

Ephesians - Fullness in Every Relationship

Dr. John Carmichael

[Eph 5:22-33 NASB95] 22 Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself [being] the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also [does] the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must [see to it] that she respects her husband.

[Eph 6:1-9 NASB95] 1 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 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

- It is possible to appear spiritual at church while behaving selfishly at home.
- We can lift our hands in worship and then use those same hands to point accusingly at our spouse. We can speak in tongues at the altar and then speak harshly to our children. We can shout about serving Jesus on Sunday and then become dishonest, disrespectful, or demanding at work on Monday.
- Paul will not allow us to separate spiritual fullness from everyday relationships.
- Ephesians 5:18 commands us to “be filled with the Spirit.” Everything that follows describes what a Spirit-filled life looks like: worship together. give thanks. submit to one another. spouses honor one another. families follow God’s order. workers serve with integrity. leaders exercise authority with justice and compassion.
- The evidence of the Spirit’s fullness is not limited to what happens around the altar. It must follow us home and go to work with us.
- Ephesians 5:22–6:9 belongs to Paul’s larger teaching about walking wisely and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
- The controlling statement is Ephesians 5:21: “And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”
- Paul then applies Spirit-empowered submission and Christlike responsibility to three foundational relationships in the first-century household: Wives and husbands; Children and parents; Servants and masters

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- Paul was not endorsing every feature of the Roman household system. He was bringing every human relationship under the lordship of Jesus. Those with authority could no longer act as though their power were absolute. They were accountable to Christ and commanded to serve others with love, justice, and restraint.
- The servant-master relationship is not identical to the modern employee-employer relationship. Nevertheless, the passage gives enduring principles concerning work, authority, integrity, and accountability.

What happens to our closest relationships when every part of life comes under the lordship of Jesus?

Paul shows us that the Spirit-filled life produces Christlike love in marriage, godly formation in the family, and faithful service in the workplace.

- I. **In Marriage, Reflect the Love of Christ - [Eph 5:22-33 NASB95]** 22 Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself [being] the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also [does] the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must [see to it] that she respects her husband.
 - a. A godly wife honors Christ through willing respect - Ephesians 5:22
 - i. Paul does not say that women are inferior to men. Both men and women are created in God's image, redeemed by the same blood, and made heirs of the same grace.
 - ii. Biblical submission is not silent suffering, coerced obedience, or permission for abuse. It is a voluntary, Christ-centered posture of honor that operates within a marriage where the husband is commanded to love sacrificially.
 - iii. A wife's submission is first an expression of devotion to Jesus: "as to the Lord." Her husband does not replace Jesus, and she must never obey a demand that contradicts God's Word.
 - iv. Submission does not mean that the wife has no voice. A wise husband needs his wife's wisdom, discernment, spiritual gifts, and honest counsel.
 - b. A godly husband loves as Christ loved the Church - Ephesians 5:25
 - i. Paul gives husbands the more extensive and demanding command.
 - ii. The husband's model is not cultural masculinity, personal preference, or unchecked authority. His model is the crucified Jesus.
 - iii. Christlike leadership is not demanding, "What can my wife do for me?" It asks, "How can I give myself for her good?"

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- iv. Jesus did not exploit the Church. He sacrificed Himself for her. Therefore, a husband must never use Scripture to control, intimidate, humiliate, or harm his wife.
- v. The husband is not called to make his wife serve him. He is called to lay down his life for her.
- c. A godly marriage displays the gospel - Ephesians 5:32
 - i. Marriage points beyond itself. It is meant to become a living picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church.
 - ii. When a husband loves sacrificially and a wife responds with godly respect, people see a reflection of the gospel.
 - iii. This does not require a perfect marriage. It requires two surrendered people who continually bring their failures, wounds, and differences to Jesus.
- d. [Gen 2:24 NASB95] 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.
- e. [Gal 3:28 NASB95] 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- f. [Col 3:18-19 NASB95] 18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.
- g. [1Pe 3:7 NASB95] 7 You husbands in the same way, live with [your wives] in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
- h. [1Co 13:4-7 NASB95] 4 Love is patient, love is kind [and] is not jealous; love does not brag [and] is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong [suffered,] 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- i. Application: For husbands: Ask yourself, "Does my wife experience the love of Jesus through the way I treat her?" For wives: Ask yourself, "Does my husband experience godly honor and respect through the way I respond to him?" For both: Stop trying to use the other person's command against them. The husband must concentrate on his command to love, and the wife must concentrate on her command to respect. Both must submit their pride to Jesus.
- j. You cannot build a Christ-centered marriage while demanding that the other person do all the dying.
- k. We need more than relationship techniques. We need the Holy Spirit to crucify selfishness, heal emotional wounds, restore tenderness, and give us power to love when love is costly.

II. In the Family, Form the Next Generation - [Eph 6:1-4 NASB95] 1 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 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- a. Children must learn obedience - Ephesians 6:1
 - i. Paul speaks directly to children, showing that they are valuable members of the covenant community.
 - ii. Obedience means listening and responding appropriately to parental authority. Children are not naturally born understanding responsibility, respect, and self-control. These qualities must be taught and modeled.

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- iii. Paul adds the words “in the Lord.” Parental authority is real, but it is not absolute. Parents do not have the right to command children to sin or to misuse them.
- b. Children must develop honor - Ephesians 6:2
 - i. Obedience changes as children become adults, but the call to honor remains.
 - ii. Honor includes: Speaking respectfully. Showing gratitude. Receiving godly wisdom. Refusing public contempt. Providing appropriate care as parents age.
 - iii. Honoring parents does not mean denying abuse, hiding destructive behavior, or eliminating necessary boundaries. Forgiveness, honor, reconciliation, and restored trust are related but distinct. Trust may need to be rebuilt over time.
 - iv. God attaches a promise to this command: “So that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” Ephesians 6:3
 - v. Godly authority provides boundaries in which children can grow in wisdom, stability, and well-being.
- c. Parents must nurture without provoking - Ephesians 6:4
 - i. I. Paul places responsibility directly upon parents, especially fathers, who held primary authority in the ancient household.
 - ii. Parental authority must not become parental cruelty.
 - iii. Parents can provoke their children through: Constant criticism. Unrealistic expectations. Harsh discipline. Public embarrassment. Favoritism. Broken promises. Inconsistent rules. Emotional absence. Refusing to admit when they are wrong. Demanding behavior they do not model.
 - iv. Children need correction, but correction without connection often produces resentment.
 - v. “Bring them up” communicates ongoing nurture. Parents are not merely called to control their children’s behavior; they are called to form their children’s faith.
 - vi. The home should be the first place where children learn to pray, worship, forgive, serve, give, read Scripture, and recognize the activity of the Holy Spirit.
- d. [Deu 6:6-7 NASB95] 6 “These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 “You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.
- e. [Pro 22:6 NASB95] 6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.
- f. [Psa 127:3 NASB95] 3 Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.
- g. [Col 3:20-21 NASB95] 20 Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord. 21 Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart.
- h. [2Ti 1:5 NASB95] 5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that [it is] in you as well.
- i. Application: For children and teenagers: Your obedience to godly parents is part of your obedience to Jesus. For adult children: Honor your parents, but establish wise and necessary boundaries where relationships have been harmful. For parents: Do not outsource your child’s spiritual formation entirely to the church. North Kids and youth ministry can reinforce what happens at home, but they cannot replace it. For grandparents and spiritual parents: Your prayers, example, encouragement, and testimony can shape generations.
- j. If we do not intentionally disciple our children, the world will eagerly disciple them for us.

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- k. We should desire homes where children do more than hear about God, they experience His presence. Let them hear us pray. Let them see us worship. Let them watch us repent. Let them witness the gifts of the Spirit functioning with biblical order and Christlike character.
- l. A child who sees genuine faith at home has been given a powerful picture of what it means to follow Jesus.

III. In the Workplace, Serve the Lord - [Eph 6:5-9 NASB95] 5 Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; 6 not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. 7 With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, 8 knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free. 9 And masters, do the same things to them, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.

- a. Important Interpretive Note: Paul addresses servants and masters within the social reality of the Roman world. Ancient servitude could take several forms and must not be casually equated with modern employment. Neither should this passage be used to defend racialized chattel slavery, human trafficking, exploitation, or abuse.
- b. Paul plants gospel truth that undermines human arrogance: servant and master stand under the same heavenly Master, and “there is no partiality with Him.”
- c. Although modern employment is different, Paul’s principles concerning work, authority, sincerity, justice, and accountability remain applicable.
- d. Employees should work with integrity - Ephesians 6:6
 - i. “Eyeservice” means working hard only when someone is watching.
 - ii. A Christian’s integrity must not depend upon supervision. We work faithfully because Jesus is always present.
 - iii. Spirit-filled employees should not be known for: Dishonesty. Carelessness. Gossip. Laziness. Wasting company time. Undermining leadership. Doing the minimum while expecting the maximum.
 - iv. Christians should be trustworthy because our work is part of our witness.
 - v. This does not mean employees must accept abuse, illegal demands, unsafe conditions, or exploitation. There are appropriate times to establish boundaries, report wrongdoing, seek another position, or use lawful protections.
- e. Work should become worship - Ephesians 6:7
 - i. Your job may not always feel spiritual, but any honest work can become an act of worship when it is offered to Jesus.
 - ii. You may work for a company, school, ministry, government agency, customer, or supervisor but ultimately, you serve the Lord.
 - iii. Your workplace is a mission field. Excellence earns credibility. Integrity opens doors. Compassion reveals Jesus.
 - iv. Your job is more than where you make a living; it is one of the places where you live out your faith.
- f. Employers must lead under Christ’s authority - Ephesians 6:9
 - i. Paul tells those with power, “Do the same things to them.” In other words, employers must also act sincerely, respectfully, and with awareness that they answer to Jesus.
 - ii. Christian leadership cannot be built on fear, threats, favoritism, manipulation, or humiliation.

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- iii. A Spirit-filled employer or supervisor should: Treat workers with dignity. Communicate expectations clearly. Correct without degrading. Listen to legitimate concerns. Recognize good work. Refuse favoritism. Care about people, not merely productivity. Remember that every leader remains under authority.
- iv. Earthly position does not impress God. The worker and the executive will both stand before the same Lord.
- g. [Col 3:23-24 NASB95] 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.
- h. [Pro 11:1 NASB95] 1 A false balance is an abomination to the LORD, But a just weight is His delight.
- i. [Luk 3:13-14 NASB95] 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 [Some] soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And [what about] us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse [anyone] falsely, and be content with your wages."
- j. [Jas 5:4 NASB95] 4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, [and] which has been withheld by you, cries out [against you;] and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.
- k. [Gal 3:28 NASB95] 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- l. [Phm 1:15-16 NASB95] 15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated [from you] for a while, that you would have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.
- m. Application: For employees: Work this week as though Jesus were your immediate supervisor because ultimately, He is. For employers and supervisors: Ask whether the people under your authority experience dignity, fairness, clarity, and compassion. For everyone: Refuse to divide life into "sacred" and "secular." Jesus is Lord at the altar, at the dinner table, in the classroom, on the jobsite, and in the office.
- n. The Holy Spirit empowers us to become witnesses wherever God places us. Sometimes the most powerful testimony at work is not a sermon; it is consistent integrity, supernatural patience, courageous honesty, and genuine kindness.

- **When Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, His love transforms our marriages, our families, and our relationships at work.**
- We cannot surrender our worship to Jesus while withholding our relationships from Him.
- The Holy Spirit wants to fill every room of our lives: the sanctuary, the bedroom, the kitchen, the classroom, the office, and the workplace.