

# Jesus Is Precious as the Foundation of the Family

by John Piper

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*Christian family life is a work of the Spirit of God among those who do everything they do for Christ's sake.*

**Duration:** 32:13

**Scripture:** Ephesians 5:15-22, Ephesians 5:25, Ephesians 6:1, Ephesians 6:4-5, Ephesians 6:9

**Topics:** "Preciousness Of Jesus"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the importance of living wisely and understanding the will of the Lord. He emphasizes the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit rather than indulging in worldly pleasures like getting drunk. The speaker then highlights the effects of being filled with the Spirit, which include addressing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord, and always giving thanks in the name of Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes by discussing the unique roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives, comparing the wife to the church and the husband to Christ. The speaker emphasizes that God is not indifferent to our family relationships and that Christ should be the Lord of everything in our lives.

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## Transcript

The morning text comes from the letter to the Ephesians, Ephesians 5, 21 through 6, 4. Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. Even so, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife, loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with a promise, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

I think everybody wants a happy home. Not only a happy home, I think most people want a family with purpose and destiny and direction that goes beyond just the satisfying of our immediate personal desires or needs. We want homes where every person flowers rather than fades.

We want homes where the aroma of respect is present rather than the odor of continual belittling. We want homes where there's laughter instead of bitterness, an eye-to-eye conversation instead of passing incidental comments along the way. Homes where there's peace instead of conflict and a sense of mission instead of a kind of festering introspection.

The importance of family life in society and in the church can scarcely be exaggerated. Oh, how crucial to the development of the personhood of little children is the home in which they grow up. And not only little children, but husbands and wives are fruitful in their adult lives in very large measure to the degree that they experience a kind of peace and contentment and fulfillment on the home front.

We want happy homes and families with purpose and destiny. And my message today is that the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the best foundation for such a home. Trusting Christ as Savior, yielding to him as Lord and ordering all of our life around him and orienting all of our family affairs on him will result in a little piece of heaven on earth in our homes.

And even if you're married to somebody who does not love the Lord or believe in him, for you, too, there is more grace and more love to endure in patience in that situation than if Christ were not your Lord. The Lord is precious because he is the foundation of a happy and purposeful home. And what I'd like to do this morning from Ephesians chapter five is make one main point and then apply it to two relationships, the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband.

Here's the main point. Christian family life is a work of the spirit of God for those who do everything they do for Christ's sake. There are two halves and I'll say it again.

Christian family life is the work of the spirit of God for those who do everything they do for Christ's sake. Now, if you want to look at this text with me, we'll be looking at Ephesians chapter five and we'll jump back to verse 18 and follow it all the way through to chapter six, verse nine. It's a very familiar text to people who have grown up in the church.

It deals, as you could see readily with three relationships, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves. That was the typical makeup of a household in Paul's day in the Hellenistic world. And those were the relationships that had to be regulated if Christ was going to make a difference.

And the question that Paul was answering by this text is, what difference does it make in the house when its members become Christians and come under the lordship of Jesus Christ? The very existence of a text like this in the Bible bears witness to the fact that God Almighty, high and removed as he is in one sense, is not the least indifferent to what happens from morning to night in your houses. And in your family

relationships, if Christ is your lord, he's the lord of everything, including your relationships at home. But what is not familiar about this text is its context.

And that's why I want to jump all the way back to verse 15 with you. It says, look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of the time because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is and do not get drunk with wine for that is debauchery, but be filled with the spirit.

And then comes a series of phrases which tell us the effect of being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, which we receive when we accept Christ as Savior and Lord. Notice what they are addressing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always giving thanks for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, the father. Then most English versions do something that make it very hard to see Paul's intention here.

They put a period or a semicolon at the end of verse 20 and they translate verse 21, something like be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. But in the original, be subject is not a new sentence or a main verb. It's just another helping verb like addressing, singing, making melody and giving thanks.

In other words, verse 21 belongs with verses 19 and 20 as an explanation of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. So it would read like this literally be filled with the spirit, addressing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord in your heart, always and for everything, giving thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus to God, the father being subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. The purpose of verses 19 to 21, in other words, is to spell out what happens when you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Verse 19 says your heart is going to overflow in songs to one another and to the Lord. Verse 20 says that thankfulness is at the heart of those heart songs. And verse 21 says that when you are filled with the spirit, you will be submissive to one another.

In other words, when the Holy Spirit is holding sway in your life, your heart brims with a song of gratitude to the Lord and your heart is lowly and meek and submissive to the needs and the deep desires of those around you. Submitting to one another means not rebelling with a sense of superiority or a feeling of being too high for some service that another person might put upon you for. There are several texts that bring to light what this submissive attitude means here, a couple Ephesians for one and two.

Let everybody lead a life worthy of his calling in all lowliness and meekness with patience for bearing one another. The word lowliness and the word submissive both imply putting yourself under another person and serving them. Like Jesus said, everybody should who wants to be great.

Romans 15 to let each of us please his neighbor for his good unto edification. Philippians two, three do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in lowliness count others better than yourselves. That kind of humility and lowliness and service is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

According to Galatians 5, 22, that kind of readiness to honor rather than be honored, serve rather than be served does not flow out of a normal human heart. It flows out of a new heart born again by the Holy Spirit and filled with his way. That's the connection then between verses 18 be filled with the spirit and verse 21 be submissive to one another.

Now comes the crucial connection to family life. Verses 22 following are clearly an extension of the principle in verse 21. We know that from the grammar of the command in verse 22.

It says wives be subject to your husbands. But now there's there's no verb in that verse in the original Greek. All it says is wives to your husbands, which means that verse 22 is a continuation of an extension of an expansion upon the words that we are to be submissive to one another.

So the flow of thought from verses 18 through 22 would be this be filled with the Holy Spirit, submitting to each other out of reverence to Christ, wives to your husbands. See the flow. And you can see now why the main point of this passage is all a family life is a work of the spirit.

We can trace that on through the submission of a wife to her husband is said to be in reverence for the Lord and husbands love their wives and children are obedient to their parents and parents nurture their children and servants obey their masters and masters forbear in their servants, all as a manifestation of this submitting to each other in reverence to Christ. And this submission in verse 21 is a description of how people act when they are filled with the spirit. And therefore, the main point of the whole passage is.

Christian family life is a work of the spirit. Now, the main point had a second half, you remember. Christian family life is a work of the spirit.

In those who do everything they do. For the sake of Jesus Christ or oriented on Jesus. Now we can find that clearly here in the text, but let me before we do that point out another passage that shows that whenever the spirit is reigning in your life, your natural inclination is to delight in the Lordship of Jesus over you and to submit yourself to him and obey him.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse three. No one speaking by the spirit of God ever says Jesus is accursed. And no one can say Jesus is law except by the spirit.

In other words, whenever the spirit is ruling in your life, you say from the heart, Jesus is Lord. And you submit to him readily. That's the mark of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The spirit exalts the Savior. As Jesus said in John 16, 14, when the spirit comes, he will glorify me. You can know if you're filled with the spirit, if your life is yielded to the Lordship of Christ and everything you do is for his sake.

Now, that is evidenced here in our text by showing that the way family life is transformed by the Holy Spirit is orienting everything on Jesus. Look at this after commanding us to be filled with the spirit. It says in verse 18, be filled with the spirit.

And then it follows on through in verse 19. The spirit produces songs to the Lord. In verse 20, we have gratitude to God in the name of the Lord.

In verse 21, we are made submissive in reverence to Christ. In verse 22, wives are to be submissive to their husbands as to the Lord. In verse 25, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

In chapter six, verse one, children are to obey their parents in the Lord. In verse four of chapter six, fathers bring up their children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord. In verse five, slaves obey their masters in singleness of heart as to Christ.

And in verse nine, masters leave off threatening because they have a master, a Lord in heaven. When a family is filled with the Holy Spirit, everything is oriented on Jesus from the most important decision to the smallest. And so the main point of the passage, I believe, once more is Christian family life is a work of the spirit of God among those who do everything they do for Christ's sake.

Now, I want to look briefly at a word to husbands and a word to wives to see how this principle comes into practical application in the apostles teaching. First, a word to husbands. Be filled with the spirit.

That's the first word to husbands. Be filled with the spirit. Second, yield yourself to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

You will if you are filled with the spirit and then out of that new relationship with the Lord. Recognize this, that your God appointed headship in the family is to be exercised in love on the pattern of Christ's headship over the church. Now, I believe lots of people make a mistake today by inferring from the fact that verse 21 calls for a mutual submission, that therefore there is no distinction between the role of husband and wife in the family.

But I don't think the text will allow that. And I'll try to show you why verses 22 to 33 spell out for us the peculiar forms that loneliness and submissiveness of husband and wife will take in that relationship. And they are not the same for husband and wife.

The wife is compared to the church and the husband is compared to Christ. The wife is compared to the husband's body and the husband is compared to the head of his body. And if all Paul wanted to say was be subject to one another, he didn't have to write verses 22 to 33.

He could have simply stopped after verse 21. But we know from other places in Paul, from first Corinthians 11 and from first Timothy two, that Paul does see in the created order of male and female, a God appointed distinction that makes the man's headship in the family, a beautiful and an appropriate expression of God's will. But what the apostle stresses mainly here for husbands in Ephesians chapter five, verses 25 to 33, is that husband should be filled with the Holy Spirit and eager to exalt Jesus Christ by bringing his God appointed headship into conformity to the headship of Christ over his bride, the church.

And Christ fulfilled that role of headship or leadership through sacrificial service. Jesus did not cease to be head and leader of the disciples when he knelt on the floor half naked and washed their feet. And when he hung on the cross, the weakest of the weak for his bride.

He did not cease to be her head and her leader in those moments. Woe to the husband who thinks that his maleness requires of him a demanding and a domineering demeanor over his wife. That's not the mark of Christ like headship.

It's the mark of immature bully. But the subordinate point of this text is, I think, just as needed in our day as the main point and the subordinate point is this husbands, you are the head, you are to be the leader in your home. Do not let the rhetoric of the contemporary feminist movement cause you to think or cow you to feel that it is bad to be the leader in relationship to your wife.

It is what our homes desperately need. Now, I'll try to explain what I think that means for the husband, for all your meekness, which the Holy Spirit gives for all your servanthood, which you have in emulation to Jesus Christ and for all your submission to your wife's deepest desires and needs. You are still the head

and the leader.

And what I mean by that is this. It is you who should take the lead in the things of the spirit. It is you who should take the lead in family prayer and Bible study and worship.

It is you who should take the lead in giving the family a vision and in giving moral direction to the family and in governing its peace and its holiness. And I have never yet met a woman who chase under that leadership in the Holy Spirit. And if there's a woman in this room who does, I want you to talk to me afterwards, so I will never say that again.

But I know many women who are so unhappy because their husbands will not leave. They have no moral vision for their family. They have no sense of spiritual direction, and therefore, of course, they can't lead.

They don't know where they're going. They don't know what they want the family to be. You've seen the camel cigarette billboards around town.

With the curly-headed, bronze-faced, macho man with a cigarette hanging out of the side of his mouth, tooling around in his Jeep, and it says, where a man belongs. You know what I pray when I think about that sign? I pray, God, make Bethlehem a church filled with men who, when they see that sign, say, to hell with such lies! Men who know that where a man belongs is on his knees beside his wife, leading in prayer. Where a man belongs is by the bed of his children, leading them in devotion and prayer.

Where a man belongs is in the driver's seat, leading his family to the house of God. Where a man belongs is up early before the family, seeking the Lord for a vision for where the family should go and what direction we should have in the Holy Spirit. That's where a man belongs.

And, oh, I hope you're not so easily duped by the people of our day that it should be any otherwise. That's my word to husbands, and now a brief word to wives. In the context of Ephesians chapter 5, verse 22, the meaning of that verse is, if you are filled, women, with the Holy Spirit and yielded to the Lordship of Christ, you will be subject to your husbands as to Christ.

And that little phrase, as to Christ, has two very important implications. The first one is this. A woman's first allegiance is to the Lord.

He is her husband first, and all other allegiances are subordinate. That leads to the second implication, namely, therefore, all subordinate allegiances, whether to husband or employer or to state, are limited by the Lordship of Christ and his revealed will. And that means that the form of that submission will vary depending on the quality of leadership provided by the husband.

Let me give two examples. For the woman whose husband is godly, who is the man I just described, who has a vision for the family, who knows the moral direction it should go, who sets the pace and leads the way in the things of the Spirit, submission for that woman means rejoicing in that leadership and supporting him all the way. If within that leadership, as will no doubt happen, the woman perceives that at some point his vision is distorted or his moral direction is askew, her submission does not mean that she will abide in dumb silence.

It means that under Christ, in a spirit of meekness, she will query him about that vision and that direction and may often save his foot from stumbling. Because husband headship, unlike the headship of the Lord, does not imply infallibility, nor does it imply hostility to correction, nor does a wife's involvement in shaping

the vision and the direction of the family involve insubordination. Here's another example, and it's the harder one and the more tragic one.

If a Christian woman is married to a man who provides no vision for the family, who has no sense of moral direction where the children should go and how the style of life should be pursued and gives no leadership in the things of the spirit, the form of submission is going to be different in that situation. For example, that wife will not follow her husband in sin, even if he wants her to. Moreover, she will try to provide that spiritual vision and that moral direction for her children wherever she can.

And even in that, she need not communicate to him a cocky sense of insubordination. Even when she must, for Christ's sake, do what he does not approve of, she can try to explain in what Peter calls a tranquil and gentle spirit that she does not do it because she wants to go against him, but because she's bound to Jesus. He may not understand that.

And there are many occasions in which you women in such situations will have opportunity to bear witness to him that you want to serve him, you want to build him up, you want to exalt him. It is not your joy that he is abdicating his leadership, but it won't work to preach. It will not work to preach at him, come on, lead.

It won't work because he, at the root of his being, feels terribly guilty that he is not providing the moral leadership for his home. And it has snowballed into the effect that he many times is paralyzed because he sees such a competent wife over against his lackadaisical attitude. You must rather give him room.

You must give him room and in prayer and quietness, as Peter says, win him by the power of sacrificial love. And so in conclusion, these words, God has ordained a pattern of headship and submission of leadership and of joyful support for that leadership in the Christian family. He has conceived it.

He has revealed it for our joy and for our purposefulness and usefulness in the world. It is the work of the spirit for those who are yielded to Christ and do everything for his sake. And therefore, I close with this appeal.

If your desire is for a happy home, a fulfilling home, a home with a mission and a destiny in the world, you must ask this question. Am I filled with the Holy Spirit and am I yielded to Jesus Christ as Lord?

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