

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

How to Be Christian in Family Life
Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Choose a creative way to share the hymn *O Perfect Love* with the group. You could sing it or have a long-married couple read it together or share the verses. If there is a newly married couple or someone who is engaged in your group, ask them to read the words. The song is written out below but is [found in copyable format on the final page of this session.](#)

Music Sources:

We are One in the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI #14459

The Family of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #393; CCLI #17023

O Perfect Love

Verse 1

O perfect love all human thought transcending,
Lowly we kneel in prayer before Thy throne,
That theirs may be the love which knows no ending,
Whom Thou forevermore dost join in one.

Verse 2

O perfect life be Thou their full assurance
Of tender charity and steadfast faith,
Of patient hope and quiet brave endurance,
With childlike trust that fears no pain nor death.

Verse 3

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow,
That dawns upon eternal love and life.

Verse 4

Hear us O Father gracious and forgiving,
Through Jesus Christ Thy co-eternal word;
Who with the Holy Ghost by all things living,
Now and to endless ages art adored.

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Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***How to Be Christian in Family Life*****Focal Text**

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Background Text

Ephesians 5:15-6:9

Main Idea

Living our Christian faith in the family calls for submitting ourselves to one another under the lordship of Christ.

Question to Explore

What difference does Christ make in your family relationships?

Teaching Aim

To help the church identify ways in which living under the lordship of Christ would make a difference in their family relationships.

Gathering together:

Sing

We are One in the Bond of Love, *The Worship Hymnal* # 387; CCLI #14459

The Family of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #393; CCLI #17023

First thoughts:

The Bible study for today is from one of the most controversial passages in the New Testament. It deals with how Christian women and men, children and parents, are to relate to one another. Differences of opinion center around the statement that the wife is to be subject to the husband. One pastor told of preparing to perform the wedding for a niece. It was suggested that he would read this scripture during the ceremony. The niece and the man she was to marry lodged a mild protest, preferring the passage on love in First Corinthians. Both had grown to adulthood in a culture in which husband and wife were equal, and were not subjected one to the other.

Within the Christian community, there are greatly differing views on the understanding of this passage. Even within a small home church, there will most likely be different views. As always, Satan is glad to use these differences to cause misunderstanding and criticism of one another.

What the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus was a startling, even shocking statement to the Gentile population of this major city in the Roman province of Asia in the years following the death of Christ. The study and the sermon will take us over this scripture at least twice. These words were shocking to the first readers of this letter because culture all over the Roman Empire in the first century was a shameful mess, particularly in matters of sex and family life. The wife had two functions in the family: she was to bear children and raise them. Male children were most highly desired and female children were often left in the city plaza where traders in human life would find them and take them to be sold.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Close the opening time for the day with a prayer especially for families that will focus on being Christian in all aspects of family life—children as well as parents.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

How to Be Christian in Family Life

Focal Text

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Background Text

Ephesians 5:15-6:9

Main Idea

Living our Christian faith in the family calls for submitting ourselves to one another under the lordship of Christ.

Question to Explore

What difference does Christ make in your family relationships?

Teaching Aim

To help the church identify ways in which living under the lordship of Christ would make a difference in their family relationships.

Introduction to your personal study:

Whether we are married or single, have young children, grown children or no children, we are all in family relationships. This portion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians strikes right at the heart of those relationships. God is a God of relationships. He cares deeply about how we interact with Him and with each other.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

Earlier in this chapter Paul calls believers to be “imitators of Christ, as dearly loved children and live a life of love.” Ephesians 5:1-2. How in the world are we to live a love-filled life? Just as Christ loved us: sacrificially. 5:2 Paul has already discussed with the Ephesian believers the importance of unity (see 4:2-6) and purity (see 5:3-7). He warns the believers to be careful how they live and sets out three contrasts: unwise verses wise; foolish verses understanding what God’s will is; and drunkenness verses being filled with the Spirit (5:15-19). The Holy Spirit longs to live a vibrant life in and through the life of every believer. A life submitted to the Spirit is characterized by a worshipful life, prayerful thankfulness, and submission to one another. 5:20-21.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Ephesians 5:21 The imperative command

The imperative command “Submit to one another” sounds foreign to our ears. However, were we to substitute the verb “respect” or “value” for submit it might be easier for us to understand and apply. “Respect and value your fellow believers, show how much you care for your brothers and sisters in Christ. Cherish and work for the good of those God has called into your fellowship.” All this is tied up in the concept of “submit.” Such submission is evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 5:22-33 Wives and Husbands

Paul identifies three relationships, wives and husbands, children and parents, and slaves and masters, in which believers are to practice submission. Although every believer may not be married or a parent, each should recognize the centrality of the home in Christian faith and practice. Clearly healthy Christian relationships are important to everyone because of their effect on the church and society as a whole.

In a Spirit-filled marriage, each spouse is committed to mutual submission, to seeking the best for the other. Just as she submits to the Lord, a wife is to submit to her husband, to respect him and recognize the importance of an orderly home life. God has no place for dictatorial orders, even a benevolent dictatorship is contrary to God’s sense of freedom. **“As unto the Lord”** Ephesians 22-24, 33.

God calls each wife to respect her husband but He commands each husband to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her 5:25. Paul recalls Christ’s goal of atonement for the body of believers, cleansing the church and making her presentable to Him 26-27. He then highlights God’s view of the intimacy of marriage, fusing two into one 28 Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5. Again he emphasizes the need for the husband to put his relationship with his wife above all other earthly relationships. Finally, Paul addresses each husband individually and summarizes his essential instructions: love your wife. Each wife must intentionally focus on respecting her husband. 33.

Ephesians 6:1-4 Children and Parents

The spiritual climate of the home evidences the extent to which the individual members are controlled by the Holy Spirit. More than anything else we do as believers, we should seek to fill our homes with God's presence, through loving relationships. Parenthood has been called the "hardest job you'll ever love." The most difficult aspect is that it highlights our faults! We must model obedience to our children through our obedience to Christ. Paul addresses children clearly, obey your parents in the Lord 6:1. This call was to children of every age. In contrast to those who discarded their aging parents, adult believers were to respect and care for their parents of every age. Paul notes that the command to obey parents is the first with a promise: that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth Exodus 20:12. Life does go well on the practical side, obedience results in less stress in the home. Not only will we enjoy life on earth but from a spiritual standpoint our obedience to earthly parents is a reflection of our obedience to God.

Even the practical one, Paul cautions fathers not to exasperate their children Ephesians 6:4a. Another translation says, **"do not provoke them to anger."** NASV. Obviously mothers should take this warning to heart too. The positive charge is to bring up children up in the instruction and training of the Lord 6:4b. Clearly, the home is to be the center of evangelism and discipleship for our children. Parents must be careful of filling critical years with good activities and ignoring the best.

For those believers who do not have children in their homes, God provides many opportunities to minister to the family of Christ. Each believer needs to embrace the biblical view of children as those who are to be treasured by the kingdom, precious to God. We can each have "spiritual offspring" into whose lives we pour the love and truths of God.

Ephesians 6:5-9 Slaves and Masters

Paul first addresses the slaves; in our context those employees or subordinates in the workplace 6:5. Each of these believers should display a spirit filled life in the way he or she relates to his or her employer, or superiors. Each is called to serve wholeheartedly as though serving Christ. We must serve whether the boss is looking or not, from our hearts. 6:6-7 Each employee must ask himself or herself whether a specific action is pleasing to God and how it reflects on that believer's witness to fellow workers and employers. See 1 Corinthians 10:31 **"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."**

Paul also speaks to the masters (employers, supervisors) 6:9. They are to show no favoritism. Paul challenges each to treat all subordinates with respect and reminds them that all people are equal before God.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

The "Teaching Aim" of this Bible study words the goal this way: To help the church identify ways in which living under the lordship of Christ would make a difference in their

family relationships. Worded differently, your goal as the leader consists of guiding every participant to see that a healthy family life (near and extended family) depends on everyone in the family who knows Jesus as Lord and Saviour living as Jesus lived—holy before the Father and servant to all—patient, forgiving, loving, giving, responsible, and faithful to God and to the family. This principle applies to all—singles, couples, and families with children of all ages.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

How to Be Christian in Family Life

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

Background Text

Ephesians 5:15-6:9

Main Idea

Living our Christian faith in the family calls for submitting ourselves to one another under the lordship of Christ.

Question to Explore

What difference does Christ make in your family relationships?

Teaching Aim

To help the church identify ways in which living under the lordship of Christ would make a difference in their family relationships.

Connect with Life:

Open with this note: Most will agree that we live in an increasingly complex world.

Ask volunteers to list a few of the commitments and activities from the last week. Note how these commitments and activities often pull family members in different directions.

Say: Our homes can be a refuge from the pressures of our society. They can be a haven for each member, where love and respect help refuel us to face the outside pressures. Let's look at how Christ can make a difference in our families.

Guide the Study:

Review briefly the main points from the background material in the Teacher Preparation section. Emphasize our calling to imitate Christ and to live love-filled lives. Note that this requires us to live sacrificially in unity and purity.

Say: Paul cautions us to be very careful how we live. We are to be intentional about our lifestyles.

Request a person to read Ephesians 5:15-18

Review the three contrasts set out. Make two columns on a white board or poster paper and list them as follows:

- 1) Unwise vs. wise who make the most of every opportunity;
- 2) foolish vs. understanding what God's will is;
- 3) drunkenness vs. being filled with the Spirit.

Describe: There appears to be an inverse pattern in these verses. First we determine to grow in our relationship with God and ask His Holy Spirit to fill our hearts and minds daily. Then we can grow in our understanding of His will for our lives and families. Once we determine His direction for our lives, we can make the most of every opportunity.

Have someone read Ephesians 5:19-21.

Say: Paul then lists some practical ways to set the atmosphere in our homes. Ask: What are some of these ways? (Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; singing and praising God in our hearts; always giving thanks to the Father; submitting to one another)

Suggest beginning the day with praise and worship music as the family gathers in the morning for breakfast.

Say: The key is to make our worship and praise of God first in our homes rather than a hurried afterthought. The Holy Spirit longs to live a vibrant life in and through the life of every believer.

List on paper or a white board the three characteristics of a life submitted to the Spirit:

- 1) a worshipful life
- 2) prayerful thankfulness and

3) submission to each other

Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 5:21-33.

Say: This word “submit” can sound foreign to our ears.

Try reading verses 21-23 substituting the word “**respect**” or “**value**” for “submit” and see if it might be easier to understand and apply. Note that this is the first of three relationships Paul identifies in which believers are to practice submission.

Say: Some of us are not married or parents. Still we can recognize the centrality of the home to Christian faith and practice. Emphasize that healthy Christian relationships are important to everyone because of their effect on the church and society as a whole.

Say: In a Spirit-filled marriage, each spouse is committed to mutual submission, to seeking the best for the other.

Discuss practical ways of showing respect and love for each other. Emphasize that God has no place for dictatorial orders; rather everything should be done in love. Note that each spouse is to put the marriage relationship above all other earthly relationships.

Say: Paul summarizes like this: Husbands love your wives. Wives respect your husbands. Each spouse should intentionally focus on the best for the other.

Have someone read Ephesians 6:1-3.

Note that we should seek to fill our homes with God’s presence through loving relationships. Note that we need to model Godly obedience, by our obedience to Christ.

Include this: Our children need for us to model how to ask for forgiveness when we fail.

Discuss this command to obey parents as applying to adult believers who are to respect and care for their parents of every age.

Say: Obedience to parents is a reflection of our obedience to God.

Discuss the promise “that it may go well with you and you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 6:4.

Note that this admonition applies to mothers who can easily exasperate kids as well.

Discuss the need to bring up children in the instruction and training of the Lord.

Say: We have to make a conscious decision to be intentional about matters of faith, to adopt a lifestyle of instruction. Even if we do not have a heritage of faith, we can choose to change that heritage for our children and their children after them.

Review the key times to share the truths of God with our children found in Deuteronomy 6:1-9. Write down each as you discuss it:

1) When we sit at home.

Say: Some just through up their hands at that saying, “Just when do we ever sit at home?” Could it be that a calendar jam-packed with good activities can rob us of the very best opportunities to train and instruct our children? Note that North American society is becoming more and more child-centered but not necessarily more family oriented.

Ask for examples from the class.

Suggest: Before saying “yes” to an activity for yourself or your children, carefully consider how it will impact your whole family. Even our churches can overbook our families to the extent that we hardly see one another, let alone have time to teach and train.

Say: Consider protecting these specific training times: when you sit at home, mealtimes are great opportunities to share.

Write down the second:

2) When we walk along the road.

Say: Actual walks or even traveling to activities provide good times for interaction. When you are getting the oil changed, take a child with you and visit about his or her day.

Write down the third and fourth training times:

3) When you lie down

4) When you rise up.

Say: These times have been called the “healing bookends” to a child’s day. Many things come out just before bedtime or first thing in the morning. Ask for members to share bedtime routines that work for their families. Suggest preparing the night before so that mornings can be less hectic and you will have time to pray with your children.

Ask for suggestions for other special times of teaching. Note that preparing for special holiday times such as Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter offer fertile opportunities to explore our heritage.

Share Advent (Advent calendars, advent wreath devotionals) and Lenten family activities.

Say: There are several resources available to assist families. Ask for suggestions.

Note: A Family Guide to Biblical Holidays, by Robin Sampson and Linda Pierce is an in-depth resource for families.

Emphasize the need for each member of the body to encourage the faith development of each other.

Note the importance of individual adults in the body who can connect with a specific child and pray for that child's spiritual life and celebrate special victories.

Encourage believers who do not have children or no longer have children at home to become involved with one or more children.

Have someone read Ephesians 6: 5-9.

Ask: How do these principles apply to our twenty-first century workplaces?

Discuss challenges in our places of employment.

Ask for suggestions as to how living a Spirit-filled life would impact our relationships in the workplace.

Say: A good rule of thumb for employees and employers alike is that there should be no appearance of impropriety.

Discuss what safeguards should be taken to prevent the appearance of impropriety.

Commit to praying for each other specifically on the job.

Mention the following resource: The Kingdom Agenda: Experiencing God in Your Workplace by Mike Rogers and Claude King. Some class members may find this six week study may be helpful in addressing issues in the workplace.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Review the call to be imitators of Christ, living a life of love.

Encourage the group to commit together to live lives under the Lordship of Christ.

Pray, asking God to empower each of you to live lives submitted to the Spirit, characterized by worship, prayerful thankfulness, and mutual submission.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

How to Be Christian in Family Life **Ephesians 5:21-6:4**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

In the summer of 2011 several articles discussed the opinion that marriage is a thing of the past. Certainly public opinion has shifted related to pre-marital sex, living together before marriage, single parenting and other issues related to family.

As a young person you are making decisions now about how you will approach this very important issue in your own life. Few decisions have more long-lasting impact that one's decision to enter into a meaningful relationship with another person.

The Christian community still holds marriage and family life as one of God's ideals for humankind. At the same time, it is obvious that Christian families face some of the same struggles that every family faces.

If your group is comfortable discussing current attitudes toward marriage, use this time for discussion. It may be best to introduce some of these ideas and challenge the group to prayerfully ask for God's leadership in the relationships they form.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***How to Be Christian in Family Life***
Ephesians 5:21-6:4**Beginning the Service:****Sing**

The Family of God, *The Worship Hymnal* #393; CCLI #17023

Offering:**Ministry Moment:**

Yinchuan City, China is located in Northern Central China and is the capital city of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Yinchuan is on the outskirts of the Gobi Desert, so the climate is extremely dry. This beautiful city, with blue skies and surrounding mountains, has a population of nearly 1 million, the majority being Han Chinese. Another large group of people are the Hui Muslims, numbering 200,000. Only 1 percent of the people of Yinchuan have put their faith in Jesus Christ. The church is small and sharing faith is not easy.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Understanding Scriptural Truth in Today's World**Introduction**

What Scripture says about wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters was absolutely shocking to first century people when they heard these words read at the meeting of the early church. For a man to treat his wife as Paul says he should was unheard of in the centers of culture of the first century. For a father to treat

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***How to Be Christian in Family Life* – 08-24-06-en**

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his children with respect, as Paul says, would have been too much for the culture of that day. Family life was far different from the idealistic view we may have today. It was absolutely a moral quagmire. Wives were to bear and raise the children; husbands were to fight battles and enjoy the pleasures of the women who were always available to them. Of course, the wife had nothing to say about her husband's affairs. But she was absolutely dependent on his good will for her financial sustenance. An unmarried woman would suffer outside of the structure of the family. We read these words addressed to a first century audience and try to make application to a world which views women's roles and family life in very different ways.

The ideal family today

Let's think about the ideal family today. We have to say that our thoughts of the family today are idealistic. An ideal family is hard to find in our culture. Although we typically consider the ideal family to be mother, father and children, we only have to look around our church, however large or small, to see many other models of family life. Single mothers and dads are raising children; grandparents are raising grandchildren; blended families struggle to honour God by loving children from two different families of origin. When we cling too firmly to a view of the ideal family, we inadvertently denigrate the families who do not fit this pattern.

Looking through the scripture we find some uplifting suggestions and implications about the ideal family. The Ideal Family complies with a pattern laid down in this scripture. Paul takes care to detail the pattern of a Christian family here. All the relations within the family are informed by the command in Ephesians 5:21. ***“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”***

The church as a model for family life

The ideal family is patterned after the relationship between Christ and the church. In the midst of first century churches, as he looked around for a pattern on which family life should be lived, Paul chose the church. Not one of the churches with which he may have been involved could be called ideal. But the church in Paul's spirit was a church in need of Christ's love and for which Christ died. The church at Ephesus is the church in the heart of Paul, and husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved that church, and all churches. This was a radical idea for Paul's culture where women were more often seen as property than as beings to be loved.

Why did Paul not pick out a specific contemporary church for a pattern of relationships within the Christian family? Because there were none: culture was “out of Christ,” and lost, but Paul knew what the church was supposed to be, and that is the church in his mind in this passage.

What Christ did for the church clearly mirrors what Christian men and women need to do in their relationships. Terms like holy, splendour, spotless, without blemish is what

Jesus wants of his church; and this is what Paul wants for husbands and wives. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Too many even in today's world can hardly grasp what it would mean for a husband to give himself up for his wife and Paul's contemporaries certainly would have been amazed at such an idea.

The church is blessed by Christ's actions and it is the pattern for the manner in which all people are to interact, but especially wives and husbands, and parents and children, slaves and masters. Note the frequency with which Paul states that a relationship is to be cherished and honoured **"out of reverence of Christ."** (v.21). Wives are to be subject to their husbands **"as to the Lord."** The comparison of the two relationships, wives and husbands, Christ and the church, is made more than once in this passage. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Paul's summary statement on the role that Christ has in a family is that **"Each of you should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband"** (v. 32).

Children are part of the family

Relationships in a family involve more than wife and husband: there are usually children to be considered, and special care must be given to them. Children are to be obedient to their parents for two reasons: it is right, and it carries with it the promise of a better life. The Ten Commandments included one especially for children. **"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you"** (Exodus 20:21). The impact in the family of children who are obedient to parents has been demonstrated many times in our culture. Two brothers beat their father to death with a baseball bat; fathers molest daughters; desertion and neglect of children are constantly in the news. Children from troubled families are troubled children.

But children in a home where Christ is the pattern are spiritually and mentally healthy children. Fathers come in for particular scrutiny in these verses. A special edict is issued to them: **"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"** (Ephesians 6:4).

In a culture particularly bad—as was that of Ephesus in the first century of the Lord—ideal family life was left up to Christians. The greatest emphasis concentrates on the way a Christian husband must treat a Christian wife, and how children in a Christian home are to be disciplined in a fair and loving manner.

Call to Commitment:

It is well to include in our thoughts Genesis 2:24 **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"** (quoted by Paul in Ephesians 5:31). From the foundation of the world, God's intention for family life rests on this commitment to be so united to one's spouse, that thinking, doing, decision-making, and disciplining of children is done in accord.

Concluding the service:

The words of a hymn sometimes sung at wedding ceremonies remind us of God's intention.

(Choose a creative way to share this hymn with the group. The group could sing it or have a long-married couple read it together or share the verses. If there is a newly married couple or someone who is engaged in your group, ask them to read the words. Make copies from the last page of this session.)

O Perfect Love

Verse 1

O perfect love all human thought transcending,
Lowly we kneel in prayer before Thy throne,
That theirs may be the love which knows no ending,
Whom Thou forevermore dost join in one.

Verse 2

O perfect life be Thou their full assurance
Of tender charity and steadfast faith,
Of patient hope and quiet brave endurance,
With childlike trust that fears no pain nor death.

Verse 3

Grant them the joy which brightens earthly sorrow;
Grant them the peace which calms all earthly strife,
And to life's day the glorious unknown morrow,
That dawns upon eternal love and life.

Verse 4

Hear us O Father gracious and forgiving,
Through Jesus Christ Thy co-eternal word;
Who with the Holy Ghost by all things living,
Now and to endless ages art adored.

CCLI Song No. 86999

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Dorothy Frances Blomfield Gurney | Joseph Barnby

Copy as needed for the reading or singing you choose at the end of the service.

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