Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

I can’t begin to tell you how many times I have taught this particular section of God’s Word. Every time I have ever taught the Sixth Commandment, this section of God’s Word has been taught. At every pre-marital counseling session and at every marriage counseling session this section of God’s Word has been taught. It is important. It is important for all who are followers and believers in Christ to grasp these words of our Savior. Because in truth, the whole of society, the strength of society rest on these words. I say that because the home and what goes on in the home is the foundation for what will go on in society.

If there is no honor, respect, and discipline found in the home, those very things will be lacking on the streets of our nation. If love is not modeled in the home, then love will be absent on the streets. If the idea of submission is not found and practiced in the home, then it will be forsaken among ourselves.

Do you doubt what I am saying? Then please just take a look at the current situation of our nation. Most of what is happening is because of what is and has been happening in the majority of our homes. Instead of discipline we find people tossed back and forth by every whim and desire, by every emotion and trauma. Where there should be honor and respect there is hatred and a “you have no right” attitude. Where there should be love, well, I don’t know what you would call it but what is being practiced by most of society does not even look like love. Because what is happening in the world in the name of love is sex, permissiveness, acceptance of every evil and just plain foolishness. I could go on and on.

What is said in this section is important. Let’s you and I take a look at this section and learn some lessons for ourselves. Our theme will be: **GODLY HOMES.**

I am sure as all of you heard the words found in our Epistle reading that you grasped that the institution of marriage is really the topic that is being laid forth. Not only does the Lord provide us with a Commandment that protects and honors the institution of marriage, but God also provides this section and others in the New Testament to give us guidance and help in this important aspect of our lives. Did you note where it all starts? That just might be the biggest problem for the world right now, that the heart and core of this important teaching is mostly ignored and laughed at in our society. I am talking about the foundation that is found in the very first verse of this section, verse 21. **“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”**

Now, before we begin to speak of what it means to “submit to one another” the most important thing to do is first grasp why we would want to do that. We do that out of **“reverence for Christ.”** Let’s just talk about this extremely important foundation for our lives.

In the Greek text the word that is used here and that is translated “reverence” is the word “*phobus.”* While I wholeheartedly agree with this way of translating in this text I think it is also important that each of us understands that this word can also be translated with the word “fear.” That’s right, there are really two sides to this word and understanding those two sides is important.

Reverence for Christ comes from a positon of awe and wonder. Can you look at Jesus and what He has done for us, giving his life to atone for our sins and rising from the dead to assure us that His words and promises are true, can you look at that and not be filled with awe and wonder? Unfortunately for many this marvel toward Jesus is missing. The world has convinced them that sin and evil are just old, out of date ideas of a bygone era and time when mankind just didn’t have the wisdom of science to guide them. Yet nothing is further from the truth. While science, at least scientism, may laugh and scoff at the idea of God and salvation please note that the scorn of the world does not void and nullify the truth of God. God has sent his Son to be our Savior. Jesus has come and has shown us the love, grace and wonder of God.

Where else are you going to learn the true nature of love? Love is nothing less that absolute commitment. God was so committed to us that He gave his One and Only Son. Jesus was so committed to us that He went to the cross to suffer our hell and damnation. Yet note that commitment does not nullify justice and righteousness. God is committed to us and yet God has declared in his justice that if we desire to ignore, reject and despise Him he will, out of love for us, give us exactly what we want…for all eternity! And yet in Jesus we learn that as his Spirit calls us, the Spirit also fills us with his commitment, and through the gift of His Church, the Father for the sake of Jesus’ righteousness is willing to forgive and overlook our weaknesses and follies. So note that reverence for Christ is the key, because reverence, awe and wonder for God and His Saving Son will lead to “submission.”

Fear for Christ should also not be overlooked. Fear is exactly what it implies, terror and trembling of our souls when it comes to the majesty and might of God. And just in case you don’t grasp what I just said, imagine yourself in the deep north woods surrounded by a pack of wolves and you are the only food they have seen for days. If you would fear the wolves in that situation, then why wouldn’t you have a fear for the Lord God and what He decrees will be. He says if you believe you will be saved but if you do not believe you will be condemned to a place often describe as “a lake of burning fire.” If you are not wise enough to have reverence for God at least have fear for his majesty and power, because one day, some day you will find yourself face to face with Him. And again, for this reason we are to submit.

Do we get that word? Submit is to “place yourself under someone, to be subordinate to.” It is not something you are to be forced into, but rather is motivated by your reverence, honor and respect. Submitting is to be voluntary, or if you would, it is to be self-imposed. You do it willingly. I like to picture the idea of this word in this way. You are driving along on a lonely, flatland road and you come to a cross road with a stop sign. No one is around, you can see that. What do you do? If you understand “submit” you will stop because that is the right thing to do. When you and I submit, we do so because that is the right thing to do. We place ourselves under the authority and will of another. It all begins with reverence for Christ. We dare not forget that. It all begins and is done out of reverence for Christ.

That reverence for Christ then moves us to “submit to one another.” By the way, I will point out this the greater section of this passage is one that encourages us to “Live as Children of light.” We are children of light because of the Spirit filled wonder that God has given us in Jesus. I repeat myself because if you don’t get that this submitting is done in love, honor, respect and awe for Christ and the person before you, then you have forgotten the wonder and awe of Jesus and the faith He has called you to. So in Christ we submit to one another.

In this particular text Paul immediately goes into a wonderful lesson on marriage where this submitting will have the greatest impact. Please note that this idea of submitting is not limited to the home. We are to practice this type of living with everyone around us. We are to practice this type of living in accord with God’s Word. The reason the home and marriage are mentioned here is because God knows the impact the home has on the world. What we learn in the home is what our society will be. Please note that in history, every time the foundation of home became eroded that society would collapse. Yep, it all starts in the home!! The best homes are those where Christ is the permanent and honored guest.

With all of that we then get to some specifics of God’s desires for our homes. Our Lord starts with the wives. He says, **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

A few things of importance to note. God does not direct wives to love, He knows he has created you to do that. God directs wives to submit. (Husbands, this is not directed at you. This is not giving you the right to demand submission or to make sure your wife is meeting your idea of submission. God is speaking to the wife, not you!!) God directs wives to submit just like they would to the Lord. Here is something important to know, and yet I fear that here is where the women of the world horribly fail.

Why? If you are going to willingly submit to your husband as God desires you to, then it would be best to choose wisely. You will need to look for a man that you respect, who walks and follows the way of the Lord. Don’t look for beauty, money, flashiness or any number of other things this world chases after. I have said this before and once again state it clearly: What you marry is what you get. Don’t marry somebody thinking you will change them. Marry someone because they are Godly. If the man shows no reverence for God and you, why would you marry them? Don’t let your hormones make your decision and blind you to the faults of a man. God wants you to submit, willingly and voluntarily. So don’t blame God when you choose badly. If while dating he has no respect and honor for you, you can be sure after you are married that will still be the case. Choose wisely! And when you do, then this encouragement of the Lord will never be a problem. (By the way, ladies, watch how the guy’s father treats his wife and family and you will see what’s coming! Just some street advice.)

Husbands, God has much more to say to you. **“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 his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, 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."**

To me the most important thing is what God first tells you, Love your wives. Note that God does not leave it up to you to determine what this love is. He says, **“Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”** Your love is to be based on the selfless, sacrificial, give up everything type of love Jesus had. He died for us. So I simply say to every husband, “If you are not willing to die for your wife, you have a problem.” You are to be to your wife as Christ!

And then just let me hit quickly a few other things God demands of husbands. Study the words before us and you will see it. If you don’t like to be yelled at, hit, belittled, scorned, etc, then don’t do that to your wife. If you like to be well fed and comfortable, she gets to be the same. If you want the best in tools and things, she gets the same first. In truth, God tells you that every decision you make will be based on her and your family’s need, not yours. And when you do this, even in this rather imperfect world of ours, you will find your home will be happy, blessed and godly. Follow the Lord and all will be well.

There you have it. Needless to say, much more, much more could be said and spoken of, but we don’t have time for that. We have been given for now, the foundation of it all. In our homes, let us be these things. In our homes, let the Lord shine and be our honored guest. In our homes let Christ shine for the benefit of our children and our neighbors. In other words, in the wider application of these words: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Amen.