

**PRACTICAL MATTERS:  
FAMILY MATTERS  
EPHESIANS 5:21-6:4  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2012**

After 17 years of marriage, a man dumped his wife for a younger woman.  
The downtown luxury apartment was in his name,  
and he wanted to remain there with his new love,  
so he asked the wife to move out and then he would buy her another place and furnish it.

The wife agreed to this,  
but asked that she be given 3 days on her own there,  
to pack up her things.  
While he was gone,  
on the first day she put her personal belongings into boxes and crates and suitcases.  
On the second day, she had the movers come and collect her things.  
On the third day, she sat down for the last time at their candlelit dining table,  
soft music playing in the background,  
and feasted on a pound of shrimp and a bottle of Chardonnay.  
When she had finished,  
she went into each room and deposited a few of the shrimp shells  
into the hollow of the curtain rods.  
She then cleaned up the kitchen and left.

The ex-husband came back with his new girlfriend,  
and all was bliss for the first few days.  
Then it started; slowly but surely.  
Clueless, the man could not explain why the place smelled so bad.  
They tried everything;  
cleaning and mopping and airing the place out.  
Vents were checked for dead rodents,  
carpets were steam cleaned,  
air fresheners were hung everywhere.  
Exterminators were brought in,  
the carpets were replaced,  
and on it went.

Finally, they could take it no more and decided to move.  
The moving company arrived  
and did a very professional packing job,  
taking everything to their new home...  
including the curtain rods filled with shrimp shells.

The moral to the story is: Divorce stinks.

Those of you who have experienced divorce “up close and personal” can testify to that fact.

Even when there seems to be no other option, divorce stinks.

That is why God’s intention and the vows made at weddings are “till death do us part.”

When questioned about divorce,

Jesus said Moses gave a very few loopholes where divorce is permitted,  
most famously adultery. (Mt.5:31-32)

But, Jesus insisted, even the loopholes exist only  
because of the hard heartedness of people. (Mt.19:8)

But God’s intention from the beginning was that  
“the two become one flesh.  
Therefore, what God has joined together,  
let no one separate.” (Mt.19:4-6)

The truth is, because of the reality of human sin, marriage is hard work.

Family relationships in general can be hard work.

So you may be glad to know the Bible provides some instructions on family life.

For instance, the #1 rule for parenting is an easy one to remember.

Get ready to write this down, because it's important.

The #1 rule for parenting is, "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex.20:13)

Now, some parents might want to plead justifiable homicide based on the #1 rule for children,

"Honor your father and mother,

so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Ex.20:12)

This is the only one of the Ten Commandments with a promise attached,

"that you may live long."

As in: If you don't honor your parents, they can take you out of the game.

But that's not really what the commandment was saying.

It has to do with God protecting and providing for you.

In fact, the apostle Paul quoted this commandment when giving instructions to families in the church in Ephesus.

#### **EPHESIANS 6:1-4**

I'll come back to these verses in a minute.

First I want to touch on what is probably the most well-known saying about parenting,

"Spare the rod and spoil the child."

You've heard that, right?

The phrase first appeared in a short poem by Samuel Butler that was published in 1662,

but he may have drawn his inspiration from the biblical book of Proverbs.

In Proverbs, a collection of wisdom sayings, it says,

"He who spares the rod hates his son,

but he who loves him is careful to discipline him."

(Pr.13:24)

The idea is that sometimes discipline and punishment is necessary.

And sometimes it is the only truly loving thing to do.

It may not make your children happy with you;

They might not like you for it.

But if we do not bring some discipline into our children's lives,

they will grow into undisciplined, chaotic, unproductive adults.

But there's a very important point often missed, but lodged in the second half of the proverb:

"He who loves him is careful to discipline him."

"He who loves him."

Too often parental punishment is an expression of anger,

not loving discipline.

When it's motivated by anger,

that's when things can get out of hand and

be more destructive than constructive.

Many of us can speak to this from personal experience...

perhaps from both sides of the situation.

Bring appropriate discipline to bear BEFORE you get angry, BEFORE you lose your temper.

Bring discipline to bear not to make your own life easier,

but to shape your child's life into what God wants it to be.

Once the anger rises, once your temper begins to flare,

that's a good time to draw back out of the conflict,

cool off,

and reengage when you can do so constructively.

That may be why Paul said,

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children;  
instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Ep.6:2)

Warning against the negative,

“Do not exasperate your children.”

And then calling forth the positive duty of a parent,

“Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Teach them godly ways.

A little girl told her Sunday school teacher,

“My mom prays every night when she tucks me in.”

The teacher was impressed and asked,

“What does she pray?”

“She tucks me in, she pauses at the door, and she says,

‘Thank God she’s in bed.’”

Parents, do you model Christian faith?

Do your kids see that Jesus is important to you?

Do they see you regularly engaged in the life of the church, worshiping and serving?

Do they see your Bible open at home?

Is prayer the rule or the exception in your life?

Is your character and behavior being shaped more and more into the likeness of Christ?

“Do as I say, not as I do” won’t cut it.

You’ve got to model a life of faith for your children to see.

And Dads, all the studies show that,

while Mom’s influence in shaping a child’s faith life is significant,

the influence of Dad is even more so.

Could that be why Paul said,

“FATHERS, bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord”?

Additionally, the research says the single most important thing you can do for your children  
is build and maintain a strong, loving marriage.

Not dote on them, not give them all your time and energy,

but build and maintain a strong, loving marriage.

The apostle Paul gave instructions for husbands and wives.

### **EPHESIANS 5:22-24**

Let’s start with the verse everyone remembers.

v.22 “Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord.”

This is the verse we all remember.

Women hate it,

but don’t want to say so out loud because, after all, it is in the Bible.

Men love his verse,

but don’t want to say so out loud because they might get hit by a woman.

But a close word study going back to the original koine Greek is helpful to really unpacking this verse.

If we look at the word translated “be subject” or “submit,”

depending on the translation you’re using,

we find the Greek term “hypotasso,” which means..... “be subject” or “submit.”

Sorry, but the word means just what it says.

Verse 24 pushes the point,

lifting up the way the church is supposed to serve Christ

as the model for how a wife is to serve her husband.

Wives are instructed to serve their husbands, to look out for his well-being.

Sorry, ladies.

I know that's not what you were hoping to hear,  
but that's what it says.

In marriage, your God-given role is to serve your husband.

Guys, what do you think?

Don't answer out loud.

But isn't there something attractive in a woman who really cares about you enough  
that she takes action to serve your well-being?

Now, I've got to make a special point here,

because this passage sometimes gets twisted for use in justifying a sick relationship.

This submission does not mean you play the doormat  
and allow your husband to use and abuse you.

That is not really serving his well-being.

In fact, it reinforces in him selfish, sinful impulses,  
and is a negative spiritual influence on him.

Abusive relationships, especially where there is physical abuse, almost always escalate.

You need to get OUT...

for your good and for the good of any children you may have.

It does mean you are to put his true, overall well-being ahead of yourself,

and serve him as the Church should serve Christ.

Serve him as the Church should serve Christ.

And how is that?

Not coerced,

not out of fear,

not out of grim duty,

not grumbling with resentment.

But willingly,

driven by love,

seeking to please Christ because of

who he is and all that he has done for us.

Now, there's more to this passage than just instructions to wives.

Husbands, fasten your seatbelt, because it's your turn.

### **EPHESIANS 5:25-33**

"Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Love your wives how?

"As Christ loved the church."

And how did Christ love the church?

Does he issue heartless orders and commands?

Does he think only of himself and ignore our needs?

Does he threaten us with a fist or shout us down?

How did Christ love the church?

He "gave himself up for her."

It was in self-surrender.

Not looking out for himself, but seeking to serve the needs of others.

Jesus said, "The Son of man came not to be served, but to serve,

and to give his life as a ransom for many."

(Mt.20:28)

Not to be served, but to serve.

He would not turn stones to bread to feed himself,

(Mt.4:1-4)

but he multiplied a few loaves and fishes

to feed others who were hungry.

(Mt.14:13-21)

He defended an adulteress against her accusers,  
 but when he was on trial  
 he would not open his mouth to defend himself against false accusations.  
 He didn't have to win the argument. (Mt.26:63)

He healed many who were sick and injured,  
 but did not use his power to preserve his own body from harm.  
 He was never about self.  
 He was always about serving others.  
 All the way to the cross.

Ladies, wouldn't you love to be loved that way by your husband?  
 It would be a joy to lovingly serve a husband who loved you that way,  
 wouldn't it?

Guys, we've got our work cut out for us.

"Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."  
 Selfless love, looking out for her needs, not mine.  
 That might mean missing a ball game to do something she wants to do.  
 Helping around the house.  
 Helping with the kids; be their dad.  
 Even... I hesitate to say it... occasionally watch a chick-flick with her.

Have you noticed the instructions to husbands seems to point the same direction as the instructions to wives?

Because it all goes back to a verse that is too often skipped over,  
 but a verse that precedes and sets the stage for these instructions to husbands and wives,  
 verse 21: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Paul is calling husbands and wives to build marriages of mutual loving service,  
 each one ready and willing to sacrifice for the sake of the other person's well-being.  
 Mutual loving service.

Notice, too, that he did not say,

Wives, be subject to your husbands  
 IF he loves you as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.  
 And he did not say, Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church  
 IF she is subject to you as to the Lord.

He simply said, Be subject. Love. Serve. Do it without conditions.

I know that's not an easy thing to do,  
 but it is a beautiful thing, a powerful thing.

After ten years of marriage, Cindy and Chip Altemos were in the long process of  
 getting a divorce.

The baggage they brought from previous marriages seemed too great to overcome,  
 so they separated and even agreed to date other people.

Five years into the painful separation,  
 Chip was in the hospital with kidney failure.

With his health deteriorating rapidly,  
 his soon-to-be ex-wife came to his aid—  
 in spite of Chip's being in another relationship at the time.

She told the press,  
 "He was still my husband.  
 There was no way I could walk around with two kidneys,  
 and he had none.

It was the right thing to do."  
 She agreed to donate a kidney,

telling Chip there were no strings attached—  
 no written agreement concerning a better share in divorce court.  
 The transplant took place on February 21, 2007,  
 and a funny thing happened as they both recovered in the hospital:  
 They fell back in love.  
 Chip thought to himself,  
     “Why would I want to date someone else,  
        when I have a woman who would give part of herself  
        so I can keep living?”  
 He put an end to his other relationship  
 and asked Cindy to come back home with him.  
*(Sam McKee, Sunnyvale, California; source: Associated Press,  
 "Kidney Saves Marriage," www.foxnews.com (5-6-07))*

The ideal is mutual loving service.

But sometimes you just have to do the right thing because it's what God told you to do.  
 Seek his help in doing it and, one way or another,  
 he'll bring you a blessing.

### **SERMON NOTES:**

Jesus on divorce (Mt.5:31-32; 19:4-8)

Parenting (Ex.20:12, 13; Ep.6:1-4; Pr.13:24)

Marriage

Wives (Ep.5:22-24)

Husbands (Ep.5:25-31)

Jesus' example of selflessly loving (Mt.20:28; 4:1-4; 14:13-21; 26:63)