



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Ephesians 5.21-6.9

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I. Introduction to this Study

The apostle Paul now writes about the Christian home, and what relationships should look like under the authority of Christ Jesus.

II. Connecting With One Another

Answer either of these:

- Briefly describe your ideal marriage, family or relationship with co-workers. What makes it ideal?
- Whether you are married or single, when is it difficult for you to humbly submit your will to that of another person? Why?

III. Study the Text

- a. Paul addresses marriage, family and co-worker relationships in this passage. Read Ephesians 5.21. What attitude are we to have toward others? What should submission look like in daily life? How do you react to the notion of submitting to someone? Why?
- b. Look back at Ephesians 5.18. What are Christians to allow themselves to be filled with? How does this help us to submit to one another?
- c. Read Ephesians 5.22-33. Why does Paul tell wives to submit to their husbands (5.22-24)? Does remembering that a wife is really submitting to the Lord affect submission to a husband?

All bodies must have a head. Paul's use of *head* here is not harsh. He will immediately nuance it with reference to the husband's responsibility to the wife. Still, in our modern culture, the idea of *headship* and *submission* within marriage can be uncomfortable for some. Has our society become so egalitarian (the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and treatment) that it negates the need for this headship in marriage and families? Why or why not?

- d. How are husbands to treat their wives (vv. 25-33)? How does comparing a husband's love for his wife to how the Messiah loved the church remove any danger of the husband abusing the wife's submission?

N.T. Wright comments: *...within marriage, the guideline is clear. The husband is to take the lead—though he is to do so fully mindful of the self-sacrificial model which the Messiah provided. The church became the Messiah's bride, not by being dragged off unwillingly by force, but because he gave himself totally and utterly for her. As soon as "taking the lead" becomes bullying or arrogant, the whole thing collapses.*

*If this guideline still seems outrageous in today's culture, we should ask ourselves: do our modern societies, in which marriage is often a tragedy or a joke, really offer a better model of how to do it? Does the specter of broken homes littering modern Western culture*

indicate that we've got it right and can tell the rest of human history how we finally resolved the battle of the sexes? Or does it indicate that we still need to do some rethinking somewhere?

- e. What are some practical ways husbands and wives can live out 5.33?
- f. Read Ephesians 6.1-9. What does it mean for children to obey and honor their parents (6.1-3)?
- g. How can fathers—and mothers—practice the commands for them in verse 4?
- h. N.T. Wright writes: *Paul could no more envisage a world without slavery than we can envisage a world without electricity. The way Paul's world worked was through slaves taking a vital place in most households except those of the very poor. If Paul were writing this letter today, he would address his instructions to employees and employers.*  
How are slaves, or employees, to do their work (6.5-8)? In turn, how are masters, or employers, to treat their slaves, or employees (6.9)?
- i. What does the mutual submission described in 5.21 look like for parents and children? For employees and employers?
- j. Choose one role from this passage: husband, wife, parent, child, employer or employee. When is it hard for you to follow Paul's instructions for that role, and what would help you change?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Thank God that you can have new relationships through faith in Jesus.
- b. Ask God to help you live according to Paul's instructions here, in whatever role you find yourself.
- c. Pray for Christian marriages, families, employers and employees, that they would represent Christ well to the world.
- d. Pray for those you know who need transformation in their relationships, asking God to bring his grace to bear in their lives.

