



**“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh,” Ephesians 5:31.**

## **Helping Build the Christian Home**

**Lesson Aim:** To observe God's instructions for a scriptural family life.

**L513. Date:** May 1964. **Text:** Ephesians 5:22—6:4. **Topic:** Family; Home.

INTRODUCTION — “It takes a heap of living to make a house a home.” This old adage underscores the importance of the home. There is a difference, however, in a home and a Christian home. Today's lesson investigates the relationship of members of a Christian home.

All men recognize the value of the home to civilization. Arthur A. Hicks has written, “No church, nation, or civilization raises higher than the spirit of religious reverence and worship that prevails in the home life of its people. The home that is not genuinely Christian is not a true home. It is God's first institution of human society and is the ultimate basis of society. It is the citadel of both church and state which so nobly serves our social order.” Helen Hunt Jackson adds, “The woman who creates and sustains a home, and under whose hands children grow up to be strong and pure men and women is a creator second only to God.” These high ideas are but the restatement of the attitude of the Bible toward the Christian home.

Today's lesson should be studied honestly. The scriptural principles expressed therein should be applied by each reader to his own home life. In any place where he fails to measure up to what God demands, he should be honest enough to admit it and yield to God's standards. Such a response will bless the reader and every member of his household. Not every reader will agree with every statement in this lesson. Judge the comments, however, not by what you prefer, but by what God's Word says. Such an approach will reap rewards in your own home.

## EXPOSITION

### I. MOTHER AND THE HOME, 5:22-24, 33.

1. The wife is to be in submission to her husband “as unto the Lord,” verse 22. When God created the world He put Adam in charge of it before woman was created. Eve was created as a helpmeet, an assistant, for Adam. From this Paul argues that woman must never “usurp authority over the man,” I Timothy 2:11-14. The Bible uses stronger terms to describe woman's submission to her husband. It commands wives to “submit to,” “be subject to,” “be in subjection to,” “be obedient to” and even “reverence” their husbands.

This subjection of the woman to man is the result of (1) the order and purpose of their creation, I Timothy 2:11-14, and (2) the consequence of Eve's part in the Fall, Genesis 3:16. To reverse this is to reverse the established order of God.

Not only do Bible-believing people hold to this principle, but pagans also. When Queen Vashti refused to obey her husband (the pagan King of pagan Persia), all men saw it as a threat to the established order. They feared the example of the queen would encourage other women to do likewise, resulting in despising their husbands and bringing much contempt and wrath. Therefore the king put Vashti away that she was no longer Queen and issued an order in the kingdom that “every man should bear rule in his own house,” Esther 1:10-22.

Paul commanded the older women to teach the younger women to love their husbands and be obedient to them, Titus 2:4-5. Moreover, this submission is to be “as unto the Lord,” Ephesians 5:22. That is, each woman must obey her husband as if it were the Lord she was obeying, as indeed, it is. The Lord, not man, set up the requirement of obedience by the woman and for her to refuse is to disobey the Lord Himself. Concerning this there can be no argument.

2. The wife is to be in submission to her husband as the head of the home, verses 23-24. Paul establishes a hierarchy of authority; woman, man, Christ, God, in ascending order. **“But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God,”** I Corinthians 11:3. The entire argument of Ephesians 5 is built upon this principle. F. F. Bruce writes, “If the head of the woman is man, and the head of the church is Christ, then an analogy can be drawn between a wife's relation to her husband and the church's relation

to Christ. The church owes obedience to Christ: so, too, does a wife to her husband.” Paul adds, **“Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything,”** verse 24.

Let the wives be subject to their husbands “in every thing.” These words seem to infer that God will never call upon a wife to disobey her husband! Does this mean Christian wives should obey unsaved husbands? Yes! **“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if I any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear,”** I Peter 3:1-2. Here is a case of an unsaved husband who will not listen to the Word, but to whom the Christian wife is to be subject. The Lord says that she can win him to Christ by such an attitude! John R. Rice has written, “The kind of religion which will make a wife the modest, unselfish, lovely and obedient wife which God commands her to be, with that ‘ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price,’ that Sarah had, who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord (I Peter 3:4-6); that kind of home religion in a wife will have more to do with the salvation of many a lost husband than any amount of public preaching of the gospel.” A husband will respect his wife if she honestly lives her religion.

3. The wife should “reverence” her husband, verse 33b. The Bible does not say that men deserve reverence nor are worthy of it, but the Lord does teach that wives should give it. (See I Peter 3:5-6 also.) Christian wives are to show the same deference to their husbands as was shown by the “holy women” of Old Testament days. Sarah is particularly held up as an example of a wife's reverence for her husband in that she called Abraham “lord.”

The relationship of Abraham and Sarah is almost idealistic in the Biblical records. There was never another woman (either second wife or concubine) who came to break their home. They never argued over their son, Isaac. They were sweethearts so long as they lived. Their love and fellowship lasted across the years. Therefore their son grew up with a deep love and respect for them both.

Some woman may object that she married a man who does not deserve her respect. Even so, in the marriage vows she pledged herself to be a faithful wife “for better, for worse . . . till death do us part” Abraham Lincoln's father once advised him, “Treat all men as if they were gentlemen. Not because they are, but because you are.” The wife will reverence her husband, not because he is a good husband, but because she is a good wife.

Disaster, trouble, heartache and ruin come upon the home where the wife is rebellious and the husband a shirker. True happiness in marriage is based on faith. The woman who does not trust her husband's judgment and

character to submit to his will cannot have true happiness. When happiness and faith is gone, love soon follows them. No woman will long continue to love a man whom she does not respect. Such a spirit in the home produces discontent and disobedient children. Children do not obey and respect mothers who are themselves disobedient and disrespectful wives. Finally, and probably most serious of all, the husband and wife who do not live together as God intended are affected spiritually. A wrong home life will definitely affect your prayer life, I Peter 3:7. Christian wife, make your home right with God for the sake of your husband, your children, and yourself.

## **II. FATHER AND THE HOME, 5:22-33; 6:4.**

1. The father is to be the head of the home, verses 22-24. As has been observed above, God has ordered that the husband be the head of the household. The husband's position over the wife and children is not a mere gratification of his desire to be master. Such a position carries with it a great obligation.

Christ is the head of the church. In the same manner the husband is the head of the home. Yet, for Christ to be the head of the church, He must have suffered for the church, loved the church, provided for the church, and otherwise assumed full responsibility for her. It is at this point that the duties of the husband to the household become evident. This is no master-servant relationship in which a woman is subject to a tyrant. It is a blessed arrangement whereby the husband is fully responsible for all the needs of the home. The faithful wife will gladly be in submission to the husband who acts toward the home like Christ acts toward the church.

2. The father is to have a sacrificial love for the home, verse 25. The wife's submission to her husband has as its correlative his duty to love her. His love is to be much more than natural affection or attraction, but is to involve his active and unceasing and self-sacrificing concern for her well-being. "By setting this highest of standards for the husband's treatment of his wife (the example of Jesus' love for the church), Paul goes to the limit in safeguarding the wife's dignity and welfare. For the love of Christ is a self-giving love; He gave Himself up for His church, and the natural inference is that there is no sacrifice, not even the sacrifice of his life, which a husband should not be prepared to make, if necessary, for his wife."-F. F. Bruce.

The husband is the provider, the protector, and the deliverer of his wife. He who loves his wife with the unselfish devotion which Christ manifests for the church will find his greatest delight in caring for her. This love is

commended in Colossians 3:19 and I Peter 3:7. Any man who is not willing to take the place God assigned to the husband and father is not fit to marry a good woman and bring helpless children into the world. Only God can make a man capable of fulfilling the high standard He has set for a father. God is wonderfully good to any man when He gives him a good wife. How anxious each man ought to be to fulfill the requirements of a good husband.

3. The father should desire to benefit his wife, verses 26-27. Paul points out that the whole purpose of Christ's sacrifice for the church is that the church might be benefited. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, but He did it in order that He might "sanctify, cleanse, and present" her to Himself as a glorious church without any blemish whatever. Of course, He finds delight in the cleansing and will find delight in the presentation, but His delight alone is not all that is involved. It is to the church's own good that the sanctification, cleansing and presentation to Christ occurs. Naturally, the husband will be delighted in a loving and devoted wife, but it is not for his sake alone that he cares for her. He is concerned for her welfare as much as his own.

A good wife is like a favour from the Lord, Proverbs 18:22. She is more valuable than precious gems and brings much good and joy to her family, Proverbs 31:10-31. Her husband's greatest delight will be to provide for all her needs.

4. The father will provide for his wife as much as for himself, verses 28-30. In the original marriage bond, Adam declared of Eve that they two became "one flesh" before God, Genesis 2:23-24. Being taken from Adam's side, Eve was literally "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." Jesus agreed with this analogy saying, "they twain shall be one flesh," Matthew 19:5. Just so, Paul insists that a man's wife and children are but an extension of his own personality. To treat one's wife as mere chattel always does much damage to one's own personality.

If one's neighbour is to be loved as one's self (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31), how much more is one's wife to be loved! The woman whose husband loves her with as much concern as he looks upon himself need not be afraid to submit to his headship of the home. Moreover, the true husband will love his wife more than he loves his own comforts. Just as Jesus gave Himself for the church (5:25), so the loving husband will sacrifice himself for the good of his wife. Blessed is the woman who has this kind of a loving husband.

5. The father is to provide a home for his wife, verse 31-33. God never intended that the normal home would be established without the bride and groom giving faithful allegiance to one another. Though it may sound

strange, God intended a husband wife to have allegiance to one another which supercedes their allegiance to any and all other relatives. For this reason, both bride and groom must be willing to leave their father and mother and to cleave to one another.

To “leave father and mother” may have a two-fold implication. First, it probably refers to the unity which binds the husband and wife as “one flesh.” Since woman originally came from man (Genesis 2:21-24), it is perfectly natural that in the community of love, interests and pursuits of marriage they become one again. Allegiance of husband and wife are to be one another first and to their respective parents secondly. Besides this, to “leave father and mother” probably speaks of the establishment and maintenance of a separate home. Occasionally, circumstances merit a newly married couple to make their home with one or the other of their parents. In most cases, however, this is a mistake. Many separations and divorces have come because of “in-law trouble!” The husband owes it to his wife to provide her own home separate from any relatives.

6. The father is to train the children, 6:4. This obligation lies on both parents, but training the children is the particular duty of the father as the head of the home. The child brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord will not depart from such rearing when he is older, Proverbs 22:6. God gives the children to parents as his heritage, Psalm 127:3. Their training should be undertaken with a sense of responsibility to Him, so that from their early days they may learn to worship and love Him.

Parents have an obligation toward the children as well as the children having an obligation to their parents. If children must obey their parents, parents should deserve their children's obedience. It is possible, even for Christian parents, to be so unreasonable in their demands that their children are irritated beyond measure and wonder if it does any good to try to please their parents at all. **“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”**

According to God's word, man is the head of the woman and subject to Christ as such, I Corinthians 11:3. As man is the glory of God, so woman is the glory of man, 11:7. Yet, each is incomplete without the other, 11:11. Due to his headship, man should assume full responsibility for the physical, mental, und spiritual welfare of the home. Concerning this latter, John R. Rice has written, “Any man who leaves it to his wife to return thanks at the table, leaves it to his wife to read the Bible to the children, leaves it to his wife to teach them to pray, leaves it to his wife to take the children to Sunday school and church, to set a godly example before them and try to win them to Christ, is a slacker, a shirker, a parasite! He is not fit to be a

husband of a good wife nor the father of a family!” **“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel,”** I Timothy 5:8.

### **III. CHILDREN AND THE HOME, 6:1-4.**

Psalms 127:3 states, **“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruits of the womb is his reward.”** The successful marriage is usually blessed with children. Occasionally there are happy homes where God has not given children, but tiny baby fingers do much in binding husband and wife together. When there are children in the home, they bear a responsibility to it just the same as the parents do.

1. Children are to obey their parents, verse 1. Obedience is to be rendered **“in the Lord.”** A companion passage states, **“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord,”** Colossians 3:20. This same principle is also set out in the Old Testament. William Shakespeare caught the idea exactly when he wrote, **“The voice of parents is the voice of gods, for to their children they are heaven's lieutenants.”** The parents are God's representatives in the rearing of children. God holds parents responsible for the discipline and control of their children. Eli, High Priest in the Old Testament days of Samuel, was judged with all his household because **“his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not,”** I Samuel 3:12-14. In the New Testament, Paul writes that the deacon must be the husband of one wife and rule his children and his household well, I Timothy 3:12.

If a child does not naturally obey his parents, he must be disciplined and required to obey. Disobedience to parents is a symptom of the disintegration of society, Romans 1:30; II Timothy 3:3. On the other hand, when a child is reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, he cannot get away from that influence all of his life, Proverbs 22:6. Someone has said, **“Happy are the families where the government of parents is the reign of affection, and the obedience of the children is the submission of love.”**

2. Children are to honour their parents, verses 2-3. The fifth commandment among the Ten Commandments is not only the first one with a promise attached, it is also the only one with a promise! The promise is that peace and long life will accompany the man who honours his parents, Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:2-6. In Mark 7:6-13 Jesus clearly shows that honouring parents is an essential part of honouring God. Moreover, the Old Testament sets out the death penalty for one who did not honour his parents, Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Exodus 21:15, 17. Indeed, at the foundation of all

Christian duty and decency and morality is the command, "**Honour thy father and thy mother.**"

How does one honor his parents? Parents are honoured when children have respect for their persons. Parents are honoured when children render strict obedience to them. Parents are honoured when children provide for them in their old age. Parents are honoured when children seek their counsel. Parents are honoured when children continue to live according to the Christian principles which their parents taught them.

Honoring of parents results in increased reverence for God. It will also promote the right attitude toward the authority of law and government. It will create a more wholesome attitude toward marriage and the home. It will cause one to rear his own children with respect for their parents and so pass on the moral and spiritual inheritance of one generation to another.

3. Children should submit to and follow their parents instruction, verse 4. If it is the duty of the parents to bring up the children in the discipline (nurture) and instruction (admonition) of the Lord, it is the duty of the children to submit to that training. Parents are responsible to God to give proper instruction and children are responsible to God to receive that instruction. Of course, parents should not discourage their children by harsh and brutal methods of discipline, but must rear them according to God's laws. Respect and obedience to parents will be divinely rewarded.

CONCLUSION—A Christian home must be built upon the principles of God's Word, with father, mother, and children living according thereto. Each member of the home has a part in making it a Christian home. Make sure you have Christ as Saviour and are living according to His will. Thus you will help make your own home truly Christian.

So long as there are homes to which men turn  
So long as there are homes where children are,  
At close of day;  
Where women stay—  
If love and loyalty and faith be found  
Across those sills—  
A stricken nation can recover from  
Its gravest ills.

—Grace Noll Crowell.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why is the home so important to society?
2. Why should the wife submit to her husband?



3. How does a wife reverence her husband?
4. Who made the husband the head of the home?
5. What are the husband's duties to the home?
6. Why should loyalty to husband or wife surpass loyalty to parents?
7. In what sense does husband and wife become “one flesh”?
8. Why should children be required to obey their parents?
9. How can a child honor his parents?
10. How can you make your home more truly a Christian home?