

Walking As Family
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Allen Power

Ephesians 5:22-6:4

Opening: Have you seen the AT&T Wireless commercials with the slogan, “Just OK is NOT OK?” What do you think of my surgeon? He’s okay. Yikes!

Let’s begin with a ridiculous question. Which would you choose, the ordinary life, the “good” life, or the extraordinary life? What about your marriage? Would you choose ordinary, just good, or extraordinary?

- The question is ridiculous when you put it that way, yet many people go through live “settling” for just good, or ordinary, or even resign themselves to struggling with “bad” lives and family lives - even some Christians.
- Ever hear someone say, “My family wasn’t ‘religious’ or Christian and we had a good marriage and family.” Why settle for ordinary or just good?
- Followers of Christ don’t have to settle. Just OK is NOT OK for us.
- The Apostle Paul was writing to those who had already chosen to follow Christ and therefore had chosen the extraordinary life. Jesus said in John 10:10b (ESV), “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”
- Jesus can turn the bad, the average, or the “just good” to extraordinary.
- The key to receiving that extraordinary life is following Him as our model.

Big Idea: Followers of Christ can live the extraordinary life and that extends to our marriage and family relationships. Why would we settle for less?

- Last week we ended with 5:21’s command to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. That sets up Paul’s teaching on marriage and family.

Ephesians 5:22–6:4 (ESV)

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

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

- This is one of those controversial passages especially in today’s world.
- The controversy today comes from verses 22-24: wives submit to your husbands and the husband is the head of the family.
- This teaching was controversial in Paul’s day for different reasons.
- In the Greco-Roman world of that day submission was the norm. Wives, children, and slaves basically had no rights. It was a patriarchy where everything revolved around the man and what the man desired.
- The controversy of Paul’s teaching was in verses 21, and 28-33: submitting to one another, husbands love your wives with self-sacrificing agape love, and love your wife as much as you love and care for your own body. In Paul’s day that was radical teaching!
- Let’s start with what these verses are NOT saying about submission.
- Verse 21 calls for “mutual submission” making it clear this applies to both husband and wife but in different roles, and the submission is voluntary.
- The wife’s submission is to her “own” husband not to all men in general. This doesn’t apply to work or government; it is specific to marriage.
- The submission is based on the *“proper ordering of an institution, in this case, the family. It did not imply that husbands were more capable or important than wives...[i]t simply created an environment in the home where order and respect were present.”*ⁱ This is about the “org chart” of the home and not a hierarchy of importance.
- Gal. 3:28 (ESV) ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- The word to wives is “submit” not obey. More about that shortly.
- The words “as to the Lord” could be misunderstood.
- Paul isn’t saying that the relationship of the wife to her husband is “comparable to her relationship with her Lord...[s]he submits because it is an act of service to the Lord.”ⁱⁱ Compare this to Colossians 3:18: ¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.
- “It is not that the husband is the ultimate authority, but that wives are to respect their husbands because of their own relationship to Christ.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Be careful with verse 23 too. “He did not say the husband was the Savior of the wife. Jesus is the Savior of them both.”^{iv}
- Verse 24: “Wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.” Another potential landmine verse if you don’t look at Christ as the example.
- As we said earlier, the word is submit and not obey.
- **When should a wife NOT submit to what a husband asks her to do? How does that verse in Colossians speak to this?**

- John Stott writes, *“We have to be very careful not to overstate this biblical teaching on authority. It does not mean that the authority of husbands, parents and masters is unlimited, or that wives, children and workers are required to give unconditional obedience. No, the submission required is to God’s authority delegated to human beings. If, therefore, they misuse their God-given authority (e.g. by commanding what God forbids or forbidding what God commands), then our duty is no longer conscientiously to submit, but conscientiously to refuse to do so.”*⁷
- Paul is not letting husbands off the hook! He says, “love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.”
- We know that scripture describes everyone who is saved as being a part of the “body of Christ” and the “bride of Christ.”
- When Paul says, “love your wives”, this is not the word for romantic, sexual, or even brotherly love. It is self-sacrificing agape love.
- **Describe what it looks like for a husband to love their wife like Christ has loved the church. What could it mean to “give himself for her?”**
- Christ died to make his “bride (all believers)” holy. Husbands can’t make our wives holy but we CAN and SHOULD be the spiritual leader of our home doing everything we can to see our wives grow as Christians.
- Paul takes this command for self-sacrificing love even further with, “love their wives as their own bodies.” The words “provides and cares” in verse 29 speak to the picture of a bird nurturing and caring for her baby birds.
- Husbands are to nurture and cherish our wives. That doesn’t isn’t just “bringing home the bacon!” (Illustration: Steve O’Hara before Christ, ‘I was a great provider but a lousy husband and father.’)
- **It’s not enough to just pay the bills, what else should a husband do?**
- Christ died for his bride. Husbands should be willing to die physically if necessary, but day-to-day we must “die to self” and serve our wives.
- My goal for Susan is that she would be everything she can be; that she would feel secure yet free. The security of provision and faithfulness, and the freedom to be fulfilled. I need to be willing to put her needs FIRST.
- Okay, this sounds like a “Hallmark channel” plan, but what about men who would use this concept of submission as an excuse to bully their wives?
- It’s really very simple: A bullying husband isn’t obedient to biblical truth!
- Using the concept of submission to bully your wife violates the teachings of Christ. Here are a few (of the many) biblical examples:
 - Mark 10:45 (ESV) ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”
 - John 13:14–15 (ESV) ¹⁴ If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.
 - Matthew 20:26 (ESV) ²⁶ It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,

- Mark 9:35 (ESV) ³⁵ And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”
- Paul also taught in Philippians 2:3–8 (ESV) ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [Again, Christ is our example] ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- Wives, would you willingly follow the leadership of a husband like that?
- Submission to a family structure isn’t hard when husbands obey Christ.
- I’ll repeat: A husband who would misuse the concept of submission to bully their wife isn’t obedient to biblical truth!
- Wives must obey too. Verse 33 makes it plain: “...let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”
- That verse is a summary of the basis of an extraordinary marriage.
- At the beginning of chapter six Paul talks about the relationship of parents and children. I wish we had more time to unpack it.
- Again, it’s a picture of loving submission by children to honor their parents and loving servant-leadership by the parents with their kids.
- There is also a warning not to provoke our children to anger.
- A parent who would bully or play cruel head games with their children is not a biblical parent! God will hold us accountable if we don’t seek to obey His word and Christ’s example in raising our kids.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Which would you choose, the ordinary life, the “good” life, or the extraordinary life? What about your marriage and family, ordinary, just good, or extraordinary?
- Followers of Christ don’t have to settle for “good enough,” we can have an extraordinary marriage and home life. So, how do we do that?
- Just go back to Paul’s teaching in this chapter:
 - Be imitators of God and Christ (5:1-2) – Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church. Wives love and respect your husband in the same way Christ has taught us.
 - Be filled with the Spirit of God (5:18) If I’m saved I have the Holy Spirit inside me to be able to live this way. Does He have all of me?
 - Mutually and lovingly submit to others (5:21) – Living this way in marriage is a choice to put the other person ahead of yourself.
 - Keep Christ in focus as the model (5:25-30) – Though there are many couples/parents to admire, Jesus is the only PERFECT example of how we are to love and serve each other. Imitating Him

is the key to living the extraordinary Christian life and having an extraordinary marriage and family.

- So, what will it be? Average? Ordinary? Just OK is NOT OK for followers of Christ. This week let's strive for the extraordinary life that's only found in Him.

ⁱ Explore the Bible Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2019

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Utley, R. J. (1997). [*Paul Bound, the Gospel Unbound: Letters from Prison \(Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon, then later, Philippians\)*](#) (Vol. Volume 8, p. 129). Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International.

^{iv} Explore the Bible Leader's Guide – Lifeway 2019

^v Stott, God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians, 218. Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 328). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.