That they may be one series: Study 5 UNITY IN THE FAMILY

(Ephesians 5:25-6:4)

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Ephesus, in the time of Paul, was a great city of the Roman Empire, a center of commerce and temples to a multiplicity of gods. Having lived there for a few years, Paul was aware of the temptations and distractions that were a part of this new spiritual community. Overall, these verses emphasize that the sacrificial love of Jesus for the church is the model for family love unity.

## STARTING THE LESSON

Tonight we will study Ephesians 5:25-6:4, looking at unity within the family. Paul’s words to Christian husbands uphold his previous remarks to wives. Paul uses the Greek word *agape* when he instructs husbands to love their wives. *Agape* describes a sacrificial love of decision. This love is the pattern of love Jesus has towards the church. Family unity is rooted in a Christian understanding of the love Christ has for us and the love we are called to show to others.

## starter question

**TIPS TO SHARE WITH LEADERS**

It is always best to allow each speaker to proceed without interruption. Thank each group member after they share. Use your speaking time to focus the conversation to the study.

Additionally, we have included more

questions than you are likely to be able to ask during the group meeting, so feel free to should choose several of your favorites ahead of time and to focus on those.

* Take a moment and think about a united family. What are the attributes of that family?
* Would someone like to share their idea of a healthy marriage?

## Opening PrAyer

 “Holy Spirit, come and speak to us today. Guide our reading and discussions together and use this time we spend together to grow us in our lives with you.”

## Discussion questions

### Question 1

**BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE**

**Ephesians 5:25-6:4**

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 their own body, but they feed and care for their body, 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 “so 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.

*.* *•* Think of an area or a time when you did something for God. Why did you do it? What was the real reason behind your service to Him?

*Answers will vary, but might include love, edification, and obedience, or perhaps other less noble secondary motives*

### Question 2

. • What does the apostle exhort Christian husbands to do?

*The apostle Paul exhorts Christian husbands to “love your wives.”*

### Question 3

* What kind of love should the husband have for his wife? Whose example should he imitate*?*

*A husband should have the same love Christ has for the church. Christ gave himself up for the church; Christ denied Himself, He sacrificed Himself, and did so for the life and well-being of His church.*

### Question 4

* This passage is often considered crucial in understanding the obligations of husbands and wives in Christian marriages, but what is the other important message?

*The point Paul is highlighting is that Jesus wants to sanctify the church and present to himself the church in all her glory.*

### Question 5

* What instruction does the Apostle Paul give to Christian children? Are there any times where you think it is appropriate for children to disobey parents?

*Christian children are commanded to obey their parents “in the Lord.” Children who trust in Christ as their Savior, obedience to their parents forms a major part of their devotion to their Lord Jesus Christ. When parents require illegal or harmful things of their children, children are put in the difficult position of being forced either to disobey their parents or to do wrong – it is an abuse of parental authority to put children in this position, and does much harm.*

### Question 6

* What is the first and foremost reason why children are to obey their parents? Christian children are also commanded to honor their parents. What is the difference between obeying one’s parents and honoring them?

*The first and foremost reason why the child is to obey his parents is that God asks them to do so. Obedience is pleasing to God. Obedience deals with actions, whereas honor is a matter of attitude. The child’s attitude towards his father and mother must be that of rendering unto them honor and respect.*

### Question 7

* What do you think it means in Eph. 6:4 for fathers not to exasperate their children (also translated “do not provoke your children to anger” – see also Colossians 3:21)?

*This means that fathers should not put their children in “no-win” situations where no matter what they do, they cannot please their parents. It means that the father in particular is called to find ways of gentle, loving discipline and persuasion, and not anger, mockery, manipulation, or humiliation, in interacting with their children.*

### Question 8

* What are the first steps in family unity?

*The wife should yield to her husband, the husband should sacrificially love his wife (which often involves yielding to her, as well), parents should discipline their children in gentleness and love, and children should honor and obey their parents.*

### Question 9

* What is the basis for true unity in the family?

*Christ the center: True unity begins with knowing what Christ has done and following his example so that His people can live in unity.*

### Question 10

* If you are married, how has this passage helped you gain a better understanding of God’s intent for marriage? What one thing will you do this week for your spouse? For your marriage?

Answers will vary

### Question 11

* What is marriage designed to reflect?

Marriage is to reflect the love and unity that exists within the trinity and Christ’s love for the church.

### Question 12

* What does the demonstration of a family unified in love with God do in the world?

*Answers can vary. It demonstrates the love of God for all people.*

##  Prayer ministry

Depending on the size of your group, you may want to break into smaller groups for prayer.

* Take a few minutes quietly as a group and invite group members to review their family interactions over the course of the last week, asking God to call to mind any particular conversations, relationships, or events that he wants to draw attention to. Ask people to share with the group what God called to their attention, and if they are willing, take some time as a group to pray over them and their families.
* Leave some time to sit quietly before God as group and invite his Holy Spirit to come. After several minutes, ask group members to share any Scriptures, impressions, images or other words from God and take time to pray over those people and situations as God leads.

**Note: This study was prepared as an act of service by Helena Dameron.**