to come together. Our natural tendency is actually separate. Since sin entered the world, this is what people look like. We go every which way. Right? By the way, you may not be able to see them, but these are little emoji balls. I found these on Amazon. I ordered a giant box of them. It came and my kids were like, “Why do you have like 1,000 emoji balls?” I was like, “Well, it’s for a sermon.” They just went, “You have the weirdest job.”

But see, this is our natural tendency. It’s not to clump together. It’s to separate. That’s what sin does. But what Paul is saying
God’s agenda is, is to draw the church together and keep the church together so that we can accomplish God’s purpose. What
he’s saying is we’re supposed to come together. The problem is, because our natural tendency to separate, the only way for us to
come together is if there’s something unnatural, something supernatural that pulls us into unity of some kind. So the question
is, what is this? What is this thing that draws us together that allows us to overcome our natural tendencies toward separation?

He goes on in Verse 18, and he says exactly what it is. He says, “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. But
instead, be filled with the Spirit.” The Spirit is the supernatural thing that draws us together. But he begins by saying, “Don’t get
filled with wine.” Now, if you get filled with wine, you get what? Drunk. So one obvious application and a lot of people immediate-
ly go there, is to say that Christians should not get drunk. That’s true. But that’s not what Paul is saying. That’s not his point.

His point is, “Hey, to the church in Ephesus, you kind of know what drunkenness looks like,” and they do. The church in Ephesus
was part of a city that was familiar with and famous for their festivals in honor of the Greek god Bacchus, who was the god
of wine. Ephesus was famous for their festivals honoring the god of wine and as you can imagine, honoring the god of wine
involved drinking a lot of wine. So Ephesus was very familiar with drunkenness, and what Paul is doing is he’s calling on their
familiarity with drunkenness to make a point about the kind of living that we should be having.

He says, “Don’t be filled with wine, because that leads to debauchery.” Now, that’s not a common word. Like I don’t know when
the last time you heard the word “debauchery” was. But my guess is, it has not been frequent in your life. So let me explain what
debauchery means. It means to burn through resources and have nothing to show for it. Does that make sense? If you think
about it, wine tends to do that. I don’t typically drink when I go out to dinner, mainly because it’s incredibly expensive. I always
look at the wine list and I’m always like, “Seriously, people pay that per glass? That’s as much as I’m going to spend on the
whole meal. That’s crazy.”

So I understand that drinking wine is resource dependent. It consumes a lot of resources. But at the end of the day, what do you
have to show for it? The answer is, an empty glass, apparently. This is what drunkenness does. Anybody who’s ever been to col-
lege has observed this. Right? Kind of wild living that burns through resources, but at the end of the day it has nothing to show
for it. So what Paul is saying, he says, “You’re familiar with living in such a way that everything kind of spreads out and fades
away.” Paul says, “That’s what we want. Instead of being filled with wine which leads to..., be filled with the Spirit which leads to...
Okay. The Spirit will draw us together. The Spirit will enable us to accomplish God’s purpose for us.”

He says, “You’re in luck. The Spirit is available to you. The Holy Spirit of God, the third-person eternity, longs to fill you up so that
you can expend God’s resources in a way that accomplish God’s purpose. All you have to do is be filled with the Holy Spirit.” We
go, “That sounds great. How do I do that?” How many of you have ever heard the commandment, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit?”
How many of you have ever gone, “I have no idea how to do that? Yeah. It sounds great. But we’re not really sure what... Does it
mean I walk... Like, how do I do that? Do I take deep breaths? What happens?”

Well, Paul goes on to explain exactly how to be filled by the Holy Spirit. He gives a series of instructions that really explain what it
looks like to put ourselves in a place where that can happen. We’ve often missed them, because most English translations trans-
late them as commands. There’s a whole series of commands in most English translations, and there’s perfectly good reason for
doing that. But it sometimes misses the point, which is what Paul is really doing is he’s explaining how to do this one command.
“Be filled with the Spirit,” is the one big idea. It’s the one command that the whole passage revolves around.
What I want to do here, is I want to kind of show you how the passage fits together, and then we’ll walk through the pieces. One command that centers around the whole passage, “Be filled with the Spirit,” and then he says, “Here’s one of the ways you do it. By corporate worshipping, by individual worshipping, by persistent thanksgiving, and by mutual submitting.” Now, there’s a reason I put an “-ing” at the end of each one of these, and that is because the Greek words here are not commands. They’re participles. How many of you r-... Do you remember participles in English? You’re lying. You do not. But thanks for playing along. Right?

A participle is usually an “-ing” word. So we might say something like this, “Win the Olympics by swimming, by running, by throwing.” Each of those really explains how to do the one thing. In the same way, what Paul says is, “Be filled with the Spirit by each of these things.” Then, he explains... [Well, he] gives some examples of what it looks like to do this mutual submitting. He talks about wives and husbands. He talks about children and parents. He talks about masters and servants. That’s how the passage fits together. It’s all one sort of explanation for what it means or what it looks like, what it takes to be filled with the Spirit.

Really, what he gives us is four taps, four places we need to screw our hose onto if we’re going to be filled by the Spirit. Now, these are not buffet options. You’re not supposed to go, “Well, I think I’ll do that one.” No, no. He says, “You’ve got to pay attention to all four of these. If you’re missing any of these, you’re never going to be able to experience the full power of the Holy Spirit.” So he begins to walk through what those look like. He says in Verse 19, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, or spiritual songs.” Those are all words that were used to describe worship music.

Now, people have tried over the years to maybe try to find significance of each separate term, and I really don’t think that’s what Paul is trying to say. He’s just basically saying, “Speak to one another with worship songs and worship tunes.” There’s no separate significance. He’s just using all the words. He says, “Basically, when you’re together as the body of Christ, worship your God together by music.” That’s what he’s saying. But remember why he’s saying it. He’s saying it, because that’s one of the ways that we become filled by the Spirit. Why is that? Because worship invites the presence of God. Do you hear me?

Worship invites the presence of God. God loves when his people gather to worship. When his people gather to worship, he comes in a particular and a unique way. Psalm 22:3, and I still think the best way to translate this is, “God is the holy one who is enthroned upon the praises of Israel.” He’s enthroned in the praises of Israel and the sense is that where God’s people are giving praise, he rests in a powerful way. God’s attracted to worship. Jesus himself, Matthew 18, said, “Whenever two or more are gathered in my name,” what? “I’m with them. I’m present with them,” and the Holy Spirit is the means by which God demonstrates that he’s present.

So worship attracts the presence of God. So he says, “When you’re together as a body of Christ, speak to one another with psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs.” Now, when he says “speak to one another,” he’s not saying that when we talk to each other in the lobby we’re supposed to make our conversation full of quotes of worship music. That would be super-awkward. No. What he’s just saying is, “Speak amongst yourselves.” He’s focusing in on the group aspect of it. Communicate with one another. Sing among yourselves, songs and hymns, and spiritual songs that hopefully not only have good tunes, but also have good content, content that speaks truth about who God is and lodges that in our minds as the week continues on.

But he says, “When you’re together, worship God together.” That’s what I mean by corporate worshipping. The problem is you cannot have authentic corporate worship, unless you also have authentic individual worship. So he moves next to the worship of the individual and he says this, “Singing and making music from your heart to the Lord.” He says, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit by singing and making music from your heart to the Lord.” You notice there’s two shifts there. First, there’s a shift from the group, “among yourselves,” to “from the heart.” What he’s saying is, “This is about what’s going on in the individual that makes up the crowd.”
But you also notice that he shifts his focus from the external to the internal. Right? He says, “It’s got to be from the heart,” which is another way of saying, “It’s got to be real. It’s got to be authentic.” What he’s really saying is this, “There’s a big difference between singing worship songs and worshipping by singing songs.” You with me? Huge difference between singing worship songs and worshipping God by singing songs. He says, “It’s got to be from the heart.” Because if it’s not authentic as an individual experience of worship, the crowd worship doesn’t mean anything. It’s just loud.

So he says, “We’ve got to do it as individuals.” Which means that each one of us has a responsibility for creating a context when we come together in which the Holy Spirit is drawn to our worship. Let me tell you the four things that I’ve learned about worship over the years. Number one is this, body language matters. That the hardest body position to worship from is this one. “I can’t believe we’re doing this song again.” It’s really hard to worship from this position. The position of our bodies either encourages authentic worship, or it discourages it. It’s just a fact.

Now, this is a Baptist church. I’m not sure that all of you know that. Because I saw a lot of you, like in worship a little while ago, you were doing this, and we don’t do that here. No. I’m kidding. I’m kidding. Okay? I love when you do that. I love that, because here’s the thing, I didn’t grow up in circles that did a lot of really expressive worship. So it’s not inherently natural for me. But one of the things I’ve discovered over the last few years is that something happens in me when I actually lift my hand. It actually opens up worship for me and somehow, I’m more fully engaging in it. I’m just saying, my body language matters.

This is a hard place to worship from. This is easier. For me, at least, there’s something powerful that happens even in doing this. The second thing I’ve learned about worship over the years is that trying often precedes doing. Trying precedes doing. Trying to worship often sets the stage for actually worshipping. We don’t want worship that’s just a show. We don’t want people just going through the motions. But sometimes, you have to begin the process before you actually get to the conclusion. It’s always a little bit weird to me that we have a countdown timer that lets people know when we’re going to start. Because it’s kind of like at a certain point you’re like, “Three, two, one, worship.” Right?

Maybe you’re not ready. I’m often not ready. Like it hits and I’m like, “Whoa. Worship is happening,” and I’m not in the place to worship. My heart is not there. My mind is not there. I’m not focused in. Yet, what I find is that when I begin to sing the song, even though I’m not quite there, I find myself much quicker moving to a place of authentic worship, because I’ve begun trying to worship and trying often precedes doing. You might hear a song and you’re like, “I don’t know this song. So I can’t worship to this song, because I don’t know it.” But you know what? Try.

We start trying to worship and we find, “You know? Actually, I’m doing okay,” and nobody is turning around and saying, “Hey, you’re doing this wrong.” I don’t think that’s going to happen here. You’d have to really mess it up to get somebody to turn around and go, “You’re totally blowing this worship thing.” So even if you don’t know the song, go ahead and start singing it, because trying precedes doing. Which leads me to the third thing, which is this. My worship affects our worship, and I don’t mean me as the pastor. I mean, me as an individual believer, me as a follower of Jesus.

When I am in a congregation, what I find is that my worship affects the people around me and their worship affects the people around them, which ultimately ripples through the whole place. If I’m in worship like this, it’s really hard for the woman next to me to be into worship. Because she’s like, “What’s going on over there?” and it’s affecting [inaudible 00:16:59]. On the other hand, I’ve been in some worship settings where people around me were singing, and I’ve got to be honest. They had no business singing. They’re so far away from pitch-perfect that it’s not even funny. But they were so loud that it’s like, “Are you not aware how bad you are at this?”

Here’s the irony. When I’m around people like that, that does not detract from my worship. It actually encourages me to do it more. I think about, I have a couple of nieces, and they’ve gotten a lot better now, but when they were really young, pitch was not their strongest gift. But volume was. They would walk around my house and they would sing. I mean, at the moment, it was like “Frozen” songs. Remember “Frozen”? “Let It Go”, right? I’m still hoping we’ll let it go at some point. They would walk around
singing these songs at the top of their lungs, and my wife and I would be in our bedroom going, “This is hilarious.”

Because not only were they not the notes of the song, but they weren’t even on the same notes of each other. It was just like random notes. But the thing is, there was so much joy in listening to them that it kind of made you want to sing. It made you want to join in, and the same thing happens in worship. You don’t have to be a great singer. But step it up. You’re not going to have people turning around going, “No.” You’re going to find that your willingness to engage in worship affects the people around you. The reality is that you have the ability to positively or negatively impact the authentic worship of this whole body.

The fourth thing I’ve learned is this, that our worship affects the presence of the Holy Spirit. As we said, God is attracted to authentic worship. Authentic worship attracts the presence of God. When there is a lack of authentic worship, the power of the Holy Spirit is simply not present in the same way as when there is powerful, authentic worship. I’ve seen it in church after church, after church around the country. I can go into a church and I can watch the worship, and I can immediately tell whether or not this is a Spirit-filled church. I can.

It’s always confirmed after the fact, after the music is done, when I’m hanging out with people. I can tell whether or not there is real life of God going on in that place. It’s not just the music. The music signals something else. So the reality is that authentic worship matters. Paul says, “Be filled with the Spirit by corporate worshipping, which is only possible by individual worshipping.” These are two of the taps that we use to plug into [to seek] to be filled by the power of the Holy Spirit. But then he moves on to a very different one. He says, “Always giving thanks to God, the Father, for everything in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.” He says, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit by persistent thanksgiving, by always giving thanks.”

Why? We’ve touched on this in the past, and I don’t want to belabor it. But it’s an important theme in scripture that thankfulness is often a sense point in our relationship with God. Thankfulness or the lack of it is often the thing that determines whether or not we are really experiencing the presence of God in our lives, because he’s a good father. I mean, as a father, I know and many of you know that when you give your children a gift, and if their response is to snatch it up and go, “What else do you got for me?” you’re like, “I’ve got nothing else. In fact, I’m taking that one back.” Right.

On the other hand, when our children are truly grateful, we want to shower more gifts upon them, and God is the same way. Understand, it’s not because God says, “Oh, you said thank you, therefore I have to give you something else.” It’s because the heart that says thankful, the heart that is persistently, consistently grateful is a heart that will not hoard blessings. It is a heart that will pour out blessings as they’re received. Do you hear me? Thankfulness signals that I am the kind of person that when God blesses me, I will bless others as I have been blessed. That’s the kind of person that God is looking to build us to be.

So thankfulness sets the stage for greater blessing. Don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying that if you are thankful for you job, God will give you a better job or a better salary. I’m not saying that. It’s not a formula. What I am saying is, if you are not thankful for the job that God has provided to you, don’t expect God to give you a better one or to give you a pay raise. It may not be a one-to-one, “If you do this, you’ll get this.” But it’s very often the case that if you are not a grateful person, you should not be expecting more blessing from God. Because the person who says, “This is not enough,” is the person who says, “I don’t have enough to bless others.”

With me? So Paul says, “persistent gratefulness.” Persistent thankfulness is one of the ways that we plug into, we tap into the Holy Spirit. Then, he moves on and he says this, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” or literally, by submitting, you can be filled with the Holy Spirit, by submitting to one another. Here’s where it gets interesting. Here’s where we begin to deal with some instructions that are not terribly popular in the modern world. He’s going to say some things like, “Wives are to submit to their husbands. Children are to submit to their parents. Servants are to submit to their masters,” and our natural inclination is not to do that.

So we immediately begin to resist what we know is coming in this passage. But there’s a couple of things I want you to be aware
of before we get into the details. Number one, understand that what Paul is going to say here is actually that submission is a mutual exercise. He’s talking about mutual submission, not the submission of this person or that person. But the submission of this person or that person, who is also submitting to this person in a two-way street. He’s talking about two-way submission. He actually does something here that’s unheard of in the ancient world.

In the ancient world, there was a thing that we call “Haustafeln”, or Household Codes, in which people like Aristotle would say, “Here’s how wives should act. Here’s how children should act. Here’s how slaves should act.” Very common. Paul follows the same model. He says, “Here’s what wives should do. Here’s what children should do. Here’s what slaves should do.” But Paul does something that is absolutely unheard of in the ancient world.

After he says, “Wives should do this,” he goes, “Okay. Now, let’s talk about what husbands are supposed to do, because it’s a two-way street.” He says, “Children are to do this,” and then he goes, “Let’s talk about what parents are supposed to do, because it’s a two-way street. Slaves are supposed to do this. But here’s what the masters are supposed to do, because it’s a two-way street.” It’s mutual submission. I’ve had people argue with me that mutual submission misses the point. I actually had a guy tell me once that the concept of mutual submission was a weasel concept.

He said, “You’re using weasel words. You’re trying to get out of it.” I’m not using weasel words. If I’m using weasel words, then they’re God’s words. You see what he says? “Submitting to one another.” It’s a two-way street. In fact, I’m going to go a little bit further and I’m going to say this, that if we miss the fact that it’s a two-way street, we not only fail to put ourselves in a place to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but we actually do incredible damage.

I’m going to say it this way. Insistence on one-way submission is oppression. Do you hear me? Insisting on one-way submission is oppression, and it’s not what God is talking about here. What he does is he gives a series of examples, beginning with the person we would most expect to submit. But then, he moves on to the other person in the relationship and he says, “and here’s what your submission looks like.” It looks different. The different people’s submission to one another looks different depending on their roles, but it is two-way. He begins with husbands and wives.

He says, in Verse 22, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the savior. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” It’s fun, right? Everybody feel entirely comfortable right now? Of course, not. I realize that the plain meaning of the text here is not popular in the world today. It’s not politically correct, and we struggle with it in the church.

But I’m going to be honest. I don’t understand how to read this in any other way than Paul was saying that the wife is under the authority of the husband, and then she is to submit to it. She is to respond to it out of respect. That the husband is the authority figure in the marriage. I don’t know how to read it any other way. I mean, I’ve read a lot of people try, and I just think they’re stretching it in ways that are just very unnatural to the text. Wives are to submit to their husbands, because the husband is the authority. The husband is the head of the household. I realize that’s not popular. But it’s what God says. But it’s not all that God says.

He goes on and he says, “Now, let’s talk to the husbands,” and at this point the husbands should be getting nervous. Because what he has to say to husbands is harder, honestly. He says, “Husbands, love your wives.” That’s not the hard part. He says, “Love your wives in this way, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” You understand, this is the essence of submission. Submission says, “I’m looking out for your good, not my own. I’m sacrificing for your sake.” That’s what submission means, and it’s two-way.

He says, “Husbands, love your wives in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word. And to present her to himself as a radiant church without
stain or wrinkle, or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” He’s saying, “Listen. Husbands, you’re to love your wives in the same way Christ loved the church.” Christ loved the church to the point of death, sacrificing in order to bring her good, to bring her to God, to turn her into what God designed her to be. That’s what he did for the church, and you’re supposed to love your wife in the same way.

Verse 28, “In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, because you’re one flesh. After all, no one ever hated their own body. But they feed and care for their body just as Christ does the church. We are members of his body. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother, and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. You can’t separate them. This is a profound mystery. But I’m talking about Christ and the church.” He’s saying that the marriage relationship and Christ’s relationship with the church are so closely intertwined that we just kind of move back and forth.

When as husbands, we see what Jesus did for the church, we see how we’re supposed to care for our wives. The world sees the way that we love our wives, and in that they begin to get a glimpse of how much Christ is willing to sacrifice for them if they’re part of the church. However, each one of you must also love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. He’s talking about mutual submission. He’s talking about both parties in the marriage being willing to sacrifice in order to seek the good of the other.

Wives are to submit to the authority of their husbands in the marriage. But husbands are to make it possible for her to do that by loving them in such a way that they know that the husbands have their good in mind. Really, what happens here, and we see it not only in the husband/wife relationship, we see it also in the children/parents, and master/servants, what we see is that the one with the greater positional authority in the relationship has the greater relational responsibility. Don’t miss that. Consistently [in the past], we see that the one with the greater positional authority has the greater relational responsibility. It’s only by exercising that responsibility faithfully that we create the situation where the mutual submission is possible.

My wife submits to me, and I bet you’re wondering, “What does that look like?” Anybody? It means that if we ever disagree on something, and we talk about everything, but if we ever come to the point where I go, ‘This is what we need to do,” and she disagrees, her response is, “Okay. I trust you. That’s what we’re going to do and I’m going to be 100% supportive of it with our kids, with everybody. I am on board with that, even though I don’t necessarily agree with it.” Now, I can’t think of a time in our marriage where that’s ever happened. Because I’ve loved her, I’ve tried to love her in such a way that her opinions matter.

When she is totally opposed to something, I feel like I need to understand why. A lot of times, I find out I’m missing something important, which modifies what I think we need to do. But I also know that at the end of the day, if we do truly come to a disagreement, she is going to support it. She’s not going to backtalk. She’s not going to undermine me with my kids or anybody else. But she can only do that, because she knows that I have her best interests in mind. Listen. No wife will ever really struggle to submit to the authority of a husband who has loved her in this way. You hear me?

No wife who’s really been loved in the way that Paul is talking by a husband who is willing to make incredible sacrifices for her good and for her benefit, is ever going to really struggle to submit to that husband. It’s mutual submission. It’s not easy. But it is one of the ways that we put ourselves in a position to be filled by the Holy Spirit. If we don’t get this right in our marriages, we as individuals and we as families, and we as a church will not be fully experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit.

He goes on to another example. He says, “Children, obey your parents and the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and your mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise, “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth. Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord.” Again, it’s a plain text. It’s a plain meaning. He says, “Children, you’re under the authority of your parents and you need to accept that. You need to respect that. You need to submit to that.”
Then, he turns the tables and he says, “Parents, don’t exasperate your children.” Let’s be honest. That’s a lot harder. Right? Let’s take a little survey. How many of you remember at some point in your life being told by one of your parents, “Because I said so?” Okay. Almost all of us. So the next question. How many of you remember when they said, “Because I said so,” you went, “Oh, okay?” No? Because that’s exasperating. Being told, “This is what’s going to happen,” without helping them understand why creates frustration. Frustration creates anger. Anger creates rebellion.

Which means that we need to talk to our kids. When we make a decision as parents, listen, we’re parents. Our job is not to be our kids’ best friend. Our kids don’t need another friend. They need a father. They need a mother. They need someone who can lead them in the ways of the Lord. They need someone who can show them what that looks like. Our job is not to win their approval. But there’s a big difference between trying to win their approval and trying to help them understand. I mean, we made it a policy in our family early on that we would talk to our kids, and when they asked something and we said no, we would explain why.

We would help them understand what principles were in play in our decision, what it is about our understanding of God and his word that led us to that decision. We did something. I didn’t think it was all that weird, but I’ve come to understand that it’s a little unusual. We let them talk back. I don’t mean talk back. I mean, converse with us. Sometimes they would say, “Yeah. But I don’t think you thought about this.” You know what? A lot of times. But quite a few times, they would say, “Yeah. But I don’t think your decision reflects this,” and we would go, “Shoot. You’re right.”

In our heads, we’re like, “Yeah. We didn’t think about that. That kind of changes things,” and we’ve got two options at that point. “Because I said so,” or, “You know, what I said was wrong, I made a mistake. Yeah. I didn’t think about that. Now that you’ve brought that up, now that I’m thinking about it, yeah, I think it makes sense to change the decision.” We’ve done that several times over the years. You know what I discovered about parenting, probably the most important lesson I learned about parenting? Admitting I was wrong and changing my mind did not diminish my authority as a father. It increased it.

I’m pretty [confident of] this, because I talked about this last night on the way home with my youngest daughter, Linay [sp]. I said, “Hey, how do you think we did with that whole not exasperating our kids?” She goes, “You guys did okay.” Yes. I said, “Why?” She said, “Because I don’t have a lot of friends who get to talk to their parents about the decisions that are being made.” But she said, “I can remember several times that you explained why, and then we said, ‘Okay. But have you thought about,’ and you said, ‘No, I didn’t. Huh. Okay. Different decision’.”

She said, “It made it so much easier on the times that you didn’t change your mind to go, “Okay. I trust you. You see this in a different way, and you’re older and you’re wiser. So yeah. If you’re not going to change your mind on this one, there’s a good reason for it. Even though I don’t see it that way, I’m okay with it.” I remember having this little moment with Jesus where I went, “Lord, thank you.” Paul says, “Don’t exasperate your children. Don’t exercise your authority. You have authority. But don’t exercise it in such a way that they’re frustrated, which leads to anger, which leads to rebellion.”

I learned this from a pastor named Craig Groeschel. He was a pastor of Life Church several years ago. He said, “Don’t say ‘My blank won’t. My kids won’t. My wife won’t. My church won’t.’” He said, “Say, ‘I haven’t created the context in which my wife can, in which my children are able, in which my church is. I haven’t led them there yet.’” He said, “If you’re in a position of authority, recognize that you have a tremendous responsibility to exercise that authority in such a way that you enable those whom you lead to respond in the way that God desires.”

He goes on and he says, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from your hearts. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people. Because you know that the Lord will reward each one for the good they do, whether they’re a slave or free. Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them. Since you know that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and there’s no favoritism with him.”
By the way, when you hear the word “slaves,” I know our natural tendency is to immediately think of like 18th century American slavery, and that’s not the kind of slavery that Paul has in mind here. That’s not biblical slavery. What Paul is calling “slavery,” we would probably call more like “indentured servants.” Don’t think about people with no rights. Don’t think of people who are treated as objects, bought and sold. That’s not slavery in the ancient context. It’s more like indentured servants. It’s not a perfect analogy, but it’s probably closer to what we would call an “employer-employee relationship” today. Again, that’s not a perfect analogy. But it’s closer in the modern world than 18th century slavery.

What he says is, “Servants, respect the authority of those who are over you. Obey them. Submit to it.” He gives a motivation, which is important here. It’s a motivation that not only applies in this relationship, but in all of them. He says, “Submit as though you’re submitting to Jesus, as though you’re serving the Lord. When you submit to that who is an authority over you, you’re actually submitting to Jesus.” In other words, what he’s saying is every act of submission is actually an act of worship. Every act of submission is an act of worship and worship attracts the presence of God.

So this is a way that we’re filled by the Spirit, where we invite the power of the Holy Spirit, because submission is an act of worship. But he goes on, and then he flips it around and he says, “Masters, treat your servants in the same way. It’s a two-way street.” He gives an important thing here for all of those who are in positions of authority. He says, “Don’t forget that you’re under the authority of Jesus.” Here’s the thing. He says, “All earthly authority is really simply a matter of relative temporary position.” Any position of authority that you’re in, it’s a matter of temporary relevant position. It’s temporary. It’s going to go away.

You’re going to stand in front of Jesus one day, and you’re not going to be at the head of the line because you were the household head. Husbands are not going to be in the front of the line. Bosses, not in the front of the line. Parents, not in the front of the line. We’re all going to be a crowd coming to Jesus. All that earthly authority stuff, it’s gone. So he says, “It’s temporary.” But he also says, “It’s relative. Any authority you have is insignificant compared to the authority that Jesus has over you. So remember that as you exercise your authority.”

But at the end of the day, don’t forget these examples are giving us some concrete ability to understand what it looks like to engage in mutual submission. But mutual submission, along with persistent thanksgiving and authentic worship, both corporately and individually, these are means by which we allow ourselves to be filled by the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s the one big idea. Everything else supports that idea. Everything else revolves around this idea that God invites us to seek the full power of the Holy Spirit by authentic worship, persistent thanksgiving, and mutual submission.

So three questions. Number one, “[What] do I need to do? What do I need to do to take my and our worship to the next level?” If you want to be filled by the power of this Holy Spirit, that’s one of the places you’ve got to zero in. What do you need to do to take your worship to the next level and in doing that, take our worship to the next level? Maybe for you, it’s moving from this to this, or this to this. Or maybe it’s that your mouth starts doing this [mumbling 00:41:07]. Because we actually start singing songs, even though you don’t know it, even though you don’t necessarily like it.

But what are you going to do to take your and our worship to the next level? Because authentic worship allows us to be filled with the Spirit. The second question is, “How can I make thanksgiving a more prominent part of my life?” I was talking to somebody between services. He said, “I’m usually okay when I’m at home. Like when I lay down on my bed, I say ‘Thank you for my bed,’” but then I get up from my bed and I get into traffic. I find myself having to say I’m sorry more than thank you.” I thought, “Yeah. I mean, I do the same thing.”

But if I’m driving to work thanking God that I have a working car and thanking God that I have a job to go to, that attitude of thanksgiving is going to change the way that I deal with the people who cut me off on my way to my job that I’m thankful with, driving my car that I’m thankful for. Thanksgiving radically alters the playing field, and it allows us to be filled by the Holy Spirit. So what do you need to do to make persistent thanksgiving a more central part of your life? Third question, “In what ways will I honor Jesus by submitting to my,” you fill in the blank.
“By submitting to my husband,” “by submitting to my wife,” “by submitting to my kids,” “by submitting to my parents,” “by submitting to my boss,” “by submitting to my employees.” It looks different. The ways that we submit to one another is clearly different in God’s word. But the idea that we seek the good of others is unchanging. They’re not just good things to do. They’re things that have a result. They’re things that allow us to be filled by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let’s pray.

Jesus, we give you thanks that you were willing to submit to us, that you loved us enough to sacrifice yourself. You took our sins upon you. You went to the cross in our place. You served us and you had no reason to serve us, except that you loved us. So Lord, now enable us to submit to one another, to remember all the ways you have given gifts into our lives, to worship authentically. Lord, as just another example of your crazy generosity, these things that you call us to do that are right and good, they also have a good result back into our lives. They allow us to be filled by your power and we want your power. We need your power. So Lord, move us in the ways that we need to be moved so that we can tap into the power that you invite us to experience. In Jesus’s name, Amen.