

Living UP TO OUR Heavenly Calling

A study in the book of Ephesians

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Ephesians 5:22-6:9

This passage in Ephesians 5 has generated lots of discussion and disagreements between biblical teachers and scholars through the years. But we need to understand it as Paul intended it, considering the culture he was addressing and the new believers he was teaching.

Ephesians 5:22 – 33

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit 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 so 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. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to 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.

First, let’s consider the context here. In Ephesians 4:15 Paul is talking about walking worthy of our calling, and then in verses 20 – 21 he says:

...giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

We are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Then, note that Paul says wives should submit to their *own* husbands, so that doesn’t extend to all men. And this submission is based on being “as to the Lord.”

The husband is *head* of the wife—what does that mean?

Paul goes to great length to use Christ as head of the Church as an example of what this headship means in a marriage.

The final sentence in this passage really holds the key to a successful Christian marriage:

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:33)

Why do you think the husband is admonished to *love* and the wife is admonished to *respect*?

When husbands love their wives and express that love freely, and wives respect their husbands and express lots of respect, that marriage usually works well. But of course, this takes some pretty good communication between two people.

Mark 10:42 – 45

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

A good marriage requires servant attitudes on the part of the husband and the wife.

It should be noted that this deals with marriage, not abuse. Anyone in an abusive situation must seek personal safety as first priority.

Ephesians 6:1 – 9

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 go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

⁵ Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, ⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. ⁹ Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

The Roman Empire was pagan to the core, and there was no sense of equal treatment. Christianity was to play a major role in planting the seeds of change in the ancient world by example and unreserved commitment to Christ. The freedoms we enjoy are Christian-based principles. Without Christ, there would be no such freedoms today!

In ancient Rome, children were very vulnerable and often thrown out and abandoned, or worse. As long as a child's father lived, the child was under the father's absolute power. Also, the institution of slavery was alive and thriving. Slavery was embedded in the very fabric of society.

Paul begins this section with an address to children and then to slaves and masters. Paul addresses all of them under the topic of submission to authority.

Family obligations

Children are to obey parents

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. (Ephesians 6:1)

Other scriptures say the same thing:

- **Proverbs 1:8:** *Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*
- Of Christ to his parents: **Luke 2:51:** *And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he continued in subjection to them; and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.*
- What if you're not obedient? **Proverbs 30:17:** *The eye that mocks a father, and scorns a mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.*

Do you observe a lack of discipline in the lives of children today—more so than before? If so, what do you think has caused it?

We are to honor our parents.

Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:2-3)

Do you honor your parents even now? If your parents were not the parents they should have been, are you still supposed to honor them?

Conclusions about children

- If children are rebellious in the home, they will probably be rebellious in society.
- If children do not learn that there are consistent rights and wrongs in the home, then they will not value the laws of society.
- If children learned that they could be disobedient and disrespectful to their parents, they will be disobedient and disrespectful in society because there were no consequences to bad behavior.
- It is under the parents that children learn respect, honor, trustworthiness, and develop their work ethic.
- It is in under the parents that children are to be trained to become members of society.
- It is in under the parents that children learn that there is an authority over them, their parents, and that this authority reflects the ultimate authority of God over us all.

Fathers (parents) don't provoke the children

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4)

What are different ways we might provoke our children to anger, even unintentionally?

Why is it so often the case that mothers do more of the discipling and instructing?

What influence has your father had in your life?

Fathers represent God to their children—in many subtle ways—and that is a very high assignment. Fathers are to guard their children, protect them, nourish them, and they are held responsible by God to raise them so that they might honor the Lord Jesus in their adulthood.

Is it any wonder that the enemy attacks fatherhood and masculinity? The media often represents men as either macho studs or buffoons who can't even change a light bulb properly. These are the subtle ways that change our culture.

What happens if your children's father—your husband—left you to raise the children by yourself? Can they still be raised well?

Servant responsibilities

How people became slaves in that day:

- **Debt:** People who couldn't pay their debts could sell themselves into slavery.
- **War:** People could be captured in war and become slaves.
- **Kidnapping:** People could be kidnapped into slavery, though this was forbidden for Israelites in the Old Testament.
- **Birth:** Children born to slave parents became slaves.

Treatment of slaves

- Slaves were treated as objects and had no rights.
- They were excluded from seeking redress for injustices.

Employees are to work hard even when the employer is not watching. We are in the service of God and as Christians we represent God in our work.

Masters' responsibilities

The Masters—the employers—are to treat their employees so as to please the Lord.

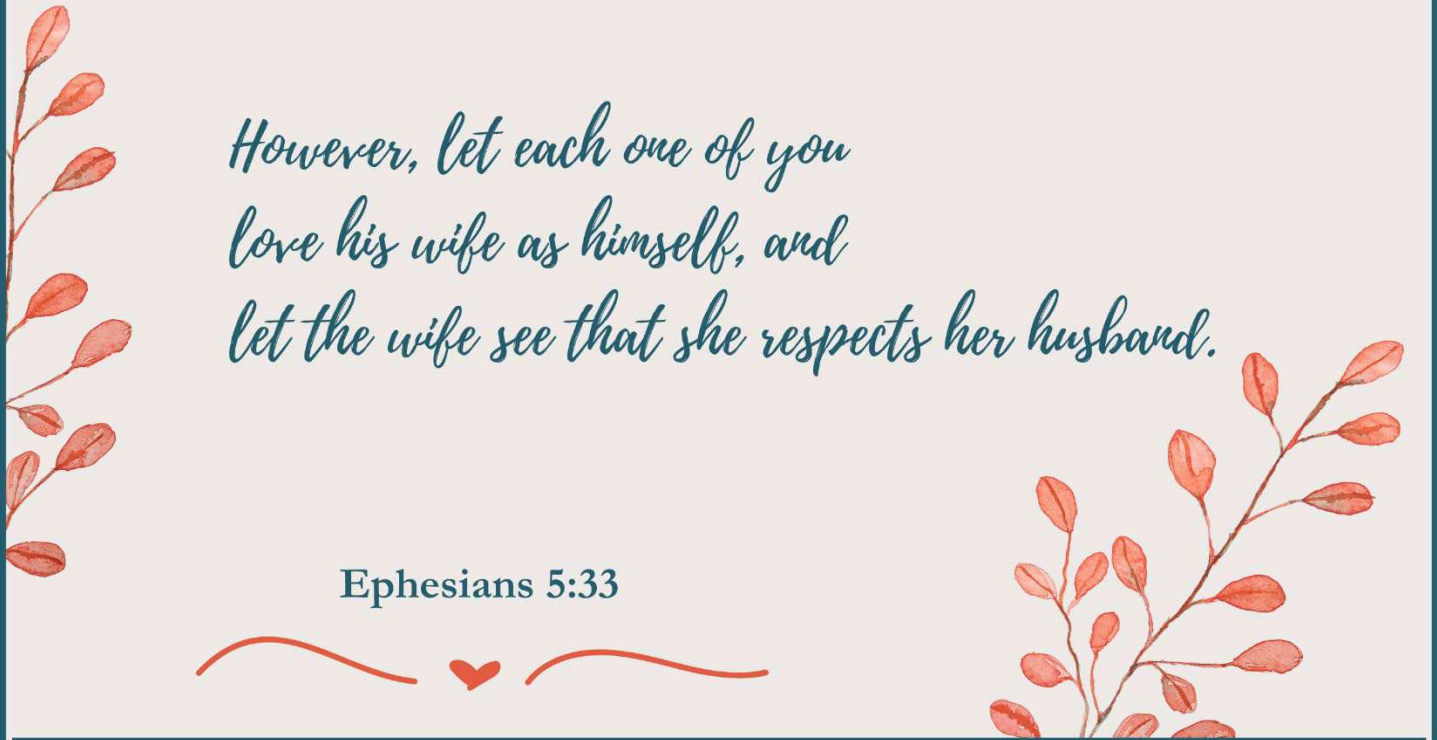
This authority that is over the servants and the Masters, the employees and employers, is a reflection of the authority within the Godhead, the Trinity.

- It was the father who sent the Son.
- The Son came to do the will of the Father.
- The Son willingly subjected himself to the authority of the Father.
- This willing subjection led him to the cross where he died as he bore our sins.

Conclusion

We see that Paul directs us to understand that there is an authority in the world, namely God. In our service at our jobs, in our ministries, and in our families, we are to do everything as “unto the Lord.”

Memory Verse



*However, let each one of you
love his wife as himself, and
let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Ephesians 5:33

