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## #DiscipleshipTuesday



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# Help for the Family (Part 1)

Genesis 21:9-21; Proverbs 23:15-24;

1 Corinthians 7:7-9, 32-35; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4

## Unit Theme:

Help for Life's Journey

## Central Truth:

Christians are to honor God in their homes.

## Focus:

Study God's Word concerning adult and family relationships, and honor God with our lives.

## Context:

Various Scripture texts regarding family relations

## Golden Text:

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

## Study Outline:

- I. On Being Single  
(1 Cor. 7:7-9, 32-35)
- II. On Being Husband and Wife  
(Eph. 5:22-33)
- III. On Being Parents  
(Eph. 6:1-4;  
Prov. 23:15-24;  
Gen. 21:14-21)

## INTRODUCTION

In New Testament times, most cultures held women in low esteem. If you asked a Jewish man what he thought of women, he would recite the prayer often prayed by Jewish males: "I thank God I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." Among the Greeks, prostitution was a way of life so that women were looked upon as objects of pleasure. In the Roman world, historians say that "women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married." Not everyone in a given culture embraced these attitudes, but they were commonly held.

In contrast to these views, the Christian attitude is expressed by the apostle Paul. Of those who have embraced Christ as Savior, Paul wrote: "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all . . . one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28 NLT). Within the body of Christ, the apostle says there is no distinction between male and female. Women are no longer treated as they were by the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans. A new day has dawned for them. What an elevation this is for women—an elevation offered only by Christianity.

This lesson is about how Paul and others apply this principle to those who have chosen the single life, to husbands and wives, and to parents and children. He also defends the single lifestyle of those who feel they are gifted in this way. He embraces the beauty of the relationship between a man and a woman who have chosen a married lifestyle. Paul understood that marriage requires an effort on the part of both parties. Someone has said, "Success in marriage consists not only in finding the right mate, but also in being the right mate." This lesson also offers biblical guidance to parents as to how they are to raise their children, and to children as to the proper attitude toward parents.

I. ON BEING SINGLE (1 Cor. 7:7-9, 32-35)

A. The Gift of Singleness (vv. 7-9)

**7. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.**

**8. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.**

**9. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.**

Some say that Paul was never married, and others say that he was married at one time and that his wife either died or left him when he converted to Christianity. They add that if he was once married, then he could speak from experience about both the single life and the married life. What seems to be clear is that Paul is not married at the time he is writing this letter.

Paul considered his celibacy a gift from God. He was content to be unmarried and possessed the self-control to resist temptations of the flesh. He desired that all men be as he was; that is, committed to the service of Christ and resistant to the temptations of the devil.

At the same time, the apostle is not suggesting that all men should be celibate or that all men should marry. Each should live according to the gift God has given him. Some have the gift of singleness and others have the gift of marriage. Some prefer the single life; others are best suited for marriage. Paul sees that both lifestyles can be a gift from God.

The apostle has some advice for those who are unmarried and for widows. By the term “unmarried” he refers to men who have never been married, or who had been married but whose wives had died. He includes widows—women who had lost their husbands—in his admonition. He says it is best for them to remain single. Perhaps he felt that they would be less encumbered with the cares of life, and have more time to serve the Lord. But if they do not have the discipline to remain pure and chaste, rather than fall into sexual sin as some seem to have done, they should marry.

B. Marriage and Singleness Contrasted (vv. 32-34)

**32. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:**

**33. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.**

**34. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband.**

**Talk About It:**

1. What did Paul wish, and why (v. 7-8)?
2. What did Paul mean by saying, “each one has his own gift” (v. 7 NKJV)?
3. Explain verse 8.

“God promises spectacular blessings to those of you who remain single in Christ, and He gives you an extraordinary calling for your life. To be single in Christ is, therefore, not a falling short of God’s best, but a path of Christ-exalting, covenant-keeping obedience that many are called to walk.”

—John Piper

**carefulness (v. 32)**—“free from concern” (NIV)

**Talk About It:**

1. What is the advantage of being an unmarried man (vv. 32-33)?
2. What is the advantage of being an unmarried woman (v. 34)?

“Marriage has in it less of beauty, but more of safety, than the single life; it has not more ease, but less danger; it is more merry and more sad; it is fuller of sorrow and of joys.”

—Jeremy Taylor

snare—“leash”  
(NKJV)

comely—“proper”  
(NKJV)

Paul’s concern for both singles and marrieds is that they not be overcome with the cares of this life. He wants both to live free from anxiety. He echoed this thought when he wrote to the Philippians: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus” (4:6-7 NLT).

The apostle indicates that the single person may have more opportunity to spend time in reading and studying the Word of God, in prayer, and in working in the service of the Lord. It does not mean that all do, but the opportunity is there. For example, it was probably easier for Paul to send Timothy out as his ambassador to some of the churches than it would have been for him to send Aquila. Aquila had a wife to be concerned about, while Timothy did not.

A married man’s attention is divided in that he must provide for the support of his family. This is not true of all husbands. Some make no effort to provide for their family; the Bible says such a person is “worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Married men should provide for their family and be devoted to the Lord. This brings honor and glory to God. However, married men may not have as many opportunities to do service for the Lord as singles may have. On this account, Paul seems to prefer the single life.

This contrast between the single state and the married state applies to men and women alike. Just as husbands are concerned about providing for the family, wives are busy taking care of the house, bringing up the children in a Christian fashion, and honoring the husband. For this reason, the single woman may have some advantage over the married woman in time devoted to Christian work.

C. Undivided Devotion to the Lord (v. 35)

**35. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.**

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of Paul’s teaching in this verse is insightful: “I’m trying to be helpful and make it as easy as possible for you, not make things harder. All I want is for you to be able to develop a way of life in which you can spend plenty of time together with the Master without a lot of distractions” (TM).

Paul has set before the Corinthians the advantages and disadvantages of both the single life and the married life. It is now up to them to decide which lifestyle is best for them and which allows for the least distraction in their service for

the Lord. Ultimately, he calls for a life of undivided devotion to the Lord which is within the grasp of both the married person and the single person.

We serve the best Master man ever had; how dedicated are we to the calling He has placed on our lives? How well do we measure up to Paul's admonition, "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31 NKJV)? He is worthy of that kind of undivided devotion.

## II. ON BEING HUSBAND AND WIFE (Eph. 5:22-33)

### A. The Duty of Wives (vv. 22-24)

**22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.**

**23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.**

**24. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.**

Paul is writing against a background in which women had virtually no legal rights and where they were held in low esteem. This was true among the Jews, in the Greek world, and even more so in the Roman world. William Barclay wrote, "It is impossible to exaggerate the cleansing effect that Christianity had on home life in the ancient world and the benefits it brought to women."

This passage represents Paul's view of marriage. It has been approximately nine years since he wrote 1 Corinthians 7. If anyone got the idea that he had a low opinion of marriage in that passage, he corrects that notion here in Ephesians 5.

The verse immediately preceding this passage calls on all believers (including husbands and wives) to "submit to one another in the fear of God" (see v. 21). It is in that context that the apostle addresses the duty of wives and husbands. First, he speaks to the duty of wives. The submission wives are to show to their husbands is manifested in their honor and respect for them. They should speak well of their husbands, appreciate the good they see in them, and bear with them in their faults. Their faithfulness should embrace the good times and the bad times. Wives are to be in submission to their husbands, but this does not mean that they are subservient to them. Their submission should be as in the sight of the Lord and according to His command.

Second, Paul addresses the duty of husbands. As the head of the wife, the husband is to relate to her as Christ relates to the Church—not domineering but cherishing. As the Head of the Church, Christ offers provision, preservation, protection, and salvation. Husbands should mirror the Lord

"To wait on God is to live a life of desire toward Him, delight in Him, dependence on Him, and devotedness to Him."

—Matthew Henry

### Talk About It:

1. How must wives "submit" to their husbands (vv. 22, 24)?
2. Describe the husband's role (v. 23).
3. Discuss ways the biblical roles of husband and wife have been distorted.

"It is hard for a wife to submit when she disagrees with her husband. But when she knows her submission is an act of obedience to Christ, it is much less difficult."

—R. C. Sproul

to their wives by their behavior. Wives will gladly honor and respect husbands who relate to them in the spirit of Christ.

B. The Duty of Husbands (vv. 25-29)

**25. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;**

**26. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**

**27. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.**

**28. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.**

**29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.**

God commands husbands to love their wives. This is not the only time God commands us to love. We are commanded to love Him, to love our neighbor, and to love one another. The love husbands are to show their wives is the highest form of love. It manifests itself in honor and respect toward their wives, both in private and in public. When husbands love their wives in this fashion, they take delight in them and find pleasure in their company. This kind of love exceeds the love an individual has for parents, children, or neighbors. The love a husband is to have for his wife is comparable to the love Christ has for the Church. The greatness of His love is shown in that He “gave himself” for the Church.

For a moment, Paul concentrates on the provision Christ has made for humanity through His death on the cross. Because of Adam’s fall and personal transgression, men and women are alienated from God and unable to remedy their situation. Christ came to make atonement through the shedding of His blood that He might cleanse us from our iniquity. Those who accept Him by faith are made pure so He can present them holy and blameless in the sight of divine justice.

The Lord has given husbands an example. As Christ loves His bride (the Church), they are to love their bride. Clearly, Christ nourishes and cherishes the Church. As Christ has provided all that the Church needs pertaining to life and godliness, so husbands should care for their wives in a way that brings them comfort and happiness. First Corinthians 13 is known as the love chapter of the Bible. John Phillips has suggested, “Every husband should take a weekly tour of that chapter and apply each of its clauses to himself and his attitude toward his wife.”

C. The Mutual Duties of Husband and Wife (vv. 30-33)

**30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.**

#### Talk About It:

1. Describe the sacrificial love required of husbands (v. 25).
2. How does Christ serve His bride—the Church (vv. 26-27)?
3. Explain the phrase “He who loves his wife loves himself” (v. 28 NKJV).

#### Real Relationships

In his book *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck says God designed us to yearn for open, honest, authentic relationships. But too many marriages, family relationships, and friendships are strictly surface level. No one says anything “unsafe.” Misunderstandings arise, but they’re never resolved. Feelings beg to be shared, but they’re not. Offenses occur, but nobody talks about them. In time, such relationships deteriorate. Peck says the situation changes only when hurts are unburied, hostilities revealed, and tough questions asked.

**31. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.**

**32. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

**33. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.**

The apostle continues using the union between Christ and the Church to illustrate the marriage relationship. He reminds us that believers make up the body of Christ, having been made new creatures in Him. Being members of His body, we are brought together in union with Christ. Paul wrote to the Romans, “We who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another” (12:5 NET).

Paul repeats the law of marriage found in Genesis 2:24 to show the deep affection that should exist between a husband and a wife. He called this a “great mystery” (Eph. 5:32)—two people becoming as one. A man cleaves to his wife, picturing the strong affection Christ has for the Church.

In summary fashion, Paul reminds the husband to love his wife since she is one flesh with him, and the wife to honor her husband since he leaves father and mother for her (v. 33). Adam Clarke observed: “The husband is to love his wife, the wife to obey and venerate her husband; love and protection on the one hand, affectionate subjection and fidelity on the other. The husband should provide for his wife . . . watch over her . . . love her without jealousy . . . and be hers entirely. . . . In short, they have equal rights and equal claims. . . . Without the woman, man is but half a human being; in union with the man, the woman finds her safety and perfection.”

The best way to fulfill their respective duties is for husbands and wives to approach them prayerfully. God’s grace is sufficient to enable them to relate to each other in a Christlike manner. Another factor in fulfilling responsibilities to each other is to be understanding. Everyone has weaknesses, and sometimes it is necessary to make allowances for them. Some things just need to be overlooked. It is not hard for love to encourage rather than complain, to forgive instead of accuse.

III. ON BEING PARENTS (Eph. 6:1-4; Prov. 23:15-24;

Gen. 21:14-21)

A. Parents and Children (Eph. 6:1-4)

**1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.**

reverence (v. 33)—  
respect

**Talk About It:**

1. Describe the union of husband and wife, and its sacredness (vv. 30-32).
2. What does Paul reiterate in verse 33?

“If you devote yourself with all your heart to the holy joy of your spouse, you will also be living for your joy and making a marriage after the image of Christ and His church.”

—John Piper

**2. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;**

**3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.**

**4. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

**Talk About It:**

1. What does it mean to obey one's parents "in the Lord" (v. 1)?
2. Describe the promise and its condition (vv. 2-3).
3. What must fathers *not* do (v. 4)?

Paul begins this chapter by instructing children to obey their parents. Children who honor their parents as authority figures will grow up to respect other authority figures and will ultimately recognize the authority of God over their lives. No better example of honoring one's parents can be found than Jesus. When Jesus was twelve years old, He recognized the role of Joseph and Mary as parents over Him "and was subject unto them" (Luke 2:51).

The only limitation to this call to obedience is when parents require a child to do something that is contrary to the will of God. A child is under no obligation to do something that is sinful. Beyond that, parents are to be obeyed because it is the right thing to do.

Children are to honor their *father and mother*, which explains who parents are: They are not "mother and mother" or "father and father," but "father and mother."

Parents are to be loved and respected. This is the first commandment with promise, and that promise is that things will go well for the child in this world and in the world to come (see Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16). Disobedience to parents can bring the judgment of God on children. One sad example is rebellious Absalom, who suffered an untimely death (see 2 Sam. 18:14).

The apostle offers a negative and a positive to fathers—words that apply to both parents—in the treatment of children (Eph. 6:4). First, they are not to "provoke" their children to anger—to *irritate* or *exasperate* by the way they treat them. Parents may provoke their children by belittling them, publicly embarrassing them, preferring one child over another, physically abusing them, or by other reasons.

Second, the positive side of the apostle's instruction is that parents should give their children godly guidance and advice. They should teach their children by their own example, by taking them to church, by praying with them, and by encouraging them to read and study the Bible. Parents should "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

B. A Father's Wise Counsel (Prov. 23:15-24)  
(Proverbs 23:16-21, 23 is not included in the printed text.)

"Faithfully disciplining (training, educating, correcting) your child in a manner that pleases the Lord is an expression of biblical love. It also is a step of obedience for you as a parent and provides godly direction for your child."

—John C. Broger



**15. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.**

**22. Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old.**

**24. The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.**

If a child wants to make his parents happy, he needs to find the path of wisdom and walk in it. The height of wisdom is to make Christ the foundation of one's life. What joy it brings to believing parents to see their children grow in the knowledge of the Lord (vv. 15-16).

Children who are wise do not envy the prosperity and happiness that sinners seem to enjoy, for their pleasure is only temporary, and there is a better way (vv. 17-18). By contrast, believing children walk with reverence for God by trusting Him, loving Him, and rejoicing in Him. Why should wise children envy those whose pleasures will fade away when there awaits for the wise "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for [them]" (1 Peter 1:4 NKJV)?

Solomon warns his son against spending time with drunkards and gluttons (Prov. 23:20). The danger of keeping company with these sorts is the temptation to take up their habits. To do so is to follow a destructive path that ends in ruin (v. 21).

The guidance one should be following is that of a godly father and mother. Solomon reminds his son that his father has a deep love and affection for him and is interested only in what is best for him (v. 22). Besides that, he has lived longer, had more experience, and has a better understanding of how things work. So the advice he offers is well worth hearing.

Children should not only listen to their father, they should also heed the counsel of their mother "when she is old" (v. 22). She, too, is looking out for their well-being. It would be a grave error to regard her words of wisdom as silly talk or old wives' fables.

Solomon concludes this section with the thought: "The father of godly children has cause for joy. What a pleasure it is to have children who are wise" (v. 24 NLT).

C. A Mother's Care for Her Son (Gen. 21:14-21)

(Genesis 21:14-16, 19-21 is not included in the printed text.)

**17. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.**

**18. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.**

**Talk About It:**

1. What makes a godly father "rejoice" (vv. 15-16, 24)?
2. List the warnings the father gives to his son (vv. 17-21).
3. How should a child respond to his or her parents (v. 22)?
4. What is a most valuable commodity, and why (v. 23)?

"A child who is allowed to be disrespectful to his parents will not have true respect for anyone."

—Billy Graham

### Talk About It:

1. Describe Hagar's love for her son (vv. 14-16).
2. How did God comfort Hagar (v. 17)?
3. What did God promise her (v. 18)?
4. How did God provide for her (v. 19)?
5. What did God do for Ishmael (v. 20)?

“The impression that a praying mother leaves upon her children is lifelong. Perhaps when you are dead and gone, your prayer will be answered.”

—D. L. Moody

Abraham provided Hagar with such supplies as she could carry and sent her and Ishmael out from his house (v. 14). According to Jewish writers, Ishmael was about seventeen years old when this happened. Apparently they got lost in the wilderness and wandered about until their water supply was depleted. At such time, Ishmael became completely exhausted to the point that Hagar thought him to be dying. She separated herself from him because she could not bear to see him suffer, and cried out to God in his behalf. In answer to her prayers, God saw the tears of the boy, had compassion, and opened Hagar's eyes to see a well full of water nearby (v. 19). She took water from the well and gave it to him to drink. He was revived and his life was saved. He grew up to be a mighty man, and from him came a great nation.

Hagar's experience gives us an idea of what it can be like to be a single parent. She had the sole responsibility for her child. Whatever happened to the child was on her shoulders. In his case, the situation became desperate. She had no human help available. Alone, she faced the possibility of losing her child.

Hagar did what every parent, single or otherwise, should do—she sought the face of God in behalf of her child. God heard her prayers and intervened to save the child's life. The best thing any parent can do is to put their children in the hands of God and teach them the ways of the Lord.

Parenting expert Kevin Leman, in his book *Single Parenting That Works*, lists several keys to raising happy, healthy children in a single-parent home. One key he mentions is to create a plan that starts with life's basics, keeps the whole picture of life in proper perspective, and takes life one day at a time. Leman urges single parents to focus on the ABCs, saying that all children long for *acceptance*, *belonging*, and *competence*. The single parent should balance rules, love, and limits to bring health and happiness to their child.

### CONCLUSION

As you reflect on the biblical truths taught in this lesson, has your attitude toward those who have chosen a single lifestyle changed in any way? Do you embrace the beauty of the marriage lifestyle as completely as does the apostle Paul? If you are a parent, have you been challenged to relate to your children in a more tender and loving way—disciplining when necessary, but encouraging always? Do you have a new sense of letting the Bible be your guide in all matters pertaining to life—single or married?

### GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE

“CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE; . . . BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD” (Josh. 24:15).

It is too easy to dismiss the advice and counsel of older adults because they are often considered out of touch with contemporary culture. I am sure this was true in Joshua's day since little was different than today. We are living in the fifth generation of the modern Pentecostal Movement, but it is time to heed the same counsel Joshua gave to his people.

After giving them a history lesson on God's miraculous provision and deliverance to their fathers, he challenged them to forsake the gods they served and to follow the Lord. Joshua's leadership came through with his stating his own decision to lead his family in serving God.

Our children may seem disobedient and irresponsible, but we can stand on our faith in God and believe that the Word He gave us will also provide our offspring the wisdom to choose wisely. All of Israel chose to serve God at this point, and we too must believe our church with all our children will choose to follow Christ.

We look for a city whose builder and maker is God, and we will find this city only when we choose to serve Him. Whatever our age, we must become as children learning from our fathers the discipline of love and service to the Lord.

**Daily Devotions:**

- M. Marriage Provides Companionship  
Genesis 2:18-24
- T. Parents to Provide Religious Instruction  
Deuteronomy 6:1-9
- W. Rejoice in Your Spouse  
Proverbs 5:15-21
- T. Serving in Singleness  
Matthew 19:10-12
- F. Teaching Needed  
Titus 2:1-5
- S. Heirs Together of God's Grace  
1 Peter 3:1-7