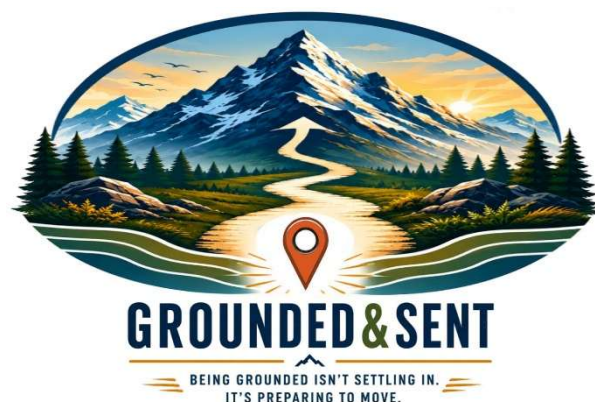


“Sent Into Your Closest Relationships”

Session 6: Ephesians 5:22-6:9

Movement: Going

Theme: Mission doesn’t begin overseas. It begins in your closest relationships.



Leader’s Notes:

Goal: 100% participation – everyone talks.

Prioritize ★ questions. These make up the central theological themes. In time constraints unstarred questions can be skipped. A great conversation on two or three questions is better than a rushed one on five.

This is the first session in the Going movement and it lands in the most personal territory of the whole series. The household codes in 5:22-6:9 are among the most misread and most avoided passages in Ephesians. People either skip them because they feel culturally awkward, or they apply them legalistically without understanding the revolutionary context in which Paul wrote them. Your job as a leader is to help your group feel the weight of what Paul is actually saying: the gospel transforms the most ordinary, closest relationships first. You don’t get sent to the world before you’re sent into your own home.

Handle this passage with care and confidence. The session title reframes the household codes missionally — these aren’t rules for maintaining domestic order. They’re a description of what gospel-shaped relationships look like from the inside. In a first-century world where relationships were almost entirely defined by power and obligation, Paul’s instructions were not a reinforcement of the status quo. They were a quiet revolution. The husband who lays down his life for his wife the way Christ laid down his life for the church wasn’t the norm. Neither was the master who treated his slave “in the same way” as himself. Paul is describing something the world around them had never seen.

You will almost certainly have people in your group for whom this passage carries pain — people in difficult marriages, people who grew up in homes where these verses were misused, people navigating complicated family dynamics. Read the room carefully. The goal of this

session isn't to produce a set of household rules. It's to help people see that the relationships closest to them are the first and most important mission field they have.

Check-In | *DO IT follow-up from Session 5 • ~3 minutes*

Leader note: Keep this brief. If anyone chose “Deal With It Before the Sun Goes Down” last week, this is a moment worth honoring — not pressing for details, but acknowledging that someone took a hard step. One or two responses, then move on.

1. Last week you chose a Do It option. Did anyone try theirs? What happened . . . or what got in the way?

OPEN IT | *Icebreaker • ~5 minutes*

Leader note: This question is warm and often funny. Keep it to two or three responses. What you're listening for is the instinct that the people we're closest to are often the hardest to love well — which is exactly the territory Paul is walking into..

2. Who in your life has required the most patience from you . . . and what have they taught you about yourself in the process?

People will name spouses, children, parents, siblings, roommates. The answers are often funny and occasionally tender. What you're listening for underneath the humor is the honest reality that the people we love most are also the ones who reveal the most about us — our patience, our selfishness, our capacity for grace. That's not a coincidence. It's the whole point of the passage.

READ IT | *Scripture • ~4 minutes*

Say it:

Paul is about to describe what it looks like when the gospel enters the most intimate relationships we have. This passage has been misread and misused in a lot of contexts — so read it carefully and we'll talk about what Paul is actually saying.

Leaders Note: Ask a volunteer to read 5:22-33. After the reading, let it breathe for two seconds. Don't rush to explain or defend the passage. Let the questions do that work.

Context Note: In the first-century Roman world, wives had almost no legal standing, children were property, and slaves were not considered fully human. Paul's household codes weren't reinforcing these power structures — they were quietly dismantling them from the inside. Notice that Paul addresses wives, children, and slaves directly — something no first-century moralist would do, because those groups weren't considered worth addressing. And notice what he asks of the more powerful party in each relationship: husbands love sacrificially, fathers don't exasperate, masters treat workers with the same standard they themselves expect. In a world of unchecked power, that was radical. The revolutionary instruction in this passage isn't primarily directed at wives. It's directed at husbands.

- Ephesians 5:22-33

EXPLORE IT | Discussion • ~12 minutes

★3. Verse 25 says husbands are to love their wives “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” That’s not a posture of authority. It’s a posture of sacrifice. “In your most important relationships — marriage, family, close friendship — what does self-giving love actually look like compared to self-protecting love? And honestly, which one shows up more often in yours?”

Frame this question broadly so it applies to everyone in the room, not just married people. The principle Paul is describing — love that gives itself rather than protects itself — applies to every significant relationship. What you’re listening for is the gap between self-giving love as a concept and self-giving love as a daily practice. Most people will immediately think of a relationship where they know they’ve been more self-protecting than self-giving. Let them name it honestly. Don’t let the conversation drift into a debate about submission or gender roles — those conversations are worth having, but not here. The passage’s center of gravity is Christlike sacrifice, not hierarchy.

Sticky phrase: (Use these to help your group remember what they learn) “**Healthy relationships don't just happen. They reflect the love that Jesus modeled first.**”

4. Verse 31 quotes Genesis: “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.” Paul uses a marriage to describe the relationship between Christ and the church. If your closest relationships are meant to be a picture of something larger — of love, sacrifice, and faithfulness — what does the picture your relationships currently paint actually look like?

This is an imagination and honesty question. Paul’s point in citing Genesis is that marriage — and by extension, our most committed relationships — was always meant to point beyond itself to something true about God’s love. That’s a high calling and most people have never thought about their relationships in those terms. The question doesn’t require people to be married — frame it around their most committed relationships. Some people will laugh uncomfortably. Some will go quiet. Both responses are honest. Don’t push for resolution. The point is simply to help people see their relationships as more than personal arrangements — they’re a witness to something.

Sticky phrase: **“Your closest relationships are a picture of something. The question is what they’re showing people.”**

READ IT | Scripture • ~3 minutes

Say it:

Paul now moves from marriage into the other relationships that define our closest world — parents and children, employers and employees.

Leaders Note: Ask a different volunteer to read 6:1-9. Note that Paul addresses children and workers directly — again, people the ancient world didn’t typically bother addressing. Remind your group after the reading: these aren’t just household rules. They’re a description of what grounded, sent people look like in the most ordinary contexts of life.

- Ephesians 6:1-9

EXPLORE IT | Discussion • ~16 minutes

★ **5. Verse 7 says to “serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.” Paul is describing a way of working — at a job, in a home, in any context of responsibility — that is**

fundamentally different from just doing what's required. What would change about how you approach your work, your roles, or your responsibilities this week if you genuinely treated them as service to God rather than obligation to people?

This question takes the passage out of the ancient slave/master context and lands it in Monday morning. Everyone in your group has responsibilities they didn't choose and contexts they find difficult — a job they're not sure they want, a role in the family they find exhausting, a responsibility they've been resenting. Paul's reframe is simple and radical: what if you did it as an act of worship rather than an act of obligation? The question isn't asking people to pretend everything is fine. It's asking them to imagine what a different motivation would do to the same set of circumstances. Let people be specific. Vague answers about "working harder" aren't the goal — concrete images of specific roles done differently is what you're listening for.

Sticky phrase: **"Ordinary work becomes mission when you change who you're doing it for."**

★6. Paul's instructions in this passage are almost entirely directed at the person with more power in each relationship — husbands, parents, masters. He's not asking the powerful to maintain their position. He's asking them to use their power differently. Where in your life do you hold more power or influence than others . . . and are you using it the way Paul describes?

This is the most countercultural question in the session, and it requires some courage from the leader to ask well. Power in this context doesn't just mean formal authority — it includes anyone who has more resources, more stability, more voice, or more influence in a given relationship. That includes parents over children, employers over employees, older siblings over younger ones, financially stable people over financially struggling friends. Most people don't think of themselves as powerful. Help them locate where they actually are in the power dynamic of their closest relationships. Then ask what Paul's instruction looks like specifically there. This is also the most direct connection to Brazos Pointe's mission — deploying faith means using whatever influence you have in service of the people around you.

Sticky phrase: **"For a Christ follower, power doesn't dominate, it serves."**

★7. Looking across all the relationships Paul describes — marriage, family, work — which one feels most like a mission field to you right now? Not a burden . . . but a genuine place where you sense God might want to do something through you?

This is the landing question for the session and it reframes everything Paul has described as opportunity rather than obligation. The word “mission field” might sound dramatic for a marriage or a job, but that’s exactly what Paul is describing — the closest relationships are the first and most important place where grounded people get sent. Let people name a specific relationship or context. Some will name something obvious. Others will surprise themselves with what surfaces. If someone names a relationship that sounds more like a burden than a mission field, gently reframe: “What would it look like to see it as a place God specifically sent you?” This question also sets up the Do It section directly — whatever someone names here is what they should be taking into their application choice.

Sticky phrase: **“Your closest relationships are already your first mission field.”**

SAY IT | Leader Teaching • ~3 minutes

Leaders Note: Read the following aloud or put it in your own words. Keep it brief. If you’re running short on time, skip this section but don’t jump over the next section. It gives directions for our Mission Statement building.

Here’s what most people think being sent means: going somewhere. A mission trip. A ministry role. A dramatic moment where you do something significant for God in front of other people. Paul has a different picture. He says: go home. Go to work. Go back to the relationships you were already in. And do them differently.

The household codes aren’t a detour from the mission of Ephesians. They are the mission. Christ didn’t redeem you so you could go perform Christianity somewhere else. He sent you back into the most ordinary, most challenging, most revealing relationships of your life — and said: let what I’ve done in you show up there first.

Your marriage. Your family. Your workplace. Those aren’t obstacles to your calling. They are your calling. And the person whose identity is grounded in Christ, has grown in community, and is now learning to go . . . starts right where they already are.

Do NOT skip this:

SG Mission Statement Framework | Application • ~4 minutes

Leaders Note: Read the following transition aloud, then allow 3-4 minutes of open conversation before moving to Do It section. (Skip the Do It section if needed this week.) This is the second of two informal conversations building toward the Session 7 mission statement finalization. You're not looking for polished answers. You're listening for the honest, specific things that surface when people reflect on what God has actually been doing. Two or three responses is enough.

Say it:

Take out your Mission Framework handout. Last session we discussed the first two questions in the mission framework. This week we will consider the next two questions. Let's spend 3-4 minutes on this:

3. Who are we being sent to? Be specific!
4. What is the one thing we want to commit together going forward?

We're going to use what surfaces here next week in Session 7 to land on a short group mission statement together. So... take a minute. What has God been using us (our group) to do/accomplish?

Be sure someone is taking notes on their handout so you can refer to it next week when we finalize your group mission statement. Write down a word or phrase that keeps coming up. Those often find their way into the mission statement language.

DO IT | Optional Application • ~6 minutes

Leaders Note: Trim this section (or skip it completely) if your "Mission Statement Framework" conversation went long. Ask everyone to pick one option and say it out loud before you close. Check in at the start of Session 7. If someone named a specific relationship during Question 7, nudge them toward the "Go First" option that connects most directly to that relationship.

Choose one of the following this week:

- **Go First.** In the relationship you named in Question 7, do one act of self-giving this week that you wouldn't normally do — something that costs you something. Not a grand gesture. Just one move that puts the other person's needs ahead of your own preferences.
- **Change Your Why.** Pick one responsibility or role in your life that you've been approaching as obligation. This week, do it as an act of worship. Same task. Different posture. At the end of the week, notice whether anything changed — in you, or in the people around you.
- **Use Your Influence.** From Question 6 — the relationship where you have more power or influence. Do one thing this week to use that influence in service rather than self-protection. A conversation you've been avoiding. A need you've been ignoring. One move toward the person rather than away.
- **Tell Someone They're Sent.** Think of someone in your closest circle who doesn't yet know they're loved by God . . . someone who hasn't stepped over the line of faith. This week, do one thing to show them what that love looks like. Not a speech. Just one act that points somewhere beyond yourself.
- **Reflect On It.** Read Ephesians 5:22–6:9 slowly. Write honestly about this: Which relationship in my life most needs the Gospel to show up differently? What would that actually look like starting this week?

PRAY IT | *Closing Prayer • ~3 minutes*

Leaders Note: Read this prayer over your group or use it as a closing after open prayer.

Father, you didn't send us somewhere dramatic. You sent us home. You sent us to work. You sent us back into the most ordinary, most challenging relationships of our lives and said: let what I've done in you show up there. We confess that we often treat our closest relationships as the hardest part of following you rather than the first part. Tonight we heard that the mission begins right where we already are. Give us the courage to go first in our homes. To serve as though we're serving you in our work. To use whatever influence we have in service of the people around us rather than in protection of ourselves. May the people closest to us be the first to see the difference you've made. In Jesus' name, Amen.