



Mountain Ridge Church

Crazy Normal • Great Expectations • Ephesians 5:21–6:4 • 04/28/2019

Main Point

God designed family relationships to help us better relate to one another and reflect His character to the world.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Why do you think family is important to God?

What are some specific ways—either positively or negatively—your family has influenced you?

God established the family as a representation of His relationship with His followers; He is our Father and we are His children (1 John 3:2). Whether or not we are married or have children, God's design for the family teaches us about how we are to relate to one another. Many of these relationships are in trouble because they fail to follow biblical commands that guide them. In Ephesians 5, Paul gives specific instructions for marriage and family.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Ephesians 5:21-33.

How would you define submission? Why does the word tend to stir up controversy?

How is Jesus' work on the cross an example of submission for us?

Mentioning the word submission usually generates negative reactions. One way to understand it is as yielding to the interests and needs of another person over your own. Paul charged that submission expressed devotion to God. It also demonstrated that the church took seriously the example of submission set by Jesus, who selflessly gave Himself on the cross for our best interest.

How does the church submit to Christ?

Why do you think God created man and woman to understand and experience love in such different ways?

How does a relationship centered on sacrificial love and submission reflect the gospel? How can you and your spouse keep these ideas as a common part of your marriage?

Though Ephesians 5 is often quoted to remind women of their struggle of submission, it is the husband who actually receives the greater challenge from God. She must submit. He must love with the love of Jesus. It is clear though that each action serves the other. The wife, in submitting, encourages her husband to Christ-likeness and the husband, in loving like Jesus, makes it easier for the wife to submit.

What happens in a marriage that lacks love and respect? What about other relationships?

How can living out God's marriage ideals be difficult? In what ways can it be rewarding?

What value does a passage like this have for you if you aren't married?

Paul summarized the relationship between the husband and wife by calling them to love and respect each other. Mutual love and respect offers the best chance for a successful home. Paul then transitioned to the relationship between children and parents.

| Have a volunteer read Ephesians 6:1-4.

What do you think might result from a society in which people generally honor and obey their parents?

How can children of all ages and family situations give their parents the respect God commands?

What are the most important ways that Christian parenting is different from secular parenting?

What if your parents aren't Christians? How might you still show them respect?

No Christian ever gets beyond the responsibility to show respect for his or her parents by honoring them as long as they live. If children are to honor their parents, then parents have a reciprocal responsibility to be

submissive to their needs in ways that will lead them to maturity. Growing up in a Christian home is to be a positive, encouraging experience for both parents and children.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Christianity has a significant impact on family relationships. We act on this by submitting to other believers, respecting and loving our spouses, honoring our parents, and lovingly raising our children. Scripture shows that God desires for these relationships to look differently among His followers than those who do not yet know Him. Ultimately, our earthly relationships should model our spiritual relationship with God.

Why do you think so much of the Bible is devoted to teaching about family relationships?

What should we learn from this fact?

What elements do you believe are vital to a good, godly marriage? Which of these needs the most attention in your marriage? What is something you can do to focus on it?

What happens in relationships that lack love and respect?

What is something you can do this week to show love and respect to someone in your family?

Pray

Pray that your family would better reflect Him and His character to the world. Thank Him for Jesus' example of submission at the cross.

Commentary

| Ephesians 5:21–6:4

Paul laid out the implications for Christian living in his letter to the Ephesian church. Chapter 5 focuses in on Christian living in the world. As Paul wrote about how God expects His people to behave, he came to consider family relationships.

5:21. Paul ends a list of actions that show the Holy Spirit's presence in a believer's life by commanding submission to one another. In today's society, the idea may seem odd. Yet in Christian fellowship we must be willing to learn from others, even from those who differ from us in age, gender, or station in life. We are also called on to serve one another and be willing to accept counsel and correction from others. An aggressive, arrogant attitude is the opposite of being careful in the way we live.

5:22. Paul then transitioned to marriage. In the ancient world, women were often oppressed by men. Women also had few legal rights and were considered unworthy of education. Husbands often treated their wives as fit only for keeping house and raising children. Paul gave Christian wives great dignity by speaking to them as moral agents capable of good decisions. On the basis of their personal relationship with Jesus, wives were to submit to their husbands. He viewed this as an act of service to Christ.

5:23-24. Paul noted a parallel between the role that Christ has as Head of the church and husband has as head of the wife. The essential characteristic of Jesus' headship is not so much dominating as it is delivering. Christ's headship over the church is that of care more than control. Paul implied that wives who see their husbands exhibiting sacrificial care will be more willing to submit to their leadership.

5:25-28. Husbands in the first century were used to the culturally acceptable pattern of demeaning their wives. Therefore, Paul had to take a firm hand in instructing the men of Ephesus. Most of them probably had never seen the example of a home in which the husband truly loved his wife sacrificially. This fact may explain why Paul went to Christ's love for the church as the example of love that husbands are to follow. The best love-pattern to follow is Christ, who gave Himself in sacrificial death for His beloved. These verses apply not only to husbands, but also to their friends and families. They are to support and honor a husband's love for his wife and do nothing to challenge, diminish, or otherwise interfere in his relationship with her.

5:29-31. As Paul finalized his instructions to husbands and wives, he emphasized that the expression of unity in a marriage goes far beyond sex. It includes every area of a couple's life and relationship. A couple's unity is based on recognizing that previous family ties are to be reprioritized after marriage. Husbands and wives are intentionally to leave their parents. Their primary human loyalty is to each other.

5:32-33. It was no mystery that husband and wife join together as one flesh. That teaching went back to Genesis. The mystery was that the redeemed and the Lord Jesus are joined together in one body, which a godly marriage reflects. Thus on the one hand, Christian husbands (and wives) look to Jesus' sacrificial self-giving as the supreme example of love. On the other hand, a godly, "one-flesh" marriage visibly models the one-flesh relationship between Christ (the Bridegroom-Head) and His people (the bride-body).

6:1. Instructions for children follows Paul's instructions for marriage. Homes are the building blocks for every society. Children growing up in a Christian home need to learn to be obedient to their parents, just like all other kids need to learn this. The verb "obey" is stronger than the verb "submit," which Paul had used to speak of the response of a wife to her husband's love (5:22). Although the apostle no doubt thought of a child's obedience as absolute, he laid a foundation for obedience in the phrase "this is right." It's simply the right thing for the survival of humanity for children to learn to do as they are told.

6:2-3. Not only is children's obedience proper, it is stated in the Ten Commandments to be God's law. The Fifth Commandment uses the verb "honor" (Ex. 20:12) in regard to parents. "Honor" includes respect and

admiration, which all children are to continue giving to their parents as long as they live—long after they have moved out from their parents' home and have become independent.

6:4. If children are to honor their parents, then parents have a reciprocal responsibility. In effect, parents are to be submissive to the needs of their children. Though addressed specifically to fathers, this verse has application for all parents, both mothers and fathers. The verb “stir up anger” can also be translated “exasperate” or “provoke to anger.” It refers to discipline so harsh that it evokes bitterness and resentment. It may even encourage disobedience. No parents ever have a “right” to taunt or be unreasonable with children. Growing up in a Christian home is to be a positive, encouraging experience for both parents and children.