

**“Family Love”
Ephesians 5:21 – 6:4**

Big Idea – Love in a family is a picture of Christ’s love for His church.

Please stand with me for the public reading of God’s Word.

Ephesians 5:21 Yield to obey each other because you respect Christ.

22, 23 Wives, yield to your husbands, as you do to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. And he is the Savior of the body, which is the church.

24 As the church yields to Christ, so you wives should yield to your husbands in everything.

25, 26 Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it to make it belong to God. Christ used the word to make the church clean by washing it with water.

27 He died so that he could give the church to himself like a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be pure and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other wrong thing in it.

28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself.

29, 30 No one ever hates his own body, but feeds and takes care of it. And that is what Christ does for the church, because we are parts of his body.

31 The Scripture says, “So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.”

32 That secret is very important—I am talking about Christ and the church.

33 But each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and a wife must respect her husband.

Isaiah 49:15 “The LORD answers, “Can a woman forget the baby she nurses? Can she feel no kindness for the child to which she gave birth? Even if she could forget her children, I will not forget you.”

Ephesians 5:25 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...”

Titus 2:4 “...admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

How can we love our family?

1. Tell them we love them.

“God so loved...” and He tells us in His Word the Bible

1 John 4:16 “We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them.”

What kind of love is this?

Eternal

Sacrificial

Unconditional

2. Show them we love them.

“God so loved...that He gave...”

Love is shown by actions.

Love is shown by time.

Love is shown by understanding

Love is shown by acceptance.

#1: Acceptance

Paul Tournier was a brilliant thinker and writer, and an influential Christian therapist during his time. Doctors from around the world traveled to his home in Switzerland to learn from him. He wrote, "It is a little embarrassing for students to come over and study my 'techniques.' They always go away disappointed, because all I do is accept people."

Accepting is not the same as approving, condoning, or even tolerating bad behavior.

Acceptance is an act of the heart in which we recognize that, despite someone's behavior, he or she has value in God's sight, and we honor that. But this can be a hard thing to do!

There are many ways to communicate acceptance to people... One of them is to listen to them with patience and compassion and receive them with love.

Another is to refrain from mental condemnation and judgments, and from constantly evaluating and analyzing. We take captive those thoughts of condemnation toward others, and we submit them to God. As we draw near to Him, we can ask Him to love through us. After all, Jesus' mind was way more intelligent than ours; yet, people felt love and acceptance from Him in a way that drew them to God!

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10

Love is shown by listening.

Writer Charles Swindoll once found himself with too many commitments in too few days. He got nervous and tense about it.

"I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day," he recalled in his book *Stress Fractures*. "Before

long, things around our home started reflecting the patten of my hurry-up style. It was becoming unbearable.

"I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter, Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, 'Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin' and I'll tell you really fast.'

"Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey, you can tell me -- and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.'"

"I'll never forget her answer: 'Then listen slowly.'"

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, don't exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.

3. Provide for them – give them what they need.

1 Timothy 5:4,8 "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

What does this mean? Two things:

1. God holds able-bodied men primarily responsible to be the breadwinner in the family.
2. Children should take care of their mothers as they get elderly and are unable to care for themselves!

Mark 7:9 He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition."

10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'

11 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"--' (that is, a gift to God),

12 In this way, you let them disregard their needy parents.

13 And so you cancel the word of God in order to hand down your own tradition. And this is only one example among many others."

Jesus is our example of taking care of mother.

John 19:26,27 "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then said he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

4. Protect them from danger, from the evil one Satan.

Ephesians 6:11,16 "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil."

Columnist Ellen Goodman wrote a powerful editorial on this topic, a portion of which I will share:

"Sooner or later; most Americans become card-carrying members of the counterculture. This is not an underground holdout of Hippies. No beads are required. All you need to join is a child.

At some point between Lamaze and PTA, it becomes clear that one of your main jobs as a parent is to counter the culture. What the media deliver to children by the masses, you are expected to rebut one at a time.

But it occurs to me now that the call for "parental responsibility" is increasing in direct proportion to the irresponsibility of the

marketplace. Parents are expected to protect their children from an increasingly hostile environment.

Are the kids being sold junk food? Just say no. Is TV bad? Turn it off. Are there messages about sex, drugs, violence all around? Counter the culture.

Mothers and fathers are expected to screen virtually every aspect of their children's lives. To check the ratings on the movies, to read the labels on the CDs, to find out if there's MTV in the house next door. All the while keeping in touch with school and in their free time, earning a living.

Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, a research associate at the Institute for American Values, found this out in interviews with middle-class parents. "A common complaint I heard from parents was their sense of being overwhelmed by the culture. They felt relatively more helpless than their parents."

"Parents," she notes, "see themselves in a struggle for the hearts and minds of their own children." It isn't that they can't say no. It's that there's so much more to say no to.

Without wallowing in false nostalgia, there has been a fundamental shift. Americans once expected parents to raise their children in accordance with the dominant cultural messages. Today they are expected to raise their children in opposition.

Once the chorus of cultural values was full of ministers, teachers, neighbors, leaders. They demanded more conformity, but offered more support. Now the messengers are Ninja Turtles, Madonna, rap groups, and celebrities pushing sneakers. Parents are considered "responsible" only if they are successful in their resistance.

It's what makes child-raising harder. It's why parents feel more isolated. It's not just that American families have less time with their kids, it's that we have to spend more of this time doing battle with our own culture.

It's rather like trying to get your kids to eat their green beans after they've been told all day about the wonders of Milky Way. Come to think of it, it's exactly like that.

"Battling Our Culture Is Parents' Task," Ellen Goodman, Chicago Tribune, August 18, 1994 (written 24 years ago!!)

According to a study of more than 500 family counselors, the following are the top traits of successful families:

*Communicating and listening *Affirming and supporting family members *Respecting one another *Developing a sense of trust *Sharing time and responsibility *Knowing right from wrong *Having rituals and traditions *Sharing a religious core *Respecting privacy.
Dec, 1988 Focus on the Family Bulletin

From a national survey of strong families conducted by the Human Development and Family Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a profile of a strong family:

Appreciation. "Family members gave one another compliments and sincere demonstrations of approval. They tried to make the others feel appreciated and good about themselves."

Ability to Deal with Crises in a Positive Manner. "They were willing to take a bad situation, see something positive in it and focus on that."

Time Together. "In all areas of their lives--meals, work, recreation--they structured their schedules to spend time together."

High Degree of Commitment. "Families promoted each person's happiness and welfare, invested time and energy in each other and made family their number one priority."

Good Communication Patterns. "These families spent time talking with each other. They also listened well, which shows respect."

High Degree of Religious Orientation. "Not all belonged to an organized church, but they considered themselves highly religious." (1983)

Human Development and Family Department at the University of Nebraska- Lincoln

The family is under attack from the Evil One, the devil, who goes about like a roaring lion trying to devour us!.

5. Pray for them - the most important thing you can and should do to show love to your family.

Ephesians 6:18 "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all believers..."

Many nights as a teenager when I came in at 11 (my curfew in high school), I'd walk down the hall to my bedroom and often as I passed their closed bedroom door, I'd hear my parents praying for Bill & Paul & Ruth.