

Lesson 9
Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Ephesians 5:22 begins with ***Wives, submit to your own husbands***; however, in the original Greek the word “submit” is not even in verse 22. The thought is carried through from verse 21. That makes it particularly important to take this verse in context, so let’s take a quick look back at Ephesians 5:17-21.

**Remember that this is a letter written to the church in Ephesus, to believers.

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Those who are wise and filled with the Spirit will address one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

They will sing and make melody to the Lord in their heart.

They will give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They will **submit to one another** out of reverence for Christ.

Submitting to one another in the context of the church includes esteeming others more important than ourselves and looking out for the interest of others (Philippians 2:1-4). As someone has said, “We agree to get along.”

Submit (*hupotassō*)

To arrange under in an orderly fashion.

Here: Present tense (continuous action)

Middle voice (the subject acts upon itself)

WIVES

Ephesians 5:22

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

In the church we all submit to one another in a general way, but in the home, wives are specifically to submit to their own husbands.

Submit (middle voice). The wife who is filled with the Spirit will **submit herself** to her husband as to the Lord. Contrary to the culture of Paul’s day, this is not a command for husbands to make their wives submit. The wife lovingly submits to her husband as an act of obedience to her Lord.

5:23-24

For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Note that this says wives should submit to their **own** husbands. It is not a command for all women to be submissive to all men.

God has established an order, a chain of command. That does not make women inferior to men. In Genesis 2:18 God said He made woman to be a helper to man. This was not a derogatory term. This is the same word used of God Himself as Israel's helper. Spiritually, all are equal before God; however, He did establish an order. The wife is to place herself under her husband's authority.

"Because the obedient, spiritual wife's supreme submission is to the Lord, her attitude is that she lovingly submits as an act of obedience to the Lord who has given this command as His will for her, regardless of her husband's personal worthiness or spiritual condition." (John MacArthur)

Christ > Head of His body, the church; Head of the husband
Husband > Head of the wife

5:33 One more command is given to the wife in verse 33:
. . .and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

<p>Respect (<i>phobeō</i>) Reverential fear, Honor</p>

This is so important for Christian wives in our culture. I don't watch much television, but even in commercials men are often made to look like buffoons. Our husbands need us to show them respect. When we lovingly submit to them and honor their leadership in the home, it makes it much easier for them to love us as Christ loved the church, which then makes it easier for us to submit to and respect them, ultimately enabling our homes to increasingly reflect Christ's relationship to His church. This can only be accomplished when each partner loves Christ supremely and is filled with the Spirit!

[NOTE: Do not forget that these commands are written to the church—to believers. The question of unbelieving husbands/wives is addressed in 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 1 Peter 3:1-4]

HUSBANDS

5:25-27

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

<p>Sanctify (<i>hagiazō</i>) To make holy, set apart Purify, Consecrate</p>
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Christ loved the church

Agape: Sacrificial, unconditional love. (Present tense = continuous action)

Christ gave Himself up for the church

He gave His very life for her.

Christ sanctified the church

He made her holy; set aside for Himself.

Christ cleansed the church by the washing of water with the word.

God's Word is what cleanses us and sanctifies us.

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. John 17:17.

God's love is a purifying love.

An interesting historical note from the IVP Bible Background Commentary:

This "washing" probably alludes figuratively to the bride's prenuptial washing...After this washing the bride was perfumed, anointed and arrayed in wedding clothes. The betrothal ceremony in Judaism also came to be called "the sanctification of the bride," setting her apart for her husband.

Why did Christ do this for the church?

That He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 1:4 told us that we were chosen *before the foundation of the world* that we should be holy and blameless before him.

James 1:27—*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

Without spot or wrinkle – free from any taint of sin. I love this description in Revelation 19:7-8.

Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

5:28-33

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love [agape] his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

How are husbands to love their wives?

As Christ loved the church: with a sacrificial, unconditional love; putting her well-being before his own desires; setting her aside for himself; purifying her by helping her grow spiritually.

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Ephesians 5:2

Plus, one more comparison to Christ which is added here.

Christ loves the church because we are members of His body.

The husband and wife are to become one flesh—members of the same body—which the husband is to nourish and cherish as Christ does the church.

Nourishes (*ektrephō*)
Brings to Maturity

Cherishes (*thalpō*)
Tenderly Cares For

Being the head of his wife is not a position of harsh authority, but rather a great responsibility that God has placed upon a Christian husband’s shoulders.

Husband and wife are now one body; therefore, they are to hold fast to one another and form a new home.

Hold fast (*proskollaō*)
Glue, Adhere, Cement
Emphasizes the permanence of the union.

****Again, keep this passage in the context of the book.** Beginning in chapter 4 Paul goes into great detail as to how we are to relate to one another in the body of Christ, the church. We are to walk worthy of our calling “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4:1-3). We are to put off the old self and to put on the new self (4:22-24).

Christ’s relationship to His body, the church, and how we are to relate to each other within that body is the big picture. Now Paul zooms in to the home where husband and wife are to relate to each other and to Christ as the church does only in a more intimate way.

The Bible lifts Christian marriage to the very highest level—serving as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His church. What an awesome privilege and responsibility!

CHILDREN

Ephesians 6:1-3

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother “(this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”

Obey (*hupakouō*)

To listen attentively; by implication to heed a command or authority.

How many times did I say to my kids, “Did you hear what I said?” And, how many times does God say, “They have ears but do not hear.” In both cases they heard with their ears but did not act upon it. This passage contains a quotation from the 5th commandment given in Exodus 20:12, and the land referred to is the land of Israel. As with many of the Proverbs, this is a general principle: those who learn to obey and honor their parents will be blessed. Learning obedience toward one’s parents is an important step in learning to obey authority, and ultimately God. Children are to obey their parents; however, the exhortation to honor one’s parents doesn’t end with childhood.

That honor should be rendered to parents does not cease to be a divine intention. It takes a new form, namely respect which expresses itself in courtesy, kindly words and deeds, and where necessary in provision for comfort in the declining years. (G. Campbell Morgan)

FATHERS

6:4

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

In the Greco-Roman culture of Paul’s day, it was common for fathers to be very harsh in the training of their children. Christian fathers are not to be harsh, but they are also not to coddle their children. They must discipline them in love; teaching them both the love of God and His justice. Earthly fathers should reflect the Father in Heaven so that their children come to know, love, and obey God.

BONDSERVANTS (EMPLOYEES) & MASTERS (EMPLOYERS)

6:5-9

Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

This passage was radical in a day when bondservants were considered property, but for us it is pretty straight-forward. If you work for someone, you are to do your best—and do it sincerely from your heart. You may work for a tough taskmaster, but remember, you are not really working for him, you are working for Christ. And, if you have others working for you, do not be a tyrant. Remember that God is your Master and he sees everyone with the same value.

SUMMARY:

Christ > Head of His body, the church; Head of the husband

Husband > Head of the wife

Parents > Head of the children

Masters (employers) > Head of bondservants (employees)

“In each of these relationships [wives & husbands, children & parents, servants & masters] the first partner is commanded to be submissive or obedient. But the second partner is also to show submissiveness by his care and concern for the first partner. Both partners are to act toward one another as a service rendered to the Lord.” (Pete DeLacy)

What would our homes and churches be like if husbands and wives, parents and children, bosses and workers, all related to each other according to Biblical standards—with every part of the body functioning properly, doing its part?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How are you preparing yourself to meet your heavenly bridegroom, the Lord Jesus?
2. How closely does your home reflect the relationship of Christ to His church? What changes could you make so that your home more nearly mirrors that to a watching world?
3. How would you explain the Biblical husband and wife relationship to an unbelieving friend who asked about it? How would you give age-appropriate teaching on this subject to your children?
4. How are you honoring your parents in this stage of life?
5. If you work for someone, do you do your best all the time, even when no one is looking?