

***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

***Ephesians 5:21-6:4***

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, December 30, 2012**

**L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 30, 2012**, is from **Ephesians 5:21-6:4**.

**Questions for Discussion and Thinking**

**Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (also known as the *Bible Lesson Forum*). **Study Hints for Thinking**

**Further** give possible hints to answer the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website and below. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

***Ephesians 5:21-6:4***

**(Ephesians 5:21) Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

Paul wrote about the importance of Christians serving Jesus Christ and one another, because they loved and wanted to honor Jesus Christ by the way they lived. Loving Christ and wanting to glorify Christ can be the best motive for humbling ourselves in service to others, instead of trying to decide if others are worthy of our serving them. Paul carefully insisted that the example of Jesus Christ should serve as the standard for how we love and treat one another, especially in the Church and family. When Jesus Christ becomes the standard for how we treat others, and when we treat others as we would if Jesus Christ were with us and we were serving Him, we will not abuse or tempt others to do wrong.

**(Ephesians 5:22) Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord.**

Paul told men, women, and children to live as obedient subjects of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ ruled over them as their loving Lord and Savior. When wives live subject to the Lord Jesus, they will obey the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus will only tell them to do what is best for others and themselves. Paul did not command or expect wives to be subject to or obey their husbands when their husbands wanted them to do something contrary to the will of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.

Once again, Jesus Christ serves as our example. Though Jesus Christ was God, as the Son of God, Jesus remained subject to His heavenly Father. Wives (and all men and women) should live subject to the will of Jesus Christ (especially if they are Christians!). When husbands and wives are both subject to doing the will of God and, therefore, living in obedience to Jesus Christ, it should be easier for wives to be subject to their Christian husbands. When husbands and wives are subject to one another out of reverence for Christ, both should find happiness in serving and meeting the needs of each other.

**(Ephesians 5:23) For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.**

Jesus Christ saved the church; therefore, all who trust in Jesus Christ bow before Him as their Lord and Savior. The church is the body of Christ on Earth. Christ is the head or the director of His body, the church. He requires what is best for everyone in His church, and His teachings in the Bible serve as the standard for the every Christian's life. In a similar way, the husband should treat his wife as Christ treats His church by trying to do what is best for her as Christ does (the Bible calls the church the bride of Christ—see Revelation 19:7, 21:2, 21:9, 22:17). The wife should be subject to her husband, but the wife is not required to obey her husband in disobedience to Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of both husband and

wife. The wife does not need to do what she knows is against the will of God, Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures. In a Christian family, disagreements can become points for discussion and prayer, not rebelliousness. Under the lordship of Jesus Christ, decisions can be reached that will meet the true needs of everyone in a family.

**(Ephesians 5:24) Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.**

Paul gave guidance on how to have a loving, harmonious, peaceful, and successful Christian marriage. A wise, Christian husband will not ask his wife to do anything contrary to the will of Christ. When a church subjects herself to the will of Christ according to the Bible, she will behave as she should. When the Christian husband subjects himself to Jesus Christ according to the Bible, he will behave as he should, as Jesus Christ would have him act. To maintain order in a family and avoid disagreeable arguments, a Christian wife needs to be subject to the decisions of her Christian husband, unless his decisions are contrary to the Bible's teachings. If they disagree, they need to go to the Lord in prayer for Him to reveal His will to them; if they still disagree, the wife should subject herself to the will of her husband, who should be trying to do what is best for his wife and family.

**(Ephesians 5:25) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,**

Paul set a high standard for husbands by telling them to follow the example of Jesus Christ. Wives will be happier and find it easier to live subject to the decisions of their husbands when their husbands love them in ways that are apparent to them and consistent with the way Christ loves His church. Husbands need to give themselves to their wives to serve them, just as Christ gave himself to save and serve us, His church.

**(Ephesians 5:26) in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word,**

Christ gave himself to us, His church, in order to improve our lives, in order to give us eternal life and prepare us for heaven. Likewise, husbands should give themselves to their wives in order to improve their lives and their family. When a Christian wife understands that the decisions of her Christian husband are their best efforts to do what is best for them, it is easier for them to be subject to their husbands. Obeying the word of Christ will cleanse a church and make a church holy. Obeying the word of Christ will renew and bring happiness to a family.

**(Ephesians 5:27) so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish.**

Jesus loved and served the church to make the church beautiful and perfect in His presence, morally and spiritually beautiful and perfect. Someday, those who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation will receive perfectly glorified human bodies that honor Him. Likewise, Christian husbands need to do all they can in their decision-making regarding their families so everyone may be motivated to come to faith in Christ and live as Jesus Christ intends – holy and without blemish. A Christian husband should never ask his wife or children to do anything that would be unholy or bring a moral or spiritual blemish upon their lives.

**(Ephesians 5:28) In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

Christian husbands will love their own bodies and not do anything to their bodies and minds that may bring them physical, mental, moral, or spiritual harm. Likewise, Christian husbands will love their wives and not do or say anything to them that will bring them into or lead them into physical, mental, moral, or spiritual harm.

**(Ephesians 5:29) For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church,**

Those who walk in darkness do what appears to indicate that they hate their bodies and themselves. Because they walk in darkness, they do what they think will give them pleasure or meet their self-centered needs, though these actions will destroy them and hurt others. Those who walk in the light will nourish and care for themselves and others (their husbands, wives, children, families) as Christ cares for the church, His body on Earth.

**(Ephesians 5:30) because we are members of his body.**

Jesus Christ treats us the way He does because as Christians we are members of His body, the church. What He does for and to each Christian individually is for their best and the best of others inside and outside the church. What He does for and to the church as a whole is best for each part of His body as well as the whole body. What Christ requires of Christians is best for each part of His body, as well as what is best for all those His body loves and serves.

**(Ephesians 5:31) “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”**

When a man and woman unite in a Christian marriage, they become one body; they are joined together at every level of their being so whatever helps or hurts the other has an effect on the other. Whatever helps or hurts the wife, helps or hurts the husband and whatever helps or hurts the husband helps or hurts the wife. The two become one body; and, as Christians, they become members of the body of Christ, with Christ serving as the head of them both.

**(Ephesians 5:32) This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church.**

Paul used a true Christian marriage to illustrate the relationship Jesus Christ has with His church. We do not understand all the facts related to a Christian marriage and Christ and His church—Paul called this relationship a great mystery. Whatever anyone does or says in the church has an effect on each person in the church, including Jesus Christ, the head of the church. What husbands and wives do has an effect in a Christian marriage, whether they know this truth or not.

**(Ephesians 5:33) Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.**

In summary, Paul continued to use our Christian relationship with Jesus Christ to illustrate the Christian relationship between a husband and the

wife. Jesus Christ loves His Father and His church, His body. Likewise, a husband should love God, themselves, and their wives as they love themselves by considering her needs as equal to, or more important than, his needs. One way a Christian wife can love her husband is by showing him respect, especially when they make decisions. Husbands who love their wives as themselves should receive the respect of their wives.

**(Ephesians 6:1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**

As he continued his discussion of Christian marriage and the family, Paul told children to obey their parents “in the Lord”; that is, when their parents commanded them to do what is physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually right according to Jesus Christ their Lord and Savior. Paul did not command blind obedience or unlawful obedience. The Bible is the objective standard for obeying anyone “in the Lord,” whether father, mother, employer, teacher, other official, or a person “in authority.”

**(Ephesians 6:2) “Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise:**

Children are to honor their Christian parents. If nonbelieving parents are acting dishonorably, children are not to follow their example, for this

would not be honoring to God in Christ. When children love their parents and try to serve them as Christian children following Jesus' teachings and example, then they will receive the promise of a long life—certainly eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. They may honor their parents by treating them as Christ would treat them, which might lead them to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

**(Ephesians 6:3) “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”**

Paul referred back to the Bible, the Old Testament Scriptures (Exodus 20:12), as the inerrant and objective authority for this teaching about marriage and the family. Many Christians can testify to the truth of this Bible promise. The Spirit of Jesus Christ can enable all those who trust in Him to obey the moral law of God, to love God and their neighbor, to love and honor their parents “in the Lord.”

**(Ephesians 6:4) And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.**

Because a parent or child may mistakenly think that a child is to obey a parent no matter what the parent commands, Paul referred again to the fact that a father's primary obligation is to bring up his children in “the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” A parent should never ask a child to do anything

contrary to or inconsistent with the discipline and instruction of the Lord as revealed in the Bible as led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will never contradict what the Bible teaches, but the Holy Spirit will help us interpret and do what the Bible teaches. All fathers need to study the Bible and pray for the Holy Spirit to help them interpret and apply the Bible's teachings in ways that will help them bring the discipline and the instruction to them that Jesus Christ would want them to bring to their children.

### **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What does it mean to be subject to someone? What does it mean to be "subject to one another"? What reason does Paul give for why Christians ought to be "subject to one another"?
2. Why do you think some people reject the Biblical role of wives that Paul described in Ephesians?
3. What does "be subject . . . as you are to the Lord" mean to you?
4. How do you think Jesus Christ being the Savior of the church has an effect on how He relates to the church as "head of the church"?
5. How should husbands love their wives?

Write your comments, suggestions, and thoughts on the [Bible Lesson Forum](http://biblelessonforum.com/) at <http://biblelessonforum.com/>. Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson* at [International Bible Lessons](http://internationalbiblelessons.org) at <http://internationalbiblelessons.org>.

— © Copyright 2012 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.  
*Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.*