

4. Have you ever heard someone using deceitful and empty words to justify wickedness, and play down the wrath of God?
5. What does it mean to walk in the light? (See also 1 John 1:7.)
6. How should we expose the unfruitful works of darkness?
7. How do we “redeem” the time?
8. Can you draw an analogy between wine and the Spirit in the way they affect a person—the way he talks, the way he thinks, etc.?
9. How do you obey the command to be “filled with the Spirit”?
10. Compared with other world religions Christianity has much more joyful singing. Why is this?
11. Is it possible to give thanks for everything? Even for heartaches and tragedies?

Lesson Eleven (5:21-33)

Husbands, Wives, and Jesus (5:21-27)

21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with

the word, 27 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.

God cares about your family. It was God who instituted the human family in the first place, and it is God who best knows how it should operate. In an age when pressures against marriage and the family are mounting, it is both refreshing and strengthening to turn to the instructions from the family’s Designer. If the wisdom of the Designer seems to be out of step with the current wisdom of our time, you will have to judge for yourself whom to follow.

V. 21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ—This command is another part of being filled with the Spirit. The construction of the Greek sentence, beginning in verse 18, can be summarized this way:

Be filled with the Spirit—

Addressing one another in psalms, hymns, songs,

Singing and making melody,

Giving thanks always,

Being subject to one another.

“Be subject” was a military term meaning “to be arranged under the authority of someone.” In the context of this verse, it means that every Christian should be ready to surrender his own rights to his brother. He should have such lowliness and meekness (Eph. 4:2) that he prefers his brother’s well-being and wishes (Rom. 12:10).

The motivation for submission is reverence (literally “fear”) of Christ. He is our master; we are all slaves. We have no right to set up our own “pecking order” among slaves. All authority belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18) and he alone has the right to designate any position of leadership or command.

V. 22 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord—Every family needs someone with the final say. It is God’s plan that this person should be the husband and father. The ultimate reason a wife should submit to her husband is not his proven qualifications for the role of leader, but because God said to submit. (We should always obey God because he is God, not because his request seems reasonable enough!)

A few points need to be made here about the Bible’s teaching on the submission of the wife to the husband. First, notice that the wives are told to be subject; the husbands are not told to put them in subjection. The husband’s responsibility is not to get the upper hand over his wife; his duty is to love her (verse 25). Voluntary submission is the wife’s responsibility. If she is unwilling to assume this role voluntarily, it is

doubtful that forcing the role upon her will achieve God's purposes.

Second, the wife's submission and the husband's love are something they owe the Lord, even more than they owe each other. Even if the husband is a clod, the wife should be subject to him, because the Lord is no clod and he deserves to be obeyed. Even if the wife is unlovely, the husband should love her, because the Lord deserves it. The application of this principle adds permanency to marriage. The relationship is not based on fickle responses to a fickle spouse, but on steadfast obedience to an unchanging Lord.

Third, God's recipe for happiness in the Christian family cannot be guaranteed if part of the ingredients are left out. If a Christian wife submits, but an un-Christian husband does not love, the results may not be satisfactory. Even so, the best chance a Christian wife has in this unfortunate circumstance is to submit and try to make it work. (See 1 Pet. 3:1-2.)

Fourth, the husband has not been appointed to be God. His authority is only a delegated authority and has limitations. Consider the parallel between the family and the government. The basis of government's authority is that God has ordained it. The Christian obeys his government, because to disobey is to resist God's command (Rom. 13:1-2). However, if government tries to oppose the clear and specific command of God, the Christian's highest allegiance is to God (Acts 4:19-20; 5:29). Likewise, the wife is subject to the husband because God has made the husband head (verse 23). Just as Christians are to "be subject" to governing authorities, the same word is used three different times to tell the wives to "be subject" to their husbands (Eph. 5:22 & 24; Col. 3:18; 1 Pet. 3:1). If, however, the husband comes into irreconcilable conflict with the authority of God, the wife's highest allegiance is to God (see Luke 14:26; 1 Cor. 7:15).

V. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife—

A few critics have asserted that "head" has nothing to do with rule or authority, but means only "source" or "origin." This may have been true hundreds of years before the first century, but the use of "head" to mean "ruler" is well documented in the Greek of Paul's time. (The use of "ruler" is found in the Septuagint, in Philo, in the Testament of Zebulon, in the Mishnah, and in the writings of Qumran.) It is not really necessary, however, to carry our investigation any further than chapter one of this same epistle. There all things have been "subjected" under Christ's feet, and he has been made "head" over all things. Paul chose this very circumstance to illustrate the relationship of the wife to the husband, using the same Greek words for "be subject" and "head."

as Christ is the head of the church, his body—

Just as Christ was given headship in 1:22, the husband is given headship in the family. Be careful to notice, however, what kind of headship this was. For Jesus Christ, headship meant that he gave up heavenly glory and comfort for the sake of the church. He became servant of all, humbling himself even to the point of death. His headship was clothed in love.

Likewise, the husband is appointed head for the benefit of the family, not for his own indulgence.

and is himself its Savior—When Jesus accepted the responsibility of being head and taking care of the church, it ultimately cost him his life, but it saved the church. Every husband and father should look to Christ for the model of how to be protector and head of his family.

V. 24 As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands—Every wife should look to the church for the model of how to submit to authority. The addition of the phrase "in everything" seems to make submission cover every area of family life.

V. 25 Husbands, love your wives—The duty of the husband is not to dominate the wife. His duty, repeated three times (verses 25, 28, 33), is to love her.

The kind of love God commands from the husband for his wife is *agape* love. This is the divine kind of love, motivated not by a self-interest or even the attractiveness of the one loved, but by a sincere interest in the well-being of the other. Love based on selfish interest will fail whenever the object of love fails to gratify selfish lusts. Love based on attractiveness will fail whenever the object of love grows older, fatter, sicker, or balder. True *agape* love includes sexual desire and appreciation for attractiveness, but it is based on a permanent concern for the one loved. It is the only love that goes on loving whether circumstances are better or worse, whether richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, until death parts the lovers.

as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her—It is only Christ's kind of love that makes the headship of the husband tolerable. When the husband's greatest desire is for the happiness of his wife, and when the wife's greatest desire is to support and be subject to her husband, a happy and harmonious union will exist.

The husband who never helps his wife with the house or the kids, caring only for his own relaxation and entertainment, can scarcely be said to "have given himself up for her!"

V. 26 that he might sanctify her—To "sanctify" means to "set apart in purity and holiness." Christ's

church has been “called out” from the world to be his holy bride.

having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word—Every member of Christ’s church has been washed from the stain and defilement of the world. As F.F. Bruce has said, “This washing with water, accompanied by a spoken word, can scarcely be anything other than baptism; this is what the language would most naturally have conveyed to the original readers.” Paul does not make a strong apologetic for baptism here, taking for granted that his readers knew its place in conversion.

The “word” associated with the washing has been taken variously to mean: the prayer of the convert (Acts 22:16), the confession of the convert (Rom. 10:9), the pronouncement of the divine name at the time of baptism (Matt. 28:19), or the whole Bible itself. The Greek term used by Paul usually has special application to the spoken word.

V. 27 that he might present the church to himself in splendor—The church is a bride getting ready for the wedding ceremony. Right now, while she is still in the process of preparing, her true beauty may not be clearly seen. But on the day the Groom receives her at the consummation of the ages, she will be beautiful. She will be splendid and glorious in a white gown of Christ’s righteousness. Every blemish, every flaw, every wrinkle will have disappeared.

without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish—Some people think Jesus chose an ugly bride. They fail to perceive two things: some of the ugliness they see is not really a part of the true church; and Jesus has the power to purify and beautify those people who are the church. (Compare the scene depicted by John in Rev. 21:1-10).

The Mystery of Love (5:28-33)

28 Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.” 32 This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church; 33 however, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

V. 28 Even so—Again the comparison of relationships comes back to the family. Just as Christ gave everything to bring about the full beauty and potential of his bride, so should the husband attend to the development of his wife.

husbands should loved their wives as their own bodies—Under normal circumstances, a man will give just about anything to save his own skin (Job 2:4). In Christ, the husband learns that he has no possession on earth more valuable than his wife—not even his own body.

At the time Paul wrote these words, wives were not always highly esteemed. Multiple wives, concubines, and mistresses could very well have made a man think his wife was expendable. In many different times and places, a wife has been considered mere chattel property. Christianity changes this, giving the wife full dignity, fully deserving her husband’s loyalty and love.

He who loves his wife loves himself—This is true in at least two different ways. First, it is true because the wife and the husband have become one flesh. They have become so united in the sharing of their lives as to be a single soul, with one flesh (verse 31). Second, it is true because it is to the husband’s own advantage to love his wife. Even if a man were motivated by nothing but pure selfishness, he ought to love his wife. Speaking in a practical way, the more a husband loves his wife, the more she will respond and be the kind of wife he wants. Perhaps you have seen the advice: “Do yourself a favor—love your wife!”

V. 29 For no man ever hates his own flesh—The instinct for self-preservation is strong. A man will do just about whatever he has to do to secure food for his stomach and to avoid pain and suffering for his flesh. It takes a lot of weird teaching to convince a man to inflict pain on himself or starve himself. God wants this protective instinct to include the man’s wife.

but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church—Just as a man instinctively cares for his own flesh, just as Christ lovingly cares for his body—the church, so should a husband care for his wife. To “nourish” means to protect and provide for. The word is even used for the sustaining protection and nourishment which the unborn receive while still in the womb. To “cherish” originally meant “to keep warm and comfortable.” The husband should be concerned for every aspect of his wife’s well-being: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

V. 30 because we are members of his body—Every child of God is a member of the body of Christ. Christ is no more eager to see harm come to any member of his body than you are eager to suffer injury to your own. Christ’s concern is for all of us, that we are spiritually well and prosperous.

V. 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one—Paul reaches back to Genesis

2:24 for this statement of the marriage relationship in the very beginning. Although the bond between a son and his parents is strong (Ex. 20:12), the institution of marriage is stronger. A young man breaks away (the word sometimes is even translated “abandon”) from his parents and establishes a new home and a new loyalty. He is joined (literally “glued to”) to his wife in a permanent new relationship. The two become “one flesh” as they blend together every facet of their lives in mutual partnership. Much more than sexual intercourse is included in becoming “one flesh.”

The marriage relationship was ordained by God. It has a holy and noble purpose. A man and woman should not enter this relationship carelessly, for God intends it to be permanent (Matt. 19:6).

V. 32 This is a great mystery, and I take it to mean Christ and the church—Through revelation Paul has been enabled to see a hidden purpose in the institution of the marriage relationship. God ordained the relationship as a preview of the fellowship to be shared by Christ and the church. Jesus Christ left his Father in heaven to seek his bride, and gave his life to ransom and redeem her. One day he is returning to claim her for all eternity. This is the greatest love story the world has ever known.

Paul has pointed out a remarkable parallelism between the family and the church. We learn more about the proper role of one by studying the other.

V. 33 however, let each one of you love his wife as himself—Paul returns to the family to end on the same note as he began. Whatever the theological teaching about Christ and Genesis 2:24, the immediate task at hand is for husbands—each one of them—to learn to love.

Immature husbands often ignore the wife’s wishes and do everything according to their own whims to prove they are not hen-pecked. The mature husband does not have to prove anything to anybody. He will consider the preferences and needs of all the family members and make choices which will result in the common good of everyone.

and let the wife see that she respects her husband—The wife’s command is to “respect” her husband. The Greek word used here is usually translated “fear” or “reverence.” It is a strong concept. The wise young woman will accept the offer of marriage only from a man she can respect and reverence.

Study Questions

1. What is the motivation for being subject to one another?

2. What is the wife’s duty? To whom does she owe it?
3. What does it mean to be “head?”
4. Are there any limitations to the authority of the husband and the subjection of the wife?
5. Was Paul’s view of the husband-wife roles more suited to life in the culture of the first century than now?
6. Would Paul’s view of marriage have been different if he had been married?
7. What are Christ’s intentions for his bride—the church?
8. What three steps are necessary for a good marriage (verse 31)?
9. What right did Paul have to find Christ and his church hidden in a verse from Genesis?
10. There is certainly room for discussion in working out the roles of husbands and wives. Perhaps each family must fit the roles to their own circumstances. How would you respond to these questions?
 - a. Should the wife work outside the home?
 - b. Should a husband help with dishes or laundry?
 - c. Should a husband help change diapers, bathe and feed the baby, or do anything else to meet a baby’s needs?
 - d. May a wife keep track of the family finances?
 - e. Who should discipline the kids?
 - f. Since homosexuality is sometimes encouraged in children by a reversal in the proper role of their parents, how should a father demonstrate his manhood? What

specific actions would be appropriate and what would be inappropriate?

Lesson Twelve (6:1-9)

Children and Parents (6:1-4)

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Being a Father himself, God is interested in children. He knows they can bring wonderful gladness to their parents (Prov. 10:1) or bitterness and grief (Prov. 17:25). For this reason, the owner's manual for the marvelous invention called mankind has instructions about raising children.

Children ultimately must make their own choices about how they will live. Not even God himself will force anyone to be what he does not choose to be. The job for parents, then, is not to make all the choices for their children, but to be teaching them to make the right choices for themselves.

V. 1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord—

This is one of the few places in the Bible addressed specifically to children. Whatever else the church teaches children about morality and decency, it must not neglect this primary commandment. Church and youth group activities should be designed to strengthen, not weaken, a child's loyalty to his parents.

The word "obey" means literally "to hear under." It means to get under the authority of someone and pay attention to their commands. Children should learn to obey their parents for at least two reasons. First, they should obey because their parents know more about life and can protect them from danger and hurt. A wise, loving parent helps a child get off to a good start in life. Second, they should learn to obey the Father in heaven. Refusal to obey authority in one area of life usually spills over into other areas.

The phrase "in the Lord" has been given some strange applications. Some have understood it to mean that children should obey their parents only if their parents are "in the Lord"—that is, Christians. Others have taken it to mean that children should obey only if the instructions are "in the Lord"—that is, what the Lord

would have recommended. (If the Lord wouldn't have wanted you to mow the yard, don't do it!) There is a grain of truth in this, but the child must be extremely cautious about disobeying his parents because of what he thinks the Lord would have wanted. I prefer to take "in the Lord" simply as the sphere in which children offer their obedience. Obedience is something the Lord wants from them, so when they obey, it is "in the Lord."

Is it ever right for a child to disobey his parents? Perhaps, but rarely. If a child is told to kill or steal or violate any explicit command of God, he should refuse to do it and suffer the consequences. If a young person comes to a point where he must choose between Jesus or his parents, he may have to reject parents and move out. If he is too young to move out on his own, he is too young to make the choice. (Consider Matt. 10:37-38 and Luke 14:25-30.)

for this is right—Children obey their parents because that is simply the way it ought to be. Parents are not perfect, but then, neither are kids! Even though the boy Jesus was wiser than his parents, he returned with them from Jerusalem to Nazareth and "was obedient to them." (See Luke 2:41-51.) He obeyed simply because it was right.

It was wrong for the Pharisees to neglect their elderly parents, saying all their wealth was "corban" (Mark 7:11). It is wrong for children to be disobedient to parents, for this is a sign of a depraved man without God (Rom. 1:30) and a sign of the "last times" (2 Tim. 3:2). Jesus came to make things right. (See Malachi 4:6.)

V. 2 "Honor your father and mother"—To "honor" means to "revere, esteem, or set a high value on." Sometimes it is even translated elsewhere as "worship." An adjective made from the same Greek word means "precious, costly, valuable."

When God first gave this commandment in Exodus 20:12, he showed that he wanted children to have the kind of respect and honor for their parents that results in obedience. Severe penalties were established for the rebellious son who refused this command. (See Exodus 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18-21.)

(this is the first commandment with a promise)—The Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20:3-17 and Deuteronomy 5:7-21. When you read these passages you will find that not only is this the first commandment with a promise—it is the only commandment with a promise!

It is also interesting to notice that there are six commandments dealing with a person's relationship with other people, and the commandment to honor parents comes first among these six.