

# Ephesians

## Lesson 8 Ephesians 5:21-6:9

### Leader Guide

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## Lesson 8

### Ephesians 5:21-6:9

### Instructions for Christian Households

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. *Ephesians 5:21*

#### Prayers

#### Introduction

Leadership as a follower of Christ was difficult for the disciples to understand. They wrestled with the idea until the night of Christ's arrest. Jesus addressed the issue several times. The first time the disciples argued about who would be greatest in God's kingdom was on the road to Jerusalem. Jesus **told** them if they wanted to be first, they must become a *slave* (harsh language, but Christ intended it to be) to the other, just as he came to serve and offer his life as a ransom. The argument among the disciples continued, so on the night of his arrest, Jesus **showed** them what it meant to lead – he washed their feet as a slave would do for his master.

The Christian idea of leadership through serving the needs of others remains a difficult concept to grasp and harder for leaders to follow. In Chapter 5, Paul continues his instruction on what it means to live holy lives as children of God. He focuses on relationships with others – among all believers, husbands, wives, children and slaves. Two words he uses to describe the relationships are translated as submit and obey. The Greek words for submit and obey have subtly in their meaning. The Greek word for submit is *hupotasso*, an organizational term used in the military for "rank." In Romans 13:1, Paul tells believers to submit to government authority because of its superior rank, but in Christian relationships, there is no connotation of superiority but rather a submission to Christ. The Greek word for obey is *hupakouo*, a compound word meaning "to listen under." The word *hupakouo* (obey) conveys the idea of understanding and responding. In a spiritual sense, obeying is the outward expression of someone in submission to Christ who listens to him and responds with understanding.

#### Read Ephesians 5:21-33

Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

Eph 5:23 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.

Eph 5:24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Eph 5:26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

Eph 5:27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Eph 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Eph 5:29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—

Eph 5:30 for we are members of his body.

Eph 5:31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Eph 5:32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Eph 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

1. In verse 21, Paul instructs all believers to submit to one another. Based on your reading of Ephesians, why was it necessary for Paul to remind the Ephesians to submit to one another?

**The theme of unity in Christ is a major theme in Ephesians. The Ephesian church included Jewish and Gentile Christians who had difficulty accepting each other as fellow believers in Christ.**

2. Why is submission to one another out of reverence for Christ the basis for unity in all Christian relationships?

**The foundation of all relationships in Christ is love. Love compels us to place a higher importance on unity in our relationships with others than our own pride or agenda.**

3. Wives, submit to your husbands. Paul's statement is difficult for many women today because their marital relationship with their husbands might be abusive rather than loving and nurturing. What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband in a healthy marriage? See Ephesians 5:21–24 and 1 Peter 3:1–2.

Eph 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>1Pe 3:1</sup> Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

**This passage has been misused by men and misunderstood by women. The submission Paul speaks of is not inferior, subordinate, or passive but is mindful. It is the same as the church submitting to Christ. The church seeks to honor Christ, and Christ builds up the church. The primary need of men in marriage is... not sex, but is respect from their wife and family. Without respect, every aspect of the relationship with their wife is undermined. It is no wonder Paul and Peter write to Christian women to submit to their husbands – even if their husbands are not believers. Their example of submission might bring their husbands to faith and eternal salvation. Could there be anything more humanly significant? A healthy relationship is marked by communication. A wise husband listens to his wife; a wise wife communicates with her husband and submits to their decision.**

4. What does it mean for a husband to love his wife? Ephesians 5:25-33, 1 Peter 3:7

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares

for it, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

<sup>Eph 5:32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

1Pe 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

**Paul instructs wives with two verses but instructs husbands with seven. What does that tell you? Husbands bear the marital responsibility to present their wives to the Lord and to love them. There are consequences if he doesn't. Just as Paul recognized the need for respect in husbands, a wife's need in marriage is love. Peter admonishes husbands to treat their wives with respect because they are also heirs to life in Christ. Some women might disagree with Peter's comment that they are the weaker partner, but I found this true in our marriage. I learned this lesson on a family trip to Glacier National Park. We planned a backpacking trip along the Highline trail, which is virtually flat along a mountain ridge, but the trail was still snowed-in when we arrived in July. Consequently, we climbed 2,000 feet straight up the mountain along the horse supply trail to our accommodation in the Granite Peaks Chalet. The hike's physical stress caused a relapse of my wife's lupus, an attack she had not experienced for twenty years. One of my responsibilities as a husband was to protect my wife from physical or emotional stress that could threaten her well-being, and I failed. Husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves, seeking nothing but good for their wives. They are to do everything they can to make the Lord's command to wives easy and pleasant to do.**

5. Read Paul's instruction to children in verses 6:1-4 and discuss how children should treat their parents.

<sup>Eph 6:1</sup> Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

<sup>Eph 6:2</sup> “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—

<sup>Eph 6:3</sup> “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

<sup>Eph 6:4</sup> Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

**Children should obey them in everything - but they are kids! Kids respond more positively to discipline when parents can do it through nurturing rather than commands. Obedient, respectful, and joyful children have been wisely trained by their parents.**

6. In Ephesians 6:4, Paul tells fathers not to embitter their children [through harsh discipline]; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Consider the following statistics and discuss the importance of why Paul addresses fathers regarding discipline and faith in Christian households.

Recent statistics by Promise Keepers on the influence of fathers on their children's faith:

1. 43% of children come to faith in Christ before the age of 12 and 2/3 by the age of 18

2. Parents are the greatest influence on their children's faith.
3. Only one in 50 children attend church regularly as adults - if their father does not attend church, regardless of the wife's church attendance.
4. 2/3 to 3/4 of children attend church regularly as adults - if their father attends church regularly, regardless of the wife's church attendance

**The statistics are quite sobering for men. Men who are passive in their children's spiritual upbringing do so to their children's detriment. The decline in American church attendance, prayer, and faith was pronounced in the '70s and accelerated in the subsequent generation in the past two decades. However, the Holy Spirit is harvesting the nations, and during the same time, the church has more than doubled in India, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Indonesia. Christianity is also resurging in Iran, Russia, and China – unthinkable 20 years ago.**

7. In verses 6:5-9 Paul addresses the relationship between slaves and masters, not to condone it but to encourage slaves in their life in Christ and to reveal a profound truth to slaveholders; all Christians are equal brothers in Christ.

Slavery was a corrupt and brutal reality in the Roman Empire. Enslaved people rebelled, murdering their masters, and were put to death – by the thousands. Three major slave revolts occurred before the writing of the gospel. In 135-132 BC, a group of slaves rebelled on the island of Sicily. Eventually, their numbers reached 200,000, and they took possession of the entire island. A Roman army was dispatched and quelled the rebellion in three years. The last 20,000 slaves were captured and crucified.

A second Roman slave rebellion occurred 30 years later in Sicily from 104BC until 100BC. The number of slaves in the rebellion reached 40,000, and they captured several cities. Rome dispatched an army of 17,000 soldiers plus mercenaries. They killed 20,000 slaves in the first battle. After several other battles, Rome quelled the revolt, and the remaining 1,000 slaves were captured and sent to Rome to die in the arena. The slaves refused to fight each other and committed suicide.

The third large slave revolt began in 73 BC, famously led by 70 slave gladiators in Capua under the leadership of Spartacus. The number of slaves in revolt eventually reached about 120,000. Rome eventually dispatched an army of eight legions (about 40,000) who crushed the rebellion and crucified the remaining 6,000 slaves along the Appian Way.

<sup>Eph 6:5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

<sup>Eph 6:9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

- a. What radical concept does Paul teach in Ephesians 6:5-9?

**Paul's radical teaching was that there is no difference between the master and slave to God.**

- b. How are all Christians slaves?

**All Christians should view their lives as slaves to Christ. We should serve him wholeheartedly in everything we do because he is our Master.**

8. The essence of Christian submission is placing the needs of others above your own. How would this view impact your:
  - a. Marriage
  - b. Children
  - c. Employment
  - d. Neighbors and community

**This concept is so fundamentally different than our outlook that even if we practiced a fraction of putting the needs of others ahead of our own, it would transform our relationships and society.**

### **Closing**

Dear Father in heaven, we praise and give you thanks in all things. We pray for your wisdom and healing in our relationships. Help us to be loving and nurturing. We pray that we treasure our spouses and our children. We pray for the protection of our children from sickness, danger, and temptations that assault their minds. Please help us to be mindful of the needs of others and grant us the wisdom to respond to their needs in ways that are pleasing to you. AMEN