

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever. Amen.

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

⁶ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Members of God’s Family,

How do you get along with family? Are you close? Do you talk to your kids every week – even though they might live far away? What about your brothers and sisters or parents (if they are still alive). When you think of family, does it bring a smile to your face or a frown? And what about your church family? We are all brothers and sisters in Christ and yet, how well do we get along with one another? I think people have different ideas about how relationships should work and every relationship we have – whether with biological family or church family or neighbors or friends – every one of those relationships is different.

In this portion of scripture Paul is focusing in on our relationship with our families and so today we want to, **“Consider God’s Plan for Healthy Family Relationships.”**

I. The first step is, **“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”** As a Christian you are filled with the Spirit and a fruit/result of your faith is humility. That’s a struggle for many Christians because our sinful nature would rather let our pride shine than humility. Our sinful nature would rather have us put me first than to put my neighbor first. But remember that Jesus came to serve and not to be served and thus we submit to one another out of reverence for him. Thankful for what he has done for us and as a result trying to Follow his example. That is our response to the priceless gift of salvation he has given us through faith as he served us and our needs and put them first.

But Paul doesn't stop there. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ is just one aspect of our relationships with one another. He then moves on to the relationship between husband and wife and he starts by speaking specifically to wives.

II. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."

There is one word in this portion of scripture than many women hate – the word "submit." And I can understand why. That word is so easily misused and abused. But remember as God gave this command it wasn't based on intelligence or strength or importance. It has nothing to do with how we are saved but rather how we live our lives after we have been brought to faith. In this portion of scripture, then, God is establishing roles of authority for the benefit of the marriage and the family.

To understand what Paul is getting at, take the example of the submission of a truck driver to a 14 year old crossing guard. The driver recognizes the authority of that 14 year old in providing for the safety of the children at the school crossing. When the 14 year old crossing guard motions him to stop – he stops. It has nothing to do with the value of these people but rather the order established for the good of the people. It's the same with the relationship of the wife to the husband. So wives, submit to your husband in everything just as you submit to the Lord and his Word. God has established this as your role in the marriage for the good of the marriage.

III. And husbands, don't think this gives you a free license to treat your wife in any way you want. God has a lot to say to you about your responsibility to your wife. In a way, I would venture to say that husbands have a greater responsibility to their wives because Paul tells us, **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."** That's a tall order especially when you remember that Christ gave up everything for the church. He humbled himself – giving up heaven to be born in a stable. He set aside his divine characteristics so he could go to the cross to suffer for your sins and mine. He gave up his life so he could rise to assure us of his victory over sin, death and the devil. He did all this for you and for me. Not because we deserved it or because he would get something in return but because he wanted to do it for us – because of our Savior's unconditional love for us.

So husbands, think about that. Marriage is more than saying, "I love you." It's showing love to your wife even if it means giving up everything for her sake. Christ had an unconditional love for us sinners. Do you have an unconditional love for your wife? Some days that's pretty easy but there are times when your wife can be demanding and unbearable. On those days you have an opportunity to practice that unconditional love Paul is talking about.

It would be great if we were able to show this unconditional love for our spouse every day but our sinful nature gets in the way. Our love for our wife isn't always unconditional but Paul gives us a little more advice in this area as you think about that unconditional love you want to have for your wife, **"In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself."** That helps a little but we still struggle with trying to be the kind of husband God wants us to be. Our relationships are imperfect and so is our love for one another but thank Jesus for his perfect love shown us on the cross.

His perfect love brings us forgiveness for the times we fall short. That, too, has an impact on our relationship with our spouse and each other. Just as Christ is willing to forgive us, so we ought to be willing to forgive each other when sin threatens our relationships. Forgiveness goes a long way in strengthening the relationships we have with each other, the relationship we have with our spouse and the relationship we have with our Lord.

IV. There is one more area that Paul addresses in this portion of scripture and that is the family. As he addresses the relationship of parent to child he points to the fourth commandment. **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”** Once again he is speaking to children in the Lord – children filled with the Spirit through faith – obeying their parents because this is the right thing to do. Obedience is a fruit of faith that comes as a result of all that Christ has done for us. When children obey their parents things go well. Yet this isn’t the natural inclination of our children. They have to be trained in the understanding of what Christ has done for them and how their obedience shows love for God and love for their parents. That takes us back to fathers – the head of the household.

The direction Paul gives to Dads is, **“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”** Dads not only have the responsibility to be good husbands but to also be good Fathers. Paul reminds us to not exasperate or frustrate our children by asking them to do the impossible but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

That begins with setting the proper example for your children by bringing them to God’s house to hear God’s Word. It continues with home devotions to show them how important God’s Word is in your home and to help them understand what God’s Word has to say to them. The home is also the best place to teach your children how to pray by encouraging them to pray during family devotion times or at bedtime. To guide them with some direction on who and what to pray for. That is a lot of pressure for Dads but you are not alone. God has given you his Word to guide you and as a tool to train your children.

There are many devotional books written for such a purpose as this and you have Luther’s Small Catechism to aid you too. The question that should always be in the back of your mind is, “How can I help my child to know Jesus better?” The influences of the world will try and keep you from this responsibility and privilege God has given you, but let these words of Paul encourage you to carry out your responsibilities.

People have all kinds of ideas about what makes for a good relationship but God lays it out pretty clearly for us in this portion of scripture. Look to Christ to guide you in your relationships. Follow his example and reflect his love in all you do. Love as he has loved you and forgive as he has forgiven you. May God help all of us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Amen.