

SESSION 3

LIFE AT HOME

▶ **The Point**

Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out.

▶ **The Passage**

Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-3

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Home. For most people, that single word can generate a good feeling—a sense of comfort, security, and even longing. After all, “there’s no place like home.”

No matter where we live or in what season of life we currently find ourselves, home is that place where we can let our hair down and be, well, at home. It’s when we’re at home that we reveal who we really are and demonstrate what really matters to us. We might pretend to be a Christian at church, but it’s impossible to fake it at home. Home is the place where the people we love the most have a front row seat to our lives.

Whatever your situation looks like at this stage of life, Jesus wants you to be the best member of your family that you can possibly be. Thankfully, He hasn’t left you alone to figure out what that looks like. As disciples of Jesus, our identity is in Christ—and that identity can be seen in a home environment of Christ-centered love, submission, and obedience.

▶ **The Setting**

Ephesians teaches God’s desire for unity among Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ. The Lord Jesus abolished the wall of hostility that divided them and reconciled the two groups by His cross (see 2:14-16). The concept of love (*agape*) appears nearly two dozen times in six chapters. The apostle Paul, who authored the letter, also stressed God’s design for the family. He highlighted the responsibilities of husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters.

What does the Bible say?

Submit (v. 22)—The term “submit” means to voluntarily place oneself under the authority of another. The believer’s submission to Jesus Christ should reflect itself in family relationships.

Ephesians 5:22-28; 6:1-3

^{5:22} **Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.**

²³ **For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.**

²⁴ **Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**

²⁶ **to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,**

²⁷ **and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.**

²⁸ **In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

^{6:1} **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—**

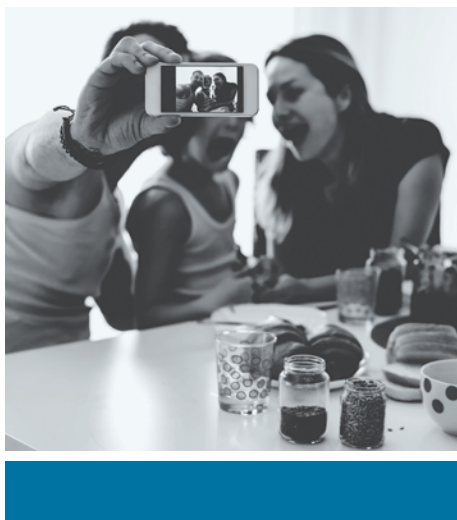
³ **“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”**

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

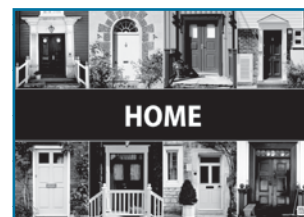
Notes



LEADER PACK: Display Pack Item 11, “Home,” to help spark conversation around Question #1, below.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 97 of the PSG: **“What do you like best about your home?”**

Note: Remind group members they don’t have to talk only about their houses—they can share about several different elements of their homes.



ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Distribute paper and pencils to each person in the group. As group members discuss Question #1, above, ask them to draw or sketch a picture of something they enjoy about their home. Allow time for volunteers to share their pictures and explain what they represent. If you have access to Pack Item 11, “Home,” you can also encourage group members to tape their pictures around the poster in order to add their own “homes” to the mix.

Note: If you have access to a portable photo printer, you could also allow group members to print images from their phones or other devices that could be added to the “Home” poster.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 98 of the PSG. Introduce the topic of living out your identity at home by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 98 of the PSG: **“Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by acknowledging that your home is a blessing from God. Pray that your group would have the wisdom necessary to explore what it means to live out your identity in Christ as part of your home.

Dotted lines for taking notes.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Ephesians 5:22-24

²² *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.*

²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

READ: Ephesians 5:22-24 on page 99 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 99 of the PSG: **“What’s your initial reaction to these verses?”**

Note: Some of your group members may have strong feelings about this passage, or perhaps a strong reaction. That’s okay. Use this question as an opportunity for everyone to get their thoughts on the table. Then, use the rest of this session to help group members find biblical footing on this issue.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How should we understand the word “submit” in these verses?

SUMMARIZE: Help group members work through the main points from pages 99-100 of the PSG in order to gain a biblical understanding of submission within a family unit:

1. “Let’s first look at submission in a broader context. As Christians, we’re all called to submit to Christ. To be a Christian is to be someone who has submitted to and acknowledged the lordship of Jesus.”
2. “As the church submits to Christ, so too ‘wives should submit to their husbands in everything.’ To submit ‘in everything’ doesn’t include things that are wrong.”
3. “In this way, submission is never a passive action. It’s a choice to live a life of obedience to Christ.”

GUIDE: If helpful, use the final two paragraphs on page 125 of this Leader Guide to gain some perspective on engaging these verses as modern followers of Christ.

TRANSITION: Verses 22-24 contained instructions for wives; it’s only appropriate, then, that verses 25-28 contain key instructions for husbands.

Ephesians 5:22-24 Commentary

Identity in Christ defines a godly wife.

[Verse 22] Paul discussed God's design for family relationships in Ephesians 5:22–6:3. Paul began by addressing how **wives** might display their identity in Christ within their marriages. The Greek word for **submit** in verse 22 does not appear in some manuscripts, but the concept is clearly present from its appearance in verse 21. The term denotes voluntarily placing oneself under the authority of another. Verse 21 indicates the people of God should willingly humble themselves and consider the needs of others ahead of their own. In verse 22, Paul highlighted specifically the marriage relationship.

Paul encouraged wives to submit to their **husbands**. Wives' submission should parallel their submission **to the Lord**. They had placed faith in Christ to provide salvation; they also needed to place faith in their husbands to lead them and their families. To do so requires a deliberate decision by the wife, an act of her will.

[Verse 23] Paul stated that **the husband is the head of the wife**. That implies he leads her faithfully. After all, he and she are part of the same team! In fact, **as Christ is the head of the church**, so the husband is to lead his wife faithfully. Marriage should reflect the relationship between Christ and the church.

Paul also reminded his audience that Jesus is the **Savior** of the body. Just as Jesus provided salvation for His church, husbands are to provide for the needs of their wives. Since Christ provided for salvation, husbands should consider how they can help nurture their wives' growth in Christ.

[Verse 24] Paul reminded believers that **the church submits to Christ**. We are to recognize His authority and voluntarily place ourselves under it. In the same way, **wives should submit to their husbands in everything**. Wives are to recognize their husband's God-given responsibility and place themselves under it.

These verses are perhaps some of the most misunderstood in the New Testament. These are not verses husbands should use to shame or manipulate their wives; good spiritual leaders would not do that. Likewise, wives should not view the verses as a "prescription for slavery" or as giving them the right to abdicate any responsibility for making a marriage work well. Marriage requires a mutual investment of both husband and wife in the relationship to which God has called them. While husbands and wives have specific roles within marriage, Paul affirmed all are equal in their standing in Christ (see Gal. 3:28). At the same time, God does call a wife to recognize her husband's leadership role.

We do not do Ephesians 5:22-24 justice if we only focus on the word *submit*. We must understand the parallels Paul drew between Christ and husbands if we are to understand how He could command wives to submit to their husbands. She chooses to believe God will lead her and her family through him as he seeks the Lord's guidance. Blessed is the wife who therefore makes praying for her husband a priority, since she knows the great responsibility he bears. Blessed is the husband who prays with his wife and shares with her matters of prayer.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Ephesians 5:25-28

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

READ: Ephesians 5:25-28 on page 100 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 100 of the PSG: **“How do these verses compare and contrast with the husbands we see today in movies and TV?”**

RECAP: Read aloud the second paragraph on page 101 of the PSG:

Christ submitted Himself to the Father and to death for our benefit—to bring us back to Himself and make us “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” What an incredible sacrifice for us! In the same way, the husband is to sacrifice himself to ensure that his wife can become everything God means her to be. When husbands love their wives they way Christ loves, they surrender their own desires in favor of what’s best for their wives. Ultimately, this is submission to Christ, because the husband is placing the needs of another before his own.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

What are some characteristics of Christ’s love that should be present in our homes?

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 101 of the PSG: **“Who’s been a positive role model for biblical sacrifice and submission in your life?”**

Note: Let group members know they don’t have to talk only about husbands or fathers when discussing this question. They can also mention women, children, singles, and so on who have modeled sacrifice and submission.

TRANSITION: As we conclude with Ephesians 6:1-3, we’ll see what our identity in Christ means for us as both parents and children today.

Ephesians 5:25-28 Commentary

Identity in Christ defines a godly husband.

[Verse 25] Paul commanded husbands to **love your wives**. The word translated “love” denotes self-denying commitment. The verb tense suggests ongoing action rather than one-time commitment. Love of one’s wife was to comprise a lifestyle; it’s one big decision to love, followed by that same decision daily.

Paul then explained the parallel to husbands loving their wives—**just as Christ loved the church**. Here, *love* is the same verb from earlier in the verse, but in a different tense. It refers to the cross when Christ **gave himself up for** the church. Christ demonstrated supreme love by giving His life for our sins. Paul applied sacrificial love to the kind of love husbands were to have for their wives. Obviously, the concept here denotes the deepest kind of love. Husbands were to follow suit.

[Verse 26] Jesus gave Himself to the church **to make her holy**, denoting setting something apart for God and service to Him. He set the church apart for Himself, that it might be all He created it to be. Paul challenged Christian husbands to follow Christ’s example. Husbands need to desire their wives’ sanctification; that is, they need to strive to help their wives become all God intended them to be.

Cleansing her by the washing with water explains more fully the result of Christ’s sacrificial work. Christ desired to prepare the church for Himself as a pure, spotless bride. The phrase **through the word** clarifies the meaning of the prior image. It is the Word of God that brings sanctification and cleansing. As we yield unconditionally to Jesus Christ, He will make us into the people He wants us to be. Christ died to accomplish that for His church. And husbands thus need to make this a priority for their wives.

[Verse 27] Jesus gave Himself because He desired to **present her to himself as a radiant church**. His love for and value of the church required Him to pay the ultimate price, and He willingly did so. Radiant is related to the Greek word for glory. **Without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish** refers to any imperfection the church might have. Old Testament worshipers were to bring spotless animals for sacrifice because God deserved the best (see Mal. 1:8-11). Thus, Christ’s intent in dying for His church was to cleanse it and to prepare it to be **holy and blameless**. Paul indirectly challenged husbands to honor and nurture their wives in such a way they would represent a holy offering to the Lord. Such a task was part of their marital stewardship.

[Verse 28] **In this same way** again stresses the parallel between Christ’s sacrificial work and marriage relationships. He affirmed that **husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies**. Later in verse 31, Paul cited Genesis 2:24, which highlights a man’s leaving his father and mother and joining to his wife as one flesh. Since they were one, he was to love her as he loved himself. Paul drove home the point with **he who loves his wife loves himself**. In the oneness that is to comprise Christian marriage, a husband is to love his wife as he loves himself.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Ephesians 6:1-3

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 *"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Say Thanks" on page 103 of the PSG.



Use the following template to express your thanks to someone (or to a couple) who has modeled for you what it means to be a biblical spouse.

Dear _____,
I'd like to thank you for the different ways you've modeled what it means to be a biblical spouse. I've noticed many wonderful characteristics in your approach to marriage, including these: _____

One of my favorite memories of your dedication to your spouse is when you _____

I am deeply grateful for your example, and I hope to use what I've learned from you as I _____.

READ: Ephesians 6:1-3 on page 102 of the PSG.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 102 of the PSG: **"How do these verses apply to your current situation?"**

Note: Encourage group members to think beyond whether or not they are currently raising children. Ask them to consider their own parents, extended family, the children in their community, and so on.

GUIDE: Ask a volunteer to read aloud the final paragraph on page 102 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Refer back to "The Point" for this session: **"Home is where our identity in Christ is clearly lived out."** Encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts and questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does our submission, sacrifice, and obedience reflect the essence of the gospel?

Ephesians 6:1-3 Commentary

Identity in Christ defines a godly child.

[Verse 1] Paul directed his attention to the children. Obedience involves recognizing the authority of another. Paul encouraged children to **obey your parents in the Lord**. Just as Paul had directed wives to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, he admonished children to reflect their faithfulness to the Lord in their obedience to their parents. The word translated **right** can also mean righteous or just (see Rom. 1:17; 1 John 1:9). Children obeying parents was right because it reflected God's design for the family. As parents led with proper authority, children would find themselves blessed by yielding to that authority.

[Verse 2] Paul rooted this instruction in the Ten Commandments. **Honor your father and mother** recalls Exodus 20:12. In the original commandment, the Hebrew word translated "honor" meant to treat as heavy or important, to give proper weight to their status as parents. The Greek word used here describes the honor Jesus gave to His heavenly Father (see John 8:49). This was **the first commandment with a promise**. Honoring one's parents would bring blessing to those who practiced it.

[Verse 3] Paul also quoted the rest of Exodus 20:12. As with the original commandment, Paul encouraged obedience to parents **so that it may go well with you**. Today, many Christians have the opportunity to honor God by honoring and caring for aging parents. Some may view this task as a burden, but others see it as a great privilege. Some parents are better equipped financially to care for their own needs; others require the support of their children. Some require long-term medical care; others do not. Whatever the situation, we should ask the Lord how we can best honor our parents in their old age.

We should not take the words **that you may enjoy long life on the earth** as an absolute promise. Yet, God did promise to bless the society that honored family values. When we carry out our family roles as God has commanded, we strengthen our families. As we strengthen our families, we strengthen Christ's church. As we strengthen Christ's church, we impact the world.

Many commentators have suggested the commandment in Exodus primarily dealt with adult children honoring their parents. It appears in Ephesians 6 that Paul intended to speak to young children as well as to adult children, particularly in light of his admonition to obey parents. Honoring one's parents was a command that applied to children of any age and to parents of any age. Christ is the foundation of a strong home. Our identity in Christ defines us and helps us to understand our family roles. Regardless of our age, we are all children, and have opportunity to serve and honor our parents every day.

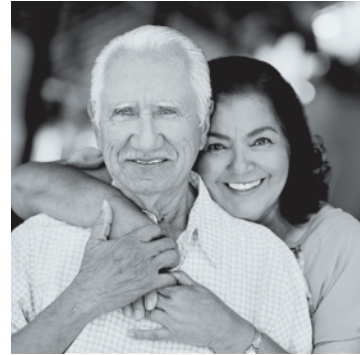
Note: Previous Biblical Illustrator articles "God as Master" (Spring 2002), "Metaphors for the Church in Ephesians" (Spring 2002), "Family Order in Greco-Roman Culture" (Summer 1993), and "Parents' Roles in the Ancient World" (Winter 1988) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at Lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.



5 minutes

LIVE IT OUT

GUIDE: Direct group members to page 104 of the PSG. Encourage them to consider the following suggestions for living out their identity in Christ when they are at home:



Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

- ▶ **Submission.** Begin each morning by actively and intentionally submitting to Christ. Verbally acknowledge Him as your Lord and Master.
- ▶ **Love.** Be on the lookout for an opportunity to demonstrate self-sacrificial love to someone important in your life—your spouse, your friend, your neighbor, and so on. Express your love both verbally and through action.
- ▶ **Honor.** Even as adults, we’re still called to honor our parents. Identify a practical way you can express that honor to one of your parents this week.

Wrap It Up

TRANSITION: Read or restate the Conclusion from page 104 of the PSG:

There certainly is no place like home. It’s likely the place where you feel most comfortable—most like your true self. For that reason, make sure your home reflects your identity as a disciple of Jesus.

PRAY: Conclude by acknowledging the important role you and your group members play as members of your homes. Pray that those homes will be places where God’s will is carried out and God’s kingdom is advanced each day.



Free additional ideas for your group are available at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra