

# E P H E S I A N S

## Week Seven: Ephesians 5:22-6:4: "The Faithful Family"

Study Guide for the week of July 18, 2021

**Study Ephesians 5:22-33.** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. In your view, what one quality or ability sustains a marriage relationship?
2. How is the relationship of the church to Christ an example to wives? ([5:24](#))
3. How should husbands love their wives? ([5:28-30](#))
4. How does the bond between Christ and the church illustrate the love of a husband for his wife? ([5:32](#))
5. How should both husband and wife model themselves on Christ?
6. Why would unselfishness be an essential part of a Christian marriage?
7. What is something you can do to help a Christian couple strengthen their marriage?

### Life Application Bible Notes

[5:21, 22](#) Submitting to another person is an often misunderstood concept. It does not mean becoming a doormat. Christ—at whose name "every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" ([Philippians 2:10](#))—submitted his will to the Father, and we honor Christ by following his example. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey his command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs. In a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are called to submit. For the wife, this means willingly following her husband's leadership in Christ. For the husband, it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Christ and where each is concerned for the happiness of the other.

[5:22-24](#) In Paul's day, women, children, and slaves were to submit to the head of the family: Slaves would submit until they were freed, male children until they grew up, and women and girls their whole lives. Paul emphasized the equality of all believers in Christ ([Galatians 3:28](#)), but he did not suggest overthrowing Roman society to achieve it. Instead, he counseled all believers to submit to one another by choice—wives to husbands and also husbands to wives; slaves to masters and also masters to slaves; children to parents and also parents to children. This kind of mutual submission preserves order and harmony in the family, while it increases love and respect among family members.

[5:22-24](#) Although some people have distorted Paul's teaching on submission by giving unlimited authority to husbands, we cannot get around it: Paul told wives to submit to their husbands. The fact that a teaching is not popular is no reason to discard it. One way to disarm the antagonism that the external culture may inject into the marriage relationship is to remember that the wife gets to submit and the husband gets to die. According to the Bible, the man is the spiritual head

of the family, and his wife should acknowledge his leadership. But real spiritual leadership involves loving service (a form of dying). Just as Christ served the disciples, even to the point of washing their feet, so the husband is to serve his wife. A wise and Christ-honoring husband will not take advantage of his leadership role, and a wise and Christ-honoring wife will not try to undermine her husband's leadership. Either approach causes disunity and friction in marriage.

**[5:22-28](#)** Why did Paul tell wives to submit and husbands to love? Perhaps Christian women, newly freed in Christ, found submission difficult; perhaps Christian men, used to the Roman custom of giving unlimited power to the head of the family, were not used to treating their wives with respect and love. Of course both husbands and wives should submit to each other ([5:21](#)), just as both should love each other.

**[5:25ff](#)** Some Christians have thought that Paul was negative about marriage because of the counsel he gave in [1 Corinthians 7:32-38](#). These verses in Ephesians, however, show a high view of marriage. Here marriage is not a practical necessity or a cure for lust, but a picture of the relationship between Christ and his church! Why the apparent difference? Paul's counsel in 1 Corinthians was designed for a state of emergency during a time of persecution and crisis. Paul's counsel to the Ephesians is more the biblical ideal for marriage. Marriage, for Paul, is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender, self-sacrificing care.

**[5:25-30](#)** Paul devotes twice as many words to telling husbands to love their wives as to telling wives to submit to their husbands. How should a man love his wife? (1) He should be willing to sacrifice everything for her, (2) make her well being of primary importance, and (3) care for her as he cares for his own body. No wife needs to fear submitting to a man who treats her in this way.

**[5:26, 27](#)** Christ's death makes the church holy and clean. He cleanses us from the old ways of sin and sets us apart for his special sacred service ([Hebrews 10:29](#); [13:12](#)). Christ cleansed the church by the washing of baptism. Through baptism we are prepared for entrance into the church just as ancient Near Eastern brides were prepared for marriage by a ceremonial bath. It is God's Word that cleanses us ([John 17:17](#); [Titus 3:5](#)).

**[5:31-33](#)** The union of husband and wife merges two persons in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean losing your personality in the personality of the other. Instead, it means caring for your spouse as you care for yourself, learning to anticipate his or her needs, helping the other person become all he or she can be. The creation story tells of God's plan that husband and wife should be one ([Genesis 2:24](#)), and Jesus also referred to this plan ([Matthew 19:4-6](#)).

**Study Ephesians 6:1-4.** Some questions to answer and discuss:

1. If you could change one thing about your parents, what would you change?
2. What does it mean to "honor your father and mother"? ([6:2-3](#))
3. What does God want fathers not to do? ([6:4](#))
4. How should children be reared and nourished? ([6:4](#))
5. Why is it easier for children to obey fair and loving parents than unreasonable and demanding parents?
6. How does honoring your parents bring you blessing?
7. What can you do to improve or strengthen your relationship with your parents?

### **Life Application Bible Notes**

[6:1, 2](#) There is a difference between obeying and honoring. To obey means to do as one is told; to honor means to respect and love. Children are not commanded to disobey God in obeying their parents. Adult children are not asked to be subservient to domineering parents. Children are to obey while under their parents' care, but the responsibility to honor parents is for life.

[6:1-4](#) If our faith in Christ is real, it will usually prove itself in our relationships at home with those who know us best. Children and parents have a responsibility to each other. Children should honor their parents even if the parents are demanding and unfair. Parents should care gently for their children, even if the children are disobedient and unpleasant. Ideally, of course, Christian parents and Christian children will relate to each other with thoughtfulness and love. This will happen if both parents and children put the others' interests above their own—that is, if they submit to one another.

[6:3](#) Some societies honor their elders. They respect their wisdom, defer to their authority, and pay attention to their comfort and happiness. This is how Christians should act. Where elders are respected, long life is a blessing, not a burden to them.

[6:4](#) The purpose of parental discipline is to help children grow, not to exasperate and provoke them to anger or discouragement (see also [Colossians 3:21](#)). Parenting is not easy—it takes lots of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring manner. But frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Instead, parents should act in love, treating their children as Jesus treats the people he loves. This is vital to children's development and to their understanding of what Christ is like.

*Ephesians Study Guide questions and notes are from*



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