

## GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

**DISCUSS:** Draw attention to the picture in **PSG page 114** as you introduce **Question #1: When have you thought to yourself, “It’s good to be home”?**

**GUIDE:** Direct attention to **The Bible Meets Life (PSG, p. 115)**. Highlight the author’s point about home being the place where we are most real.

Reinforce the importance of the home in believers’ lives by reading **The Point (PSG, p. 115): Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out.**

**LEADER PACK:** Point to **Item 11: Home** as you read **The Point.**



# SESSION 3

## LIFE AT HOME



### ***The Point***

Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out.

### ***The Bible Meets Life***

One of the hottest topics in recent years has been the defining of the family. With the attempt to create a new definition, the family roles have also been redefined. God created

us with only one definition of the family and specific roles for each of us. As we carry out the roles we’ve been given, we experience life as a family at its best. A family centered in Christ is a strong family.

### ***The Passages***

Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-3

### ***The Setting***

Ephesians teaches God’s desire for unity among Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ. The Lord Jesus abolished the wall of hostility that divided them and reconciled the two groups by His cross (2:14-16). The concept of love (*agape*) appears nearly two dozen times in six chapters. The apostle Paul, who authored the letter, also stressed God’s design for the family. He highlighted the responsibilities of husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters.

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## Ephesians 5:22-24

**22** Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord,

**23** because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body.

**24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.

**KEY WORD: Submit** (v. 22)—The term *submit* means to voluntarily place oneself under the authority of another. The believer's submission to Jesus Christ should reflect itself in family relationships.

Paul began Ephesians 5 by encouraging believers to imitate God as dearly loved children (5:1). Formerly they lived in spiritual darkness; now they were children of light (v. 8). Consequently, he urged them to pay careful attention to their spiritual walks (v. 15). As the Holy Spirit filled them, their lives would feature much praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (vv. 18-20). Their lives also would feature placing the needs of others ahead of their own (v. 21).

### *Identity in Christ defines a godly wife.*

**1** ▶ **Verse 22.** God's design for family relationships are found in Ephesians 5:22–6:3. Paul began by addressing how **wives** might display their identity in Christ within their marriages. The Greek word for **submit** in verse 22 does not appear in some manuscripts, but the concept is clearly present from its appearance in verse 21. The term denotes voluntarily placing oneself under the authority of another. Verse 21 indicates the people of God should willingly humble themselves in this way.

Paul encouraged wives to submit to their **husbands**. Wives' submission should parallel their submission **to the Lord**. Whereas verse 21 denotes a general submitting of believers to one another, verse 22 encourages wives to place themselves under their husband's authority. To do so requires a deliberate decision by the wife, an act of her will. ◀

**Verse 23.** Paul clarified how God's design for the family and for marriage portrayed an even greater spiritual reality. Indeed, this parallel is key to understanding verses 22-33. Paul stated that **the husband is the head of the wife**. That implies he leads her faithfully. After all, he and she are part of the same team! Thus, both he and she have a responsibility;

## STUDY THE BIBLE Ephesians 5:22-24



10 minutes

**SUMMARIZE:** Before reading the passage, set the context by summarizing the information in **The Setting** on page 118.

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:22-24.

**DISCUSS: Question #2**  
(PSG, p. 117): **How do most people respond to the idea of submission?**

(Alternate: *Why is submission such a difficult concept to embrace?*)

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 1** and the **"Key Word"** (PSG, p. 116) to explain the biblical significance of the term *submit*. Make the point that, unlike the world's view, is one actually makes a decision to *submit*; it is an act of the will.

**GUIDE:** Refer group members to **PSG pages 116-117**.

Contemporary culture laughs at the idea of submission, calling it ancient and out of touch. The Bible teaches otherwise.

*Just as God has blessed the church with Christ as its Leader, God wants to bless every family with a leader. For families with a husband in the home, God has assigned him to be the leader.*

*As Christians, we are all called to submit to Christ. To be a Christian is to be someone who has submitted to and acknowledged the lordship of Christ. A wife who submits to her husband, therefore, simply has submitted her marriage to Christ. This is why Paul said wives are to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord.”*

*Submission is entrusting the marriage to God. It does not mean the wife places her faith in her husband, but it is placing her faith in Jesus to lead her husband.*

she must submit to his authority, but he must lead her well and fulfill his God-given leadership responsibility. In fact, **as Christ is the head of the church**, so the husband is to lead his wife faithfully. In other words, marriages should reflect the relationship between Christ and the church. That’s a great challenge, but as we faithfully live in that way, the world will take notice and God will receive honor.

Paul also reminded his audience that **Jesus is the Savior of the body**. His words recall Ephesians 1:22-23, where he described Jesus’ authority over the church. Jesus provided salvation for His church, and husbands are to provide for the needs of their wives. They are to consider Christ’s example and follow it as they care for their wives. Since Christ provided for the church’s salvation, husbands should consider how they can help nurture their wives’ spiritual growth in Christ. Good leadership results when a husband asks, “How can I help my wife become the woman God created her to be?” Thus, the husband bears great responsibility, an issue Paul addressed further in verses 25-28.

**Verse 24.** Paul reminded believers that **the church submits to Christ**. The body of Christ was to recognize His authority and voluntarily place themselves under it in all walks of life. They could fully trust His leadership in everything, because He loves them supremely. In the same way, Paul said, **wives are to submit to their husbands in everything**. Wives are to recognize their husband’s God-given responsibility and place themselves under it.

These three verses may be some of the most misunderstood in the New Testament. Husbands should never use these verses to shame their wives or manipulate them; good spiritual leaders would not do that. Likewise, wives should not view the verses as a “prescription for slavery” or as giving them the right to abdicate any responsibility for making a marriage work well. Marriage requires a mutual investment of both husband and wife in the relationship to which God has called them. At the same time, God does call a wife to recognize her husband’s leadership role.

The apostle Peter challenged Christian wives to live in such a godly manner that they would impact their husbands’ lives, even leading unbelieving husbands to salvation through their godliness (1 Pet. 3:1-4). Likewise, he encouraged husbands to lead their wives well, for husband and wife are co-heirs of God’s grace (v. 7). Peter went on to suggest not honoring one’s

wife could hinder the couple's prayer life. While husbands and wives have specific roles within marriage, Paul affirmed all are equal in their standing in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

We do not do Ephesians 5:22-24 justice if we only focus on the word *submit*. Rather, we must understand the parallels Paul drew between Christ and husbands if we are to understand how He could command wives to submit to their husbands. Indeed, a godly wife blesses her husband when she trusts his leadership. She chooses to believe God will lead her and her family through him as he seeks the Lord's guidance. Blessed is the wife who therefore makes praying for her husband a priority, since she knows the great responsibility he bears. Blessed is the husband who prays with his wife and shares with her matters of prayer.

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## ***Ephesians 5:25-28***

**25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her

**26** to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word.

**27** He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless.

**28** In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

### ***Identity in Christ defines a godly husband.***

**2** ▶ **Verse 25.** Paul turned to the duties of husbands. Paul's society often recognized the duties of wives but generally paid less attention to the duties of husbands. Paul, however, did not do that; in fact, many believe he gave greater responsibility to husbands.

Paul commanded husbands, **love your wives**. The Greek word translated "love" is *agape*, a word denoting self-denying commitment. The tense of the verb suggests an ongoing action of love, rather than a one-time commitment to the idea. Love of one's wife was to comprise a lifestyle; it was one big decision to do so, followed by that same decision every day of marriage.

**TRANSITION:** "Having addressed the God-given duty of wives, in the next verses Paul addressed men about being godly husbands."

## **STUDY THE BIBLE** ***Ephesians 5:25-28***



**15 minutes**

**READ:** Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:25-28.

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 (PSG, p. 118): **How do these verses compare and contrast with the husbands we see today in movies and TV?**

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 2** on this page and on page 122 to explain the duty of the husband to love his wife.

**GUIDE:** Point out the nature and extent of Jesus' love for us (PSG, p. 118):

*Jesus loves us and desires the very best for us. The very best for us meant His death on the cross, because through that sacrifice we gained forgiveness and eternal life with Him.*

*Christ submitted Himself to the Father and to death for our benefit, to bring us back to Himself and make us "without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless." What an incredible sacrifice for us! In the same way, the husband is to sacrifice himself to see that his wife can become everything God has meant her to be.*

*When husbands love their wives like Christ loves, they will surrender their own desires for what is best for their wives.*

*Ultimately, this is submission to Christ, because the husband is placing the needs of another before his own.*

Paul then explained the parallel to husbands loving their wives—**just as Christ loved the church**. Here, *love* is the same verb from earlier in the verse, but appears in a different tense. It refers back to the time on the cross when Christ **gave himself for** the church. Christ demonstrated His supreme love for the church by giving His life as the perfect sacrifice to pay for our sins. Paul earlier had addressed the issue (Eph. 5:2); here, he applied sacrificial love to the kind of love husbands were to have for their wives. Obviously, the concept here denotes the deepest kind of love. Jesus loved the church so much He died for the church. In doing so, He provided an example for husbands to follow. ◀

**Verse 26.** Jesus gave Himself to the church **to make her holy**. The biblical concept of holiness denotes setting something apart for God and service to Him. Again, Paul returned to a theme he introduced earlier in the book. In Ephesians 1:4, Paul said God's desire was that we would be "holy and blameless in love before him." Paul now highlighted how one of the purposes of Christ's death was to sanctify His church. He set the church apart for Himself, that it might be all He created it to be. In drawing this parallel, Paul challenged Christian husbands to follow Christ's example. Husbands needed to desire the sanctification of their wives; that is, they needed to strive to help their wives become all that God intended them to be.

**Cleansing her with the washing of water** explains more fully the result of Christ's sacrificial work on behalf of the church. Christ desired to prepare the church for Himself as a pure, spotless bride. The phrase **by the word** at the end of the verse clarifies the meaning of the prior image. It is the Word of God that brings our sanctification and cleansing. As we yield our lives unconditionally to Jesus Christ as Lord and trust in His Spirit's enabling power, He will make us into the people He wants us to be. Christ died to accomplish that for His church.

**Verse 27.** Paul continued to focus on the amazing work Christ had done on behalf of His body. Jesus gave Himself because He desired to **present the church to himself in splendor**. His love for and value of the church required Him to pay the ultimate price and He willingly did so. *Splendor* is related to the Greek word for *glory*.

The expression **without spot or wrinkle or anything like that** refers to any imperfection the church might have. In the Old Testament, it was important for worshipers to bring spotless animals for sacrifice because God deserved

the best (Mal. 1:8-11). Thus, Christ's intent in dying for His church was to cleanse it and to prepare it as the perfect offering for Himself, without any blemish whatsoever. His goal was to prepare the church to be **holy and blameless**. Again, *holy* and *blameless* recall Paul's words in Ephesians 1:4. Paul indirectly challenged husbands to honor and nurture their wives in such a way that they would represent a holy offering to the Lord. Such a task was part of their marital stewardship.

**Verse 28.** In the same way stresses the parallel Paul drew between Christ's sacrificial work for the church and marriage relationships. He affirmed that **husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies**. In verse 31, Paul would cite Genesis 2:24 that highlights a man's leaving his father and mother and joining to his wife as one flesh. Since they were one, he was to love her as he loved himself. Leviticus 19:18 encouraged Israel to love one's neighbor as oneself; the concept is similar here, although with respect to marriage, the admonition goes much further. Paul drove home the point with **he who loves his wife loves himself**. In the oneness that is to comprise Christian marriage, a husband is to love his wife as he loves himself.

Jesus described true biblical leadership when two of Jesus' disciples asked for privileged positions in the age to come (Matt. 20:20-28). Jesus contrasted biblical leadership with the world's leadership. Rulers of the Gentiles lorded it over others and loved the power they exercised. In contrast, biblical leadership required humility and a servant spirit. Jesus Himself provided the ultimate example by giving His own life. True biblical leadership is costly!

Verses 25-28 stand as a great challenge to me and to husbands everywhere. Do we truly love our wives with self-denying commitment? Do we love our wives as Christ loves the church? Are we willing to sacrifice to see our wives become the women of God He wants them to be? Do we love them and care for them as we love and care for our own bodies? Is it truly our desire to present them to Christ one day having done all we can to prepare them for that day? Someone has well said, "Rare would be the woman who couldn't find it in her heart to submit to a man like that."

I confess I have days when I think I'm doing pretty well as a husband, but when I look at Christ's example, I realize how far short I fall, even on my best day. Living as a godly husband requires a daily appeal to God's enabling grace; the wellbeing of our marriages and families depends on it.

**GUIDE:** Refer to "Digging Deeper" on PSG page 119

to discuss how Paul used the metaphor "body of Christ" to mean the church, and how he compared the relationship between husbands and wives with that between Christ and His church.

**DISCUSS:** Question #4 (PSG, p. 120): **Who's been a positive role model for biblical sacrifice and submission in your life?**

*(Alternate: How does our submission, sacrifice, and obedience reflect the essence of the gospel?)*

**TRANSITION:** "In the next verses, Paul gave important instruction for children."

## STUDY THE BIBLE

### Ephesians 6:1-3



10 minutes

**READ:** Read or ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:1-3.

**SUMMARIZE:** Use **Bible Commentary 3** to discuss the importance of children obeying their parents in the Lord.

**GUIDE:** Refer members to **PSG page 121**. Encourage group members to share their experiences in regard to these bullet points:

- Honor is more than a Mother's Day or Father's Day card.
- Honor is more than flowers on their grave.
- Honor is seen in our attitude toward them.
- Honor is seen in what we do when we're with them.
- Honor is seen in how we talk and respond to them.
- Honor is seen in how we talk about them.

## Ephesians 6:1-3

- 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right.
- 2 Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise,
- 3 so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.

### *Identity in Christ defines a godly child.*

**3** ▶ **Verse 1.** Paul directed his attention to the children who might be listening as his letter was read. The word for **obey** differs from the term for submission earlier, although the two have some similarity in meaning. Submission involves a voluntary placing of oneself under the authority of another. Obedience also involves recognizing the authority of another. Paul encouraged the children **obey your parents in the Lord**. As Paul had directed wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, he admonished children to reflect their faithfulness to the Lord in their obedience to their parents. The word translated **right** can also mean *righteous* (Rom. 1:17; 1 John 1:9). Children obeying parents was right because it reflected God's design for the family. As parents led with proper authority, children would find themselves blessed by yielding to that authority. ◀

**Verse 2.** Paul rooted his instruction to children in the Ten Commandments. The command **honor your father and mother** recalls Exodus 20:12. In the original commandment, the Hebrew word translated "honor" meant to treat as heavy or important, to give proper weight to their status as parents. The Greek word used here describes the honor Jesus gave to His heavenly Father (John 8:49). The command "honor your father and mother" was the fifth commandment, and the first one to deal specifically with human relationships. It was therefore no surprise that God would begin with a commandment that deals with the family.

Paul pointed out that this command was **the first commandment with a promise**. The commandments that came before and the commandments that followed were

simply stated as commands; however, honoring one's parents would bring blessing to those who practiced it.

**Verse 3.** In verse 3, Paul quoted the rest of Exodus 20:12. As with the original commandment, Paul encouraged obedience to parents **so that it may go well with you**. As Israelite society reflected respect and honor to older generations, they would embrace the life to which God called them. Older people deserved respect (Lev. 19:32), and so did older parents. Today, many Christians have the opportunity to honor God by honoring and caring for aging parents. Some may view this task as a burden, but others see it as a great privilege. Some parents are better equipped financially to care for their own needs; others require the support of their children. Some require long-term medical care; others do not. Whatever the situation, we should ask the Lord how we can best honor our parents in their old age.

We should not take the words **that you may have a long life in the land** as an absolute promise. At the same time, in ancient Israel, God did promise to bless the society that honored family values. When we carry out our family roles as God has commanded, we strengthen our families. As we strengthen our families, we strengthen Christ's church. As we strengthen Christ's church, we impact the world.

Honoring parents naturally applies to all children regardless of their age. Many commentators have suggested the original commandment in the Book of Exodus primarily dealt with adult children honoring their parents. It appears here in Ephesians 6 that Paul intended to speak to young children as well as perhaps to adult children, particularly in light of his admonition to obey parents. Honoring one's parents was a command that applied to children of any age and to parents of any age.

Christ is the foundation of a strong home. Indeed, our identity in Christ defines us and helps us to understand our family roles. At the same time, this week's session speaks powerfully to those who are not married as well. Regardless of our age, we are all children, and have opportunity to serve and honor our parents every day. The apostle Paul likewise had encouragement for people who are not married (1 Cor 7:8-9,32-35). They had the opportunity to live their lives more completely focused on the Lord Jesus, without distraction. All of us must recognize that above all, we find our ultimate fulfillment and satisfaction in our relationship with the Lord. He, not a spouse or children, provides our ultimate foundation for life.

**DISCUSS: Question #5**  
(PSG, p. 122): **Does honoring our father and mother change over time? Explain.**

*(Alternate: What are some characteristics of Christ's love that should be present in our homes?)*

**SAY:** "A healthy family is built on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ. We submit our lives to Him, voluntarily placing ourselves under His authority. Our submission to Jesus Christ should reflect itself in all of our family relationships."

**DO:** Invite volunteers to share their responses to the activity on **PSG page 122: "Sacrificial Living."**

## LIVE IT OUT



5 minutes

**GUIDE:** Emphasize **The Point:** **Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out.**

**REVIEW:** Review **Live It Out** (**PSG, p. 123**; see text to the right). Encourage each group member to follow through this week with at least one of the applications.

## WRAP IT UP

**GUIDE:** Emphasize that the family is central to God's plan for nurturing disciples and growing His kingdom.

**PRAY:** "Father, help us to follow Your plan for family and model Your love for a lost world."

**NOTE:** Remind members that **PSG pages 8-11** are there so that they may keep an ongoing prayer journal of one another's requests.

## LIVE IT OUT

How will you live out your identity in Christ at home?

- ▶ **Submission.** If you are a wife, identify a way you can reflect your submission to Christ in your marriage.
- ▶ **Love.** If you are a husband, identify a very tangible sacrifice you can make for your wife that reflects your love for Christ and for her.
- ▶ **Honor.** If you are a grandparent, help your grandchildren to understand the importance of honoring their parents. Identify one way you can encourage your grandchildren to obey their parents this week.



BIBLICAL  
**ILLUSTRATOR**



Funerary relief depicting a family. Reliefs of this type, in which the figures appear as busts within a circular frame, are sometimes freestanding and sometimes integrated into the facades of funerary structures, as here. Late 1st century A.D.

The laws and societal customs in Rome accepted a Roman father's unquestioned right to spare the life of his newborn child or to kill it! A letter a Roman soldier wrote to his expectant wife in Italy told her to keep their soon-to-be-born child if it were a boy, but to throw it on the trash heap if it were a girl.

A Jewish father, however, could never have given such an order to his wife. His religion, family, and society would have taught him to

regard obedience to the Lord God as being of supreme importance. The foundation for that obedience was the law of Moses, which included the Ten Commandments, one of which clearly stated, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

Another major difference between pagan husbands and their Jewish counterparts was the matter of marital fidelity to their spouses. Sexual fidelity to his Jewish wife, however, did not necessarily mean the husband married because he "loved" his wife or had chosen her for himself or that he regarded her as his equal. Love was not the primary reason for marriage. Paul gave a radically new high standard when he commanded Christian husbands at Ephesus to "love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (Eph. 5:25).

The excerpt above is from the article "The Husband's Role in the First-Century Family" (Winter 2011-12), which relates to this session. More *Biblical Illustrator* articles are available that relate to this session. See page 7 about *Biblical Illustrator*.

## SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her on the cross as the ultimate example of sacrificial love. Jesus loves you and gave Himself for you on the cross as the ultimate expression of sacrificial love.*

Each week, make yourself available either before or after the session to speak privately with anyone in your group who wants to know more about becoming a Christian. See the article, "Leading Someone to the Greatest Decision of All," on page 2 for guidance in leading a person to Christ.

Remind group members that **page 2** in the **PSG** offers guidance in how to become a Christian. Encourage believers to consider using this article as they have opportunities to lead others to Christ.



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