

## **Ephesians chapter 5 verses 15 to 33**

**Paul tells us Christians to live like wise people. The times we live in are evil. So we must use our time wisely. Paul makes a contrast between 2 kinds of gatherings of people. A pagan gathering and a Christian gathering. Often a pagan gathering is a sinful activity. The word used means a drinking party. You need to be filled with something. The heathen find happiness filling themselves with wine and worldly pleasures. The Christians finds happiness in the fact that they are filled with the Holy Spirit. This passage tells us a lot about early Christian gatherings. The early church was a singing church. They sang psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The early church had a happiness which made them sing. Secondly the early church was a thankful church. Their instinct was to give thanks for all things and in all places and at all times. Christians were amazed that God's love reached down to save them. For the first time ever people were conscious that they were in the hands of God. So they gave thanks to God because they were convinced that all things come from God. Thirdly the early church was a group of people who honoured and respected each other. Why? Because they had reverence for Christ and they saw each other not in their trade or business or their social**

**standing. They saw other people in the light of Christ and that meant they had a dignity, so they respected others and honoured others.**

**Verses 22 to 33: No one in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can realise how important this is. Over the years the idea of Christian marriage has come to be accepted. Even if the practise falls short of the ideal. When Paul wrote things were very different. Paul sets out a radiant purity for men and women. One of the worst aspects of the ancient civilization was a low view of women and that is why the old civilization died.**

**At the time when the New Testament was written the Jews had a low view of women. The Jewish form of the morning prayer said by every Jewish man every day was, I give thanks that God did not make me a Gentile, a slave or a woman. In Jewish law a woman was not a person but a thing. She had no legal rights whatsoever. She was totally her husbands possession to do with her whatever he wanted. In theory the Jews had the highest ideal of marriage. For them it was to stop committing adultery or idolatry. The Old Testament in Deuteronomy chapter 24 verse 1 says that if a woman displeases her husband because of uncleanness he can write her a bill of divorce and send her out of the house. Of course different Rabbis interpreted unclean in different ways. Further a woman had no rights to divorce at all. It**

was easy to divorce too. The Rabbi had to be handed the document in the presence of 2 witnesses, the dowry had to be returned and the divorce was complete. With the coming of Christianity there was a new problem. Girls did not want to get married because the position of a wife was so uncertain. The position in the Greek world was worse because prostitution was an essential part of their culture. In Greece home and family life was nearly non-existent and fidelity totally non-existent. Roman culture was even worse. People did not count years they counted marriages. It is a simple fact that in history no one in the world owes more to Christianity than women, except maybe children. Christianity had a cleansing effect on ordinary everyday home life in the ancient world. At first reading you might think that this teaching is about control by the husband and submission by the wife where the husband is the head. This passage is not about control it is about love. The passage is talking about how a husband must love his wife in the same way as Christ loved the church. Jesus Christ did not seek to control the church he laid down his life for the church. His was a sacrificial love. Not a selfish love to gain something for himself, no the opposite. He died not so that the church would do something for him but the opposite, what he could do for the church. The church is not a

**building it is people. It is the people who gather together to meet and learn about God's love in Christ. It must be a caring love. A man loves his wife just as he loves his own body. She is not a permanent servant who cooks, cleans, washes clothes and trains children. This is the person who he has a duty to cherish. It is an unbreakable love. A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh. This was an ideal in a world where people changed partners like they changed their clothes. In the home Jesus is an unseen guest and it is a partnership of 2 with Christ.**