



# VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

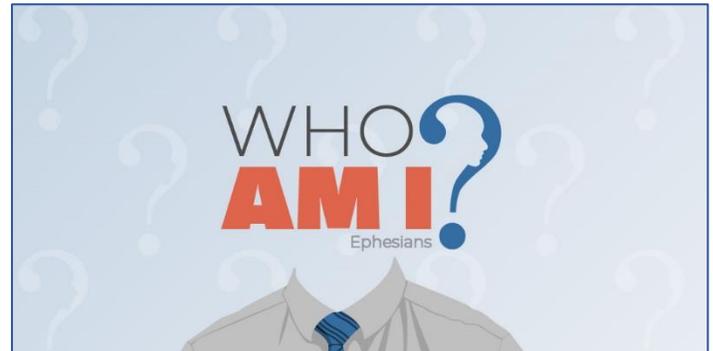
## SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

### Father Knows Best!

### WHO AM I?

### Ephesians 5:1–21

Tim Badal | March 26, 2023



In the 1950s there was a TV show called “Father Knows Best.” Some of you who are really old remember that show. I would have shown the picture in black and white, because that’s how the show ran, but I didn’t want our younger people to be traumatized by TV in black and white.

The show was about the life of the Anderson family, more specifically about the life of the father, Jim Anderson, and his two teenage children who found themselves in trouble in just about every episode. They were involved in a scenario, a situation or a circumstance where they didn’t know what to do or where to turn. Inevitably, within the 25-minute episode, they would turn to their father for wisdom, advice and direction. By the end of the program, their father’s wisdom, advice or direction would get them out of the trouble they were in. By the end of the program, we inevitably learned that father did know best.

Now, we live in a world where we know that not all fathers know best. Perhaps many of you this morning have experienced life with a father for whom that could not be farther from the truth. Your father may be an abusive or evil man. Your father may be an unwise man who treated you badly, or maybe even now is treating you badly. Maybe you don’t even know who your father is. One of the problems these scenarios can bring is when you come into the church and you’re introduced to this Book, is that God identifies Himself and speaks about Himself as our Father.

There’s a rub here, because you start understanding your heavenly Father through the lens of how you think about your earthly father. If your earthly father was a good and godly man, a kind and wise man, then it’s not too hard for you to think about your heavenly Father in the same way. But when you start thinking about your heavenly Father through the lens of an evil, unwise, unhealthy or abusive father, then it becomes really, really difficult to listen to God. To not think about God. To picture Him as an abusive, angry and vindictive dad, maybe like the one you have here on earth. So when you hear that God is your Father, you begin to bristle. You begin to view God as someone who isn’t out for your good, who doesn’t love you, who only longs to have you do what he says for some nefarious reason or another.

I want you to know that we have a God Who not only knows best—the Bible says He’s all-wise and all-knowing—but He’s a God Who has also opinions about us, about who we are. He both knows us best and He is a Father Who knows best. He knows every moment of our lives. He has been with us at every moment of our days. He knows the good, the bad and the ugly. He knows what we’ve done in public. He knows what we’ve done in private. He knows the things we’ve done that we’re really excited about. He knows the moments of shame, remorse and dread, those moments we never want to think about again. He knows our moments of failure. He knows how you have failed Him in recent days. The question you and I would ask is, “What does our Father think of us? What does this Father Who knows us best think about us? What are His opinions of us?”

Turn to Ephesians 5, as we continue in this series where we’re asking, “Who Am I?” We come to this chapter and see in verse one that we’re told in no uncertain terms about God’s opinion of us. What does the God Who knows everything about us think about us? See this with your own eyes: He says we are His beloved children. He loves us.

He knows everything about you. He knows if you have bowed the knee to Jesus. He knows if you have given your life over to Jesus. He knows if you have sought forgiveness for your sins through the work of Jesus on the cross of Calvary. God the Father says, “I love you. You are my beloved child. I love you so much that I sent My Son to die for you so that you might be part of My family.”

Now, we are not His naturally-born children, if you will. Remember the description in chapter two? We were once children under God's wrath. We were children of disobedience. We were enemies of God. But in chapter one, we were told that because of the work of Jesus, we were adopted into the family of God. So we are the adopted children of God—adopted into His family—and He introduces us as His beloved children. This is not based on anything we've done or said. It's not based on our performance. It's because of His affection that He says, "I love you and will always love you."

He is also adding here, "I now want you to know, as your loving heavenly Father, as your Creator, how I want you to live." In chapter five, we are going to get two lists: to-do and not-to-do lists. We'll get a checklist of six don'ts and ten do's. It's easy to think that God is this overbearing, domineering Father Who has a clipboard with a pen, watching and checking off what you're doing right or wrong.

Verse one in this chapter helps us understand that this is not the posture God is taking with us. Rather, He's our loving Father and He longs for us to find peace, joy and contentment. He wants us to find the good life and He says, "This is how you do it. I want you to experience all I created life to be. You won't find it by listening to what the world tells you to do, because that leads to destruction. I've created you to find life My way." So we should not view this as a list of do's and don'ts, but rather as the words of a loving Father Who is telling us how to experience the goodness of life.

In this passage in particular, Paul will focus on one particular area in which we have all mixed up. We're all mixed up like this today, as well as they were back in first-century Ephesus. Last week we talked about such issues as telling lies, letting our anger get out of control and allowing the bitterness of wounds to take hold of our lives. Next Paul is addressing another area and it's a sensitive one. It's not sensitive because only a few people are impacted by it or because it's something only a certain generation has to deal with. Rather, it impacts everyone in every generation. It's the area of our sexuality. Paul says there are three commands our heavenly Father has given to His children whom He loves. So let's look at these now.

## **God tells His children to wake up.**

As a child, I heard this from my parents: "Tim, it's time to wake up; it's time for school. Tim, it's time to wake up.; it's time for church. Tim, it's time to wake up; it's already afternoon. It's time to wake up!" Paul says, "Church, it's time to wake up."

We'll address the first part of the passage in a moment, but look first at verse 14. He says, "*Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*" If you have your Bible open—and I hope you do—you'll see that this sentence is separated from the rest of the passage. This is because it's a quote from someone else. However, you won't find a footnote because Paul is quoting from the Bible here. We know it's a quote because right before this he tells us, "*Therefore it says...*" So we can assume that this is a famous saying that the Ephesus church would have been familiar with. Maybe it was part of a song or part of some other religious practice that they were in the habit of repeating: "*Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*"

Whatever this was, it was a reminder to them that they were to wake up from their slumber. It appears that the church in Ephesus had a problem of being asleep when they should have been awake. How ironic that 2,000 years and half a globe away the same issue is true for us as well. We have a church that is asleep. Paul is telling us here that we need to take our spiritual lives seriously and actively pursue our relationship with God. He's using the metaphor of sleeping, or even of being dead. So let's use the metaphor of sleeping: "Awake, O sleeper!" There are three truths about sleeping. Write these down; they might help you. Maybe you've never thought about them.

### **You don't know you're sleeping until you wake up.**

Did you know that? Unless you have some external information from a clock or the sunlight, you don't know how long you've been asleep.

Yesterday Amanda and I were watching a TV program in our living room. I was laying down on the couch and fell asleep. I thought I had dozed off for maybe ten minutes. I woke up and noticed that I had missed some of the program we were watching, so I rewound it. I kept rewinding and rewinding...to the end of the previous episode. Then to the program before that episode. I said, "Amanda, how long have I been asleep?" She said, "A very long time." She then said, "We're not going to watch all that again, are we?" I said, "Yes. Yes, we are."

You don't know that you're asleep. Some of us are spiritually asleep right now and we have no idea until we wake up.

## **Sleep is characterized by inactivity.**

The most productive people in this room accomplish nothing during their sleep. You cannot multitask while you're sleeping. You do not vacuum while you sleep. You do not do laundry while you sleep. You do not do your taxes while you sleep. You do not watch TV while you sleep. You do not talk on the phone while you sleep. You do not text while you sleep. You only sleep. That's what makes it so stinking restful.

So it is with spiritual slumber; it is marked by inactivity. Some of you are sleeping spiritually. That is, you're not in God's Word, you're not praying, you're not involved in Christian community, you're not using your spiritual gifts, you're not giving back to the Lord. There is no activity that points to anything spiritual. You're sleeping! You're unconscious to the things of God.

## **You hate the sound of the alarm.**

Sleepers hate the alarm. Now, there might be 0.1% of you who love the alarm going off. Let's just admit it: you're weird and God will deal with you. For most of us who are sleepers, the first thing we want to do when we are aroused from our sleep is to silence the alarm, right? First, we have to find wherever that sound is coming from. We don't want to be awakened. Back in the olden days, when we had those things called clocks, we could just slap the "snooze" button.

Some of you are going to be agitated. "Why is he being so loud? Why won't he just shut up? Quit bothering me. Leave me alone. I want to watch what I want to watch. I want to do what I want to do. I want to be a part of what I want to be part of. Leave me alone." Why are you responding that way? Because you are asleep.

God is saying to you, child of God, "Awake from your slumber." What does He want to wake us from? The context is clear. It's that the world is heading down a sexual slide of degradation and we're asleep at the wheel. We're not even thinking about it. Oh, maybe once in a while we're kind of jostled from our sleep, thinking, "Oh, I'm not sure I like that. I'm not sure I'm okay with that."

You're thinking, "How do you know I'm asleep?" Sleepers, in the realm of sexuality. Now I'm talking to Christians. Yes, I'm judging us; I am not judging the world. I'm talking to those who identify themselves as followers of Jesus Christ. Church, we're asleep when it comes to this issue of sexuality when we're entertained by the world's definition of sexuality. Notice, this happened in Ephesus too. It first begins by joking about it. It's all over the place these days. It's on our radios, in our comedy shows, in our movies, in our sitcoms. You can't watch a show or movie without these jokes. The city of Ephesus was filled with people who joked about sexuality. It goes beyond just joking to watching things. In the first century, people would go to the temple of Artemis or Diana and watch people engage in sexual activity. You might think that's weird but it is recorded in secular historical documents. We don't have to do that—we can just watch it on TV or on our tablets or phones. We find it to be entertaining.

Church, we're asleep to this. That which is entertaining today will be something we excuse tomorrow—whether in other people's lives or in our own life. The world knows that if it's something we can joke about, if it's something on TV or in the movies, we end up becoming immune to what it means. We lower our resistance and will excuse it in our lives and other people's lives. And we haven't even gotten to the terrible stuff yet.

Then eventually, at some point, we will find ourselves endorsing it, thinking, "Oh, I'll never do that." Sure, you will. If you're being entertained by it today, you will embrace it at some point in the future. That which is fun, which is enjoyable, we'll excuse one day, then sooner or later, we'll embrace and endorse it. The reason why the younger generations are more apt to embrace the world's definition of sexuality is because they've been entertained by it at a much younger age. They excuse it at a much younger age, then they endorse it at a much younger age.

That's why Paul is saying, "Wake up! Wake up, sleeper. This is not what God wants for us. Our loving heavenly Father has a purpose and a plan for sexuality—and it's not this." He's saying, "Wake up so you can wash up." That's the second command he gives.

## **God tells His children to wash up.**

Look at what Paul says beginning in verse three:

<sup>3</sup> But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup> Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not

become partners with them;<sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light<sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true),<sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.<sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

How can you expose that which you enjoy, that which you are entertained by? Do you see? You can't.

<sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Paul is declaring that God has a plan for sexuality for His children. He writes in this passage that there is a place for sexual expression. God is the Inventor and Creator of sexuality. In fact, next week we'll see this in Ephesians 5:31: *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* This is a citation from Genesis. From the beginning, God had a plan for sexuality. He purposed sex to be between a man and a woman in a marriage relationship for the sake of pleasure and procreation. The world has decided that sexuality is for everything but that. We either will define ourselves according to God's definition or accept the world's definition of sexuality. God created sex, but the world and the devil are seeking to convince us that counterfeit sexuality is better. In other words, the world is promoting all forms of sexual immorality (verse three).

The Greek word here is *porneia*, from which we get our word pornography. I don't have time to get into this, but I preached a sermon not too long ago in the series on the Seven Deadly Sins, titled, "Lust: the Real Giant Killer." wherein that sermon, I gave you a lot of statistics of how far under water we are in this issue of sexual immorality. One quarter of all internet sites on the worldwide web are pornographic in nature. Both men and women are inundated with it. I know a lot of people think it's a man problem, but then why were three of the leading movies in the last ten years taken from a bestselling book called "50 Shades of Grey"? Ninety percent of the viewers were women and it was a very sexually explicit movie.

Women have a problem with pornography. Men have a problem with it. Pastors have a problem with it. We all have a problem with it. It sells everything from hamburgers to cars. Our children are exposed to it at an average age of seven. This problem is destroying relationships. With great fear and trepidation, the Justice Department describes what this generation will look like as they head into adulthood because of what they have seen in pornography, including a rise in sexual assault crimes. I don't think our government is a bastion of high moral standards and even they are freaking out over this.

Because we have a problem with sexual immorality, our loving Father in heaven who knows best says, "This immorality should not be found among you." We must do everything in our power to push back against this. We can either think God is a prude, or we can recognize that He has a good plan and purpose for sexual expression, that it should remain within the confines of marriage.

So God creates, but the world and the devil come up with counterfeits that are very enticing. This is important for both married and unmarried people to realize. Married folks might think they're not impacted by this. In your case, the devil may be tempting you to not have sex with your spouse. In a lot of marriages, he's absolutely winning. God has given this as a gift to us, so the people who should be enjoying sex are not, while the people who should be waiting for God's proper time are the ones having sex. Do you see this problem? God creates and the devil counterfeits—and we're losing this battle.

Then we wonder why there's so much disease, disappointment and dysfunction in our world. It's because we've taken what our loving Father has created and we're asleep at the wheel. This thing called sex that was designed for our good and for the glory of God, we've made it something different. Our text says we've brought in greed. We've made it an idol, something to be coveted.

Do you want to know if your sexuality is impure? Ask yourself if you're being selfish. Is it all about you? Have you gone with Burger King and decided to "have it your way," any way, any time? That's immoral. Are you taking it however you can? You have to grab it and it has to be yours? Where does that come from? Paul says it's become an idol in your life. Your sexuality has become your god. Pleasure has become your god. The church in Ephesus lived in the shadow of the temple of Diana, which was built for the purpose of sexual gratification. They worshipped sex—so do we.

We need to wash ourselves. We need to recognize that this is not how God intends us to live. God says in verse five that if we make sex our god, we will not inherit the Kingdom of Christ and God. Why not? Because we cannot serve God and sex. Jesus said we cannot serve two masters; if we try, we'll hate one and love the other. Sex has to be submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

So you have to make a decision. Either you're going to confess these sins or you aren't. Some of you find yourselves in the throes of sexual sin. You're filled with shame and remorse. I want to remind you of something. You are loved by God and you have a Savior Who is sympathetic to your temptations. He knows what it's like to be human. He says, "Come to Me, all who are weary, and you will find rest" (Matthew 11:28) So confess those sins. That's why Jesus died on the cross. That's why Christ loved us so much He gave Himself up for us. He wants us to wake up and be washed clean.

## God tells His children to wise up.

That leads to one final point: God wants us to wise up.

<sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The world is deceiving us. Here's how we can wise up. Verse six says, "*Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*" You and I are being deceived. Every time we turn on the TV, every time we go to our phones, every time we go to social media, we are being deceived in the realm of our sexuality. Have it your way, right away. That's what's being advertised. We're being deceived by this.

God says, "No, you have it My way, in My timing, for your good and for My glory." He also says in verse ten that we need to discern what is pleasing to Him. That word "discern" is the Greek word *dokimazo*. It means to make a critical examination of something. The first time we find this word used outside the Bible was in 140 A.D. in a manuscript that spoke about the examination of a physician. It's telling us we need to examine our hearts and ask, "Will I identify my sexuality by the world's definition or by God's definition? Will I believe the lies of the world or accept the truths of God?" We have to discern which of these are true and which are lies.

So let me ask you this today, who knows better? The God Who created you and knows you—the God Who created sex—or the world? Does Hollywood know? Does the porn industry know? They surely don't. Their world is full of disease, divorce, hardships and sorrows, moving from one person to another. Does that seem right? Does that seem like it's getting them somewhere?

Or, as He's going to tell us next week, does God long for one husband to love one wife for a lifetime, sacrificing for, caring for, ministering to, cherishing and giving of themselves to each other? That's God's best; that's what God desires for His people. Are you going to go God's way or are you going to go the way of the world? We need to wise up and understand that if we don't get this thing right, it could kill us. It could rob us of our joy. It could steal our peace. It could keep us from the goodness of God.

So how do we wake up, wash up and wise up? It involves walking and talking like our Dad taught us to. It begins back in verse one, "*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.*" Imitating God requires that we stay close to Him. You can't imitate that which you're far from. We know that Christ followed His Father closely, resulting in a fragrance (verse two).

Many of you know that in my other line of work, outside of being a pastor, I grill food. When I leave the grill and go anywhere, for the rest of the day everyone knows that at some point I was near the grill. That fragrance goes with me. I can't shake it. Amanda says we should bottle it. Because I've been so close to it, the fragrance has attached itself to me, so then everyone knows it.

If you want to know if you're an imitator of God, ask yourself, "Do I smell like God?" In this realm of sexuality, do you smell more like the world, or more like God? Are you imitating the world, or are you imitating God? We'll learn next week what it means to imitate God when it comes to our married life and our sexual life within our marriage, what it means to love our spouse like Christ loved the church.

We have work to do. We have to wake up, we have to wash up, we have to wise up—for our good and for the glory of God, because our Father does know best. He loves us so much that He doesn't want to leave us in our sin. He wants us to know there's so much more to life. Amen?