

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

EPHESIANS 5

²¹ *Submit to one another in reverence for Christ.*

²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he himself is the Savior. ²⁴ Moreover, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.*

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. ²⁷ He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands have an obligation to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ To be sure, no one has ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh.” ³² This is a great mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ In any case, each one of you also is to love his wife as himself, and each wife is to respect her husband.*

¹ *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise: ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live a long life on the earth.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*



So what’s going on in your family? Is it like this? Sin has introduced serious consequences like sibling rivalry, family dysfunction, alcoholism, abortion, and gender dysphoria. We are surrounded by an onslaught upon the nuclear family, with word games about birthing persons and inseminators, toxic this and hierarchy that. Like cramming puzzle pieces that do not fit, the modern family is a grotesque chaos of misfits. Sin sets us off eating each other alive. Yes, these Bible paradigms have been abused; and, even if a household can follow all these steps outwardly, sin still seeps and causes some of the worst family problems.

God knows. But God didn't suggest the family. He designed the family as its architect. God also designed you for good. Give up your weapons! Husband and wife, and children and parents, for that matter, without Christ are at each other's throats with forks and knives. They have no Substitute for their sin, so they devour each other.

But that's exactly why Jesus Christ got in the game, wed the Church and fed the Church. That's why He came and expressed His dying and redeeming love. He showed His love to save us from ourselves and from each other.

THE GOSPEL SAVES THE FAMILY FROM EACH OTHER

1. Husbands and wives self-sacrificing

There is a union that the eternal Love instituted among people in paradise. Its fragrance lingers by His creating power. It is the covenant of holy marriage. Without it, selfishness would run amok and life on earth would be an icy winter. Marriage ties a warm band of love around millions and produces family circles of natural love.

Only believers experience marriage in its fullest sense. Believing marriages are an image of Christ and His Church, His bride. By himself, what man can be to his wife as Christ is to the Church? Can a wife redeem her husband as Christ redeemed the Church? Can she give satisfaction for his sins and reconcile him with God? Can a husband keep his in the faith until the end, and finally bring her to the glory of heaven? No man or woman can do any of these. Sadly you never marry Mr. Right or Miss Perfect ... it's always Mr. Mostly Right and Miss Pretty Good. And you marry the person who sins against you the most.

But God be praised that redeeming each other, making right with God, and bringing each other to the glory of heaven is not required of husbands and wives.

Instead, what makes a marriage of believers an image of the marriage of Christ and His Church is **self-sacrifice**. "Wives submit to your own husbands." "Husbands, love your wives." The directive to "submit" is given to one another. There comes a time when we are all Church together submitting to God's will. This sets off a whole table of duties for different stations of life in Ephesians 5-6. Faith is always very busy, but it works for the good of the neighbor and not for self.

Specifically, wives receive the directive to “submit.” St. Peter says, “respect.” “Submit” can be translated “be subject to.” Some wives wince at the word and chafe under this directive. But it is meant as nothing to frustrate a wife. Notice, husbands are not taught to make sure the wife submits. For submitting is done of one’s free will. Submitting is, by definition, never forced or coerced. Coerced submitting is not submitting, nor is it biblical. Nor is submitting a value judgment on a wife, as if she were less of a human, more of a sinner, or less of a believer. It simply reveals to us that God knows the difference between men and women. Submitting wives don’t need a command. They understand husbands thrive on this much-needed respect for a complementary relationship. Attentive wives learn just how to care for their husbands by observing, and consider themselves blessed with automatic thoughtfulness. Women are naturals at this, and it puts husbands *in their masculine.*

Husbands, you are told to love your wife. This seems like the easy task. But notice the standard to which you are held—the self-sacrificing love of Christ. He loves His church fervently, from the heart, giving her drink with His own heart’s blood. Love your wives no less fervently. You are inseparable from her, patient and understanding. Love her continuously, with deeds. Faith is busy. Care for her, let her lack nothing, be her intercessor with the Father, protect her in danger, comfort her in sorrow, and fill her with peace and joy.

Then, when a husband lives *in his masculine* and emanates confidence, a wife can live *in her feminine.* That is, a husband is considerate of his wife and her needs, he’s not losing his cool, failing to take the lead, and being weak-willed about his values. And then a wife can live *in her feminine*, enjoyable, carefree, the proper helpmeet. Don’t be testy with each other. Don’t nag. Communicate with the facts, feelings, then needs. Take care of the other’s body as your own. Many of us don’t always fit into the cookie cutter family paradigms. It may look different in different families, and often we adapt to personalities more than genders. But God has given us insight exactly how He designed us.

2. Children and parents forgiven

Now we also hear from Paul how children and parents ought to live together. There is a special pattern of love. The ideal children grow in responsibility combined with respectful love.

Children, I've seen plenty of talking back to those in authority. I've heard grumbling and whining even at church. You know that's sin. You know your tone of voice and your unloving attitude. Notice who is supposed to be obedient to whom. The Lord has set up your parents in His place. Remember they know more than you think. They have seen and lived their own lives and know how to make mistakes. But that's just why God has given them to you, so you listen. These parents love you and want what is best for you. They love to forgive you and see you grow in faith and knowledge. They love to see you becoming you.

When I was young, a teacher told me about a whipping boy. Rich children used to have a servant who was whipped for all the times they misbehaved. It was never the whipping boy's fault, but he took all the punishment. You are all rich in spirit, children. For you have a whipping boy. Every time you have sinned, forgiveness comes from the Son of God, who was whipped and beaten up for you. Thank Jesus for being your whipping boy, and now resolve to be kind and obedient out of respect for His wounds.

The long list of parental faults include arbitrary, inconsistent, foolish, harsh, and cruel treatment. Authority is easily abused. What is said of fathers thus applies also to the mothers. There is also the sin of Eli, who was soft, carelessly indifferent, so that the children rule and the parents obey. Children are not given to families to rule over the adults. The world does not revolve around children. Turn the home upside-down and don't be surprised at an upside-down home. Unjust, improper parental treatment angers a child so they are left unable to honor the parent. Yes, parents are mindful, not neglectful, of their children's needs. The parents who mismanage their children make it next to impossible for their children to be what they could be. They rob their child of the blessing of the Fourth Commandment and bring down God's curse.

The reward is sweet, for the promise is long life. Law and Gospel work in raising children. Threaten real, consistent discipline for real sins; comfort and forgive with unlimited love. Check attitudes with the Law; speak warmly to the humble heart.

I imagine a Jesus in the middle of our family room, with as many arms as you have people in your family, holding each family member back from each other. Each arm is protective and at the same time embracing. These are the arms that spanned the cross. That cross won forgiveness to fill our arms with each other. The Lord built your house. Your labor is not in vain. **Amen.**