

STUDY UNIT 7

Eph. 5:22-6:9 / Col. 3:18-25

LOVING MY FAMILY

If anything exposes the state of the church in America it is the divorce rate among professing Christians. The numbers are the same as for the population in general. 50% of those who get married get divorced. It is even worse than that, given that another 15% or more just live together, not bothering with marriage commitments. The family, as God designed it, has been rejected just as He has. Children are also perceived to interfere with life, so the birth rate is nearly a fourth of what it was not so long ago. Officially, we have aborted 85 million.

The complexities of living for Christ without a solid family to support us are many and hard. Add to this the weaknesses and problems in our compromised churches and we find many of us rebuilding more than building, alone instead of supported.

To what extent are you living for yourself and not for the family God has given you or that He wants you to have and live your life for?

The Biblical Principles of Selfless Love of Others Applied to Family

1. Loving My Spouse

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord....” Eph. 5:22-33

Of all the wonders of God’s creation, we find the marriage relationship between a man and a woman to take center stage in His revelation to us.

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...and God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them....For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Gen. 1:26-27, 2:24

Marriage between a man and a woman was designed to be a relationship of perfect love in which the parties lived for one another. Like God.

“I... ask... that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; ...And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one.” John 17:20-22

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."
John 6:38

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, that is the Holy Spirit."

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him."
John 14:16-21

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

2. Loving My Children

"And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."
Gen. 1:28

"Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward.... How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."
Psalm 127:3-4

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."
Eph. 6:4

"Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old he will not depart from it."
Prov. 22:6

We are to give our lives to the children that God gives us. Doing this as God wants will take much of it. But if we love them as God wants, He will be very pleased.

3. Loving My Family and Others in My Singleness

Paul is very clear that, in regard to how much of our life we can give to influencing others for Christ, singleness is superior to marriage. If marriage is not what God has planned for you, you are free to give your life to others in ways that married people cannot and should not.

"But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.... One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.

And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."
1 Cor. 7:8, 32-35

4. Loving in a Wounded, Broken, or Failed Family

Chances are this is what you face, because biblically solid, Christ focused, loving families are rare today. Oftentimes it is those in our family that hurt us the most, both by being there and not being there. Responding to them with love is life's greatest challenge for many Christians.

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.

And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same." Luke 6:27-33

How can we turn the hardest things that God has allowed to come into our life into glory for Him? Its "easy" to be a member of a strong Christian family. The battles there are like child's play when compared to the devastation that comes to many. We live in a fallen world that loves itself and could care less about loving others.

*"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom **every family** in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and **that you, being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you **may be filled up to all the fulness of God.**"* Eph 3:14-19

5. Loving My Parents

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." Eph 6:1-3

"Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way...Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you. Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways." Prov 23:19-26

If we give our heart and life to the Lord to use as He will, He will direct us in the path that He desires regarding loving our parents.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you." Psalm 32:8

False Teaching in the Church about Family that has Ruined Many

Of the many false teachings that are common today in our churches regarding marriage and the family, these three are among the most damaging.

False Teaching #1. Family is First and Church is...Optional

It is all too common for committed Christian families to put their family's interests first and their church family a distant second. They attend church to get, not to give. They are self centered, living for themselves instead of their church family. If the church meets their needs they may go there. If it is not what they want they have no hesitation to leave.

Study Unit 6 (Loving My Church in Self Denial) is placed in order before this Unit because that is the order and priority we find in the New Testament.

False Teaching #2. Divorce is Permissible for Really any Cause

God hates divorce. (Mal. 3:16) Many Christian vows are really "as long as my love for you shall last." Many churches just ignore the issue among their members. Thankfully Jesus doesn't divorce us when we cease being likeable. For better or for worse.

False Teaching #3. It Is Ok to Send Your Children to the Humanists for Their Education

Our educational institutions have put God out and led the way in the collapse of our culture and country. Many Christian parents have said, "I can't afford to take my children out of these schools." Actually, they can't afford not to. Few of even our Christian schools, at all levels, have stood well against the culture and the compromises of the church.

"Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge." Prov. 14:7

UNIT 7 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self- evaluation.

Evaluating My Love For My Family

Overall I think God would say: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

As a spouse: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

As a parent: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

In my singleness: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

With the hard things: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

With my parents: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

With the false teaching: ___ Well done ___ Needs some work ___ Not good

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

Family relationships are a complex and life long part of life. Do you have questions or comments on the first section regarding:

1. Loving your spouse and your children?
2. Loving family as a single person?
3. Living in a wounded, broken, or failed family?
4. Loving your parents?

Do you have questions or comments on the second section regarding false teaching:

1. Family vs. church?
2. Divorce and remarriage?
3. Schooling our children?

Prayer Together

UNIT 7 STUDY SESSION #2:

In preparation for Session 2 consider pursuing one of the following application projects and be prepared to share about it.

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

1. Read *Strengthening Your Marriage* by Dr. Wayne Mack on marriage – or another recommended book on marriage.
2. Read *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp – or another recommended book on raising children for the Lord.
3. If you are a Dad, have devotions every morning and evening with your family.
4. If you are single, make a full list of all of your extended family members and pray for them each day. Send a note or call those you are prompted to.
5. Contact and get counsel from someone at church or a church leader regarding a significant issue of “family” you are facing.
6. If you have an older member of your family that is frail or alone, contact and visit him or her.
7. If you know someone at church that is estranged or separated from their spouse or family, contact and encourage them.

Discussion Questions

If you pursued one of the projects can you share with us about it?

Prayer Together