



"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Family Relationships

Lesson Subject: God has provided an effective arrangement for the home.

L49. Date: August 1982. **Text:** Ephesians 5:22-6:4.

Topic: Family; Marriage.

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man; and the head of Christ is God" (I Corinthians 11:3). That is the order of responsibility and authority God Himself has established. Respect for that order is respect for God. Rebellion against that order is rebellion against God. Filling one's place in that order is obedience to God. That is not the social custom of ancient times, which we are free to change today, but is the decree of God.

Here is the order of descending authority and accountability: God, Christ, man, woman, children. To change that order (for the woman to be superior to the man and for him to be subject to her, for instance) would be most serious (as for the man to be superior over Christ).

Believing that "God has provided an effective arrangement for the home," the lesson comments will review Bible teaching concerning the place each member of the family has been assigned by God.

I. RELATIONSHIP OF THE HUSBAND TO THE WIFE

A. The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).

1. What is the meaning of *"head"* in that statement? Physically, *"head"*

is the top appendage of the body (Mark 6:24; Luke 7:38). Metaphorically, it means to be over another, to have authority over another (I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 4:15). In the text, it means the husband, is in charge of the wife.

2. Why is the husband the head of the wife? The Bible gives three reasons. (a) The husband is the head of the wife by the design of creation. *"For Adam was first formed, then Eve"* (I Timothy 2:13). He is first because he was here first. (b) The husband is head of the wife because of the deception, of sin. *"The woman being deceived was in the transgression"* (I Timothy 2:14). She surrendered the universal dominion given both man and woman (Genesis 1:26) when she submitted to the lies of the serpent (Genesis 3:1-6). Having surrendered dominion, she was placed under the dominion of another. (c) The husband is the head of the wife because of the decree of God (I Corinthians 11:3). That is the way He set it, and no one has power to change it.

3. In what areas is the husband the head of the wife? He is her head *"in every thing"* (Ephesians 5:24). Physical, spiritual, social, financial — all areas of life must find the husband exercising his duty of headship. The wife may counsel, assist, and advise, but the ultimate responsibility belongs to the husband.

4. For how long is the husband the head of the wife? *"The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth"* (Romans 7:2). The only release is death (Romans 7:2,3) or divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) because of fornication (Matthew 19:9).

B. The husband is to love his wife like Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). He is commanded to love his wife, while the wife is taught to love her husband (Titus 2:4). He is to love his wife with a divine love (agape), with the human love of tender affection (phileo), and with sexual desire (eros).

All three areas are designed and approved of God. His love is to be holy as well as human, a love which God puts in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Loving her as Christ loved the church, he will love her sacrificially, purposefully, realistically, constantly, intimately, and helpfully.

C. The husband is to honor his wife (I Peter 3:7). To honor means to hold in highest esteem, to value highly, to hold in preeminence. Such honor is expressed in practical ways as acts of common courtesy, tenderness, praise and appreciation, support, communication, etc. Blessed is the wife whose husband truly honors her.

II. RELATIONSHIP OF THE WIFE TO THE HUSBAND

A. The wife is to love her husband (Titus 2:4). She must love him as he loves her: divine love, affectionate love, and sexual love (I Corinthians 7:3-5). Such love is an act of the will, not an accidental feeling. And it is unconditional. There must be no "I love you if . . ." nor "I love you because . . ." Let it be, "I love you." Such love is expressed by one devoting himself to bring the other's life to its greatest possible good.

B. The wife is to submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33), "*Submit*" means "to set in order under; to subordinate oneself," Its grammar is (1) Present tense, "keep on submitting as a lifestyle"; (2) Middle voice, "submit your own self" and not be forced to submit; (3) Plural number, "each and every wife among you submit yourselves." (For the meaning of "*submit*" in other contexts, see Romans 10:3; James 4:7; I Peter 2:13; Colossians 3:18.) The wife's duty is clear.

C. The wife is to obey her husband (I Peter 3:6). There can be no misunderstanding of this command from God. "*Obey*" means "to listen under; to hearken to a command; to respond by submission." It differs from submit in this way: "*Submit*" refers to attitude, while "*obey*" refers to action. The wife is to obey her husband as Abraham obeyed God in leaving Ur of the Chaldees (Hebrews 11:8). She is to obey him as the winds and waves obeyed Jesus when He stilled the storm (Matthew 8:27). She is to obey him as the children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1) and servants are to obey their masters (Ephesians 6:5).

Is that asking too much? Not at all. Reference is not to a master-slave relationship, but to one person yielding to and following the leadership of the other. What wife would refuse to submit and obey a husband who is under God's orders to love her as Christ loves the church "*and gave himself*" even unto death for her?

D. The wife is to reverence her husband (Ephesians 5:33). The meaning of "*reverence*" (Greek, *phobatai*) was originally "to terrify, to frighten, to put to flight by terror." But the meaning changed in usage. It came to be used in classical Greek to mean, "to fear; to venerate; to treat with deference and high respect." Its usage in the New Testament means to venerate and hold in high esteem (as indicated in Ephesians 5:33; Luke 1:50; 18:2, 4). It is the proper response of a person to the one whom God has set over him. A woman's esteem for her husband is an act of reverence to God.

The grammar of the command in Ephesians 5:33 is very meaningful. (1) The present tense indicates a continuing spirit: "Make it your custom to reverence your husband." (2) The middle voice means, "Make yourself reverence him" and not expect another to force such a spirit upon you.

Love, submission, obedience and reverence are expressed in practical ways of yielding to his will, trusting his decisions, accepting his priorities, forgiving his mistakes, esteeming him in public, responding to him physically, etc. Blessed is the man with such a wife!

III. RELATIONSHIP OF CHILD TO PARENTS

A. Children are commanded of God to obey their parents.

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). The obedience required is to be performed immediately, fully, willingly, and constantly. The Old Testament pronounced the death penalty on a son who would rebel against his parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). God is serious about a child's obedience to his parents.

The parents are God's agents to discipline and develop the child. Rebellion against parents is rebellion against God. Such rebellion will be met with severe punishment.

B. Children are commanded of God to honor their parents.

"Honour thy father and mother" (Ephesians 6:2). That is the same requirement God places on the husband toward the wife (I Peter 3:7). It means children are to hold their parents in highest esteem, to value them, to give them preeminence. The child who does not honor his parents will not honor God.

C. Children must be taught the long-range benefits of obeying and honoring their parents. That is the first commandment accompanied by a promise, and the promise is this: *"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth"* (Ephesians 6:3). The truth is very simple. A society must be built on respect for authority. The child who does not learn to submit to the authority of his parents will not submit to the authority of teachers in school, or officers of the law in the state; such a child is headed toward anarchy. Such a spirit of rebellion against authority will destroy a nation. A society marked by everyone doing what is right in his own eyes will not enjoy good things, nor will it long exist. A stable society begins in well-trained children.

A. Parents should love their children (Titus 2:4). The Bible speaks of the kind of love God has for men — a love that gives itself to any sacrifice on behalf of the beloved in a desire to see the beloved one benefited. Parents

are to love their children like Christ loved the church. That is amazing, isn't it? Such love is not weak sentiment, but strong commitment.

B. Parents should teach their children (Ephesians 6:13). The duty of teaching rests totally on parents' shoulders. The public school system, and the educational program of the church, supplement the parental teaching; however, they do not substitute for it. A child needs to grow physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually (Luke 2:52). It is the responsibility of the parent to see that the child develops in all areas. That means that a lot of the parent's time will be invested in the child.

C. Parents should train their children. Proverbs 22:6 promises, *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* What is the difference between teaching and training? *"Train"* has the element of example added to teach. One must walk the way himself if he is to train another. Still more time is involved in that. It is a full-time job to be a parent!

D. Parents should discipline their children. *"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4).

The training, teaching, and disciplining of a child must not be of the nature to break his spirit. (A child can be so corrected as to make him give up. "What's the use of trying? I can never do anything right to please Dad.") Discipline is to correct, not to goad one to resentment.

The whole of Christian family relationships is to promote *"the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). That sort of relationship will bless and sanctify every member of the home.

Each member of the household has a duty before God. It is significant that every obligation is addressed to the one who is to respond. That way each person is accountable to God, not to some other family member, as to whether or not he obeys.

A good home life never comes by accident, but it can be destroyed by neglect. Follow God's guidelines and enjoy God's blessings on your family.

QUESTIONS

1. What does I Corinthians 11:3 mean?
2. In what sense is the husband the head of the wife?
3. How does the wife submit to and obey the husband?
4. How should husband and wife love one another?
5. How does the wife reverence the husband and the husband honor the wife?

6. Why are children commanded to obey their parents?
7. How does a child show honor to his parents?
8. How can parents train their children properly?
9. How does the church help in this training?
10. How can you have a better home life?