

Jesus and His Bride Ephesians 5:22-33 (ESV) bible-sermons.org April 22, 2012

It is interesting that we come to this passage right after the second Art of Marriage seminar concluded. The passage today is familiar to many of you, but we can always use a refresher in these essentials of the marriage relationship. More importantly, it reminds us of our eternal relationship as the bride of Christ.

²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* Paul tells us in a number of passages that God has ordained that men lead in the home and in the church. (1Timothy 3:2; Colossians 3:18) Paul tells us the basis for this is the order of creation and the events of the fall. (1Timothy 2:12-14) It certainly does not mean that Paul or Jesus did not value women and their role within the body of Christ. In fact, Jesus and Paul refer to women that were a part of their ministry. (Philippians 4:3; Luke 8:3)

I like the analogy of a quarterback and a receiver. The quarterback calls the plays, but it is often the receiver that scores the points. Is one more valuable than the other? The MVP is often someone other than the person that called the plays. Because God, in His word, has assigned different roles to men and women does not mean He values one above the other. Both are said to be made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:27) They equally share in this new life, as the Scripture referring to salvation says, "There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

God, for His own reasons, designed men to lead. There are exceptions when women need to step into that role. There was a woman judge of Israel named Deborah. It doesn't mean that men never take advantage of their role and use it selfishly. Yet, it is still God's order.

The statement could not be any clearer. ²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* The home is to be a picture of the church's submission to Jesus. The husband is to lead. You have probably experienced, and certainly there are examples in Scripture, when the Lord, though He leads, invites us to ask. (Matthew 7:7) Within His permissive will He lets us make choices. Have you noticed how often He does things that bring you joy? Husbands should do the same.

Someone needs to lead and make the final decisions. In many cases the wife thinks she will make the better choices. Of course none of you have ever experienced that. (laughter) As a counter measure to that tendency, the Spirit through Paul tells wives that as new creations in Christ they can submit to their husbands. They can let them lead. The Spirit gives them the power to rise above the fallen nature that wants to have its way. (Genesis 3:16)

Commented [notes1]: 1 Timothy 3:2 (ESV)

² There fore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Commented [notes2]: Colossians 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

Commented [notes3]: 1 Timothy 2:12-14 (ESV)

¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve;

¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Commented [notes4]: Philippians 4:3 (ESV)

³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Commented [notes5]: Luke 8:3 (ESV)

³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Commented [notes6]: Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Commented [notes7]: Galatians 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.

Commented [notes8]: Matthew 7:7 (ESV)

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Commented [notes9]: Genesis 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

This is all predicated on the belief that as believers we submit to the Lord. We all are submitting to a higher authority. This is the Christian life, to lay down your will and surrender it to the One who loved you and died for you. (1Corinthians 6:20) In this submission, men and women are the same. The more the Christian couple yields to Christ, the more united they will be in all their decisions.

Commented [notes10]: 1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV)

²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

The real difficulty comes when a woman's husband is not a believer. This is why we are not to be unequally yoked, married to someone that does not know Jesus as Lord of their life. (2Corinthians 6:14) When He is Lord of both your lives, you will usually be on the same track. As Jesus said elsewhere, "You cannot serve two masters." (Matthew 6:24) The girl that marries an unbeliever has put herself in an impossible situation.

Commented [notes11]: 2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Commented [notes12]: Matthew 6:24 (ESV)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

If you are here this morning and you do not know the Lord Jesus as your Savior, you might think this is regressive and even ignorant. I'd encourage you to wait a little longer and see that the more difficult role is that of the husband. For those that do know the Word or have been here for some time, you know the importance of pictures in God's creation and revelation. (Romans 1:20)

Commented [notes13]: Romans 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

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. We have seen the numerous shadows of future reality in the Biblical instructions. God paints physical pictures for us to understand spiritual realities. (Colossians 2:17) Since the woman is a picture of the bride of Christ, the church, what signal does it send when the woman demands that the husband routinely submit to her?

Commented [notes14]: Colossians 2:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Do you remember the picture of Moses striking the rock the second time? (Numbers 20:8) We had the amazing picture of Jesus being struck to give us living water after which to receive the water we only need speak to Him. Moses was severely disciplined for not demonstrating that picture God had asked him to illustrate. When the Christian woman demands her husband follow her lead, she is painting a picture of the church demanding that Jesus obey and submit. Some women might say, "But my husband is no Jesus!" Yes, but in the picture of marriage he represents Him. He may do so poorly, but he still represents Him. *²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* Why do you think the Spirit had to say this so bluntly?

Commented [notes15]: Numbers 20:8 (ESV)

⁸ "Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle."

Our problem in receiving God's word is often that we think we know better or that we are the exception. We can think that we know a better way and that God doesn't understand our situation. We are basically declaring that we know better than the revelation of God. The word continually reminds us that God gives us commands for our good. (Deuteronomy 4:40) They aren't just demands for obedience, but rather that they are the best way for us to live. Peter tells us that the unbelieving husband is won over by the quiet submission of the wife. (1Peter 3:1-2) Contending for your rights will

Commented [notes16]: Deuteronomy 4:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Commented [notes17]: 1 Peter 3:1-2 (ESV)

¹ Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,

² when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

only escalate the tension and dissatisfaction. The patient loving submission of the wife can challenge her spouse to be a godly husband.

The follower of Jesus should ask their heart if they are submitting in everything to Jesus. (Deuteronomy 6:5) Would your spouse say that was true of you? Would your friends describe you that way? When under persecution, believers must get used to the fact that it will cost them to submit to Jesus, but that it is the right thing to do. But when the culture becomes "Christian" there is little cost, and so we get used to doing as we please, forgetting to daily submit to Christ. (Luke 9:23) The Spirit reminds us, but it is so easy to just ignore it and be satisfied that we know the forgiveness of the cross. We neglect to take up our cross. This, too, has an analogy to marriage.

Now it's your turn husbands. You may have thought this is a sweet deal so far. Hang on. ²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,* Your part is to really love your wife to the point of giving yourself up for her. That puts your joy about her submission in a whole new light. As you give yourself up for her in love she submits to your loving instruction that is always for her good. That wouldn't be so difficult if Paul didn't tell us that Jesus is the example. He lived daily for the church, teaching, healing, instructing, and then died on the cross to save us from our sins. He then rose again that He might live in us, always interceding for us. (Hebrews 7:25)

Let me put it as bluntly as Paul has here. If you are giving yourself up for your wife in love, she'll rarely have a problem submitting to your loving requests. Before you complain that your wife demands to have her way, ask yourself if you are lovingly laying down your life for her. And wives, before you complain that your husband is a tyrant, demanding to always have his way, ask yourself if you have been quietly submitting to Him as to the Lord. You see, when either spouse consistently practices what the Word of God instructs us to do, it will almost always result in the transformation of the other spouse. **You can't change your spouse. You can only change yourself with the Spirit's help.** And when you do, God has a tool with which to convict and transform your spouse. It may take some time, but it is so much better than starting all over again only to find you are in the same situation six months later.

Are there exceptions? Of course! God's Word also tells us that you do not have to stand for infidelity (Matthew 19:9), and many believe that physical abuse is also a Biblical reason for separation. (Malachi 2:16) But I have seen God overcome even these. Consider God's grace to you!

Why does the husband lovingly give up his life for his spouse? It is for the same reason that Jesus lovingly gave Himself up for us, the church, 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.* Jesus has a vision for what He can make of us. The

Commented [notes18]: Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV)
⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Commented [notes19]: Luke 9:23 (ESV)
²³ And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Commented [notes20]: Hebrews 7:25 (ESV)
²⁵ Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Commented [notes21]: Matthew 19:9 (ESV)
⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

Commented [notes22]: Malachi 2:16 (ESV)
¹⁶ "For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless."

process is accomplished by washing us in the water of the Word. The Word of God transforms us. It is the tool Jesus uses to sanctify us. (Romans 12:2) The spots and wrinkles that we call sin and old habits, are removed as the Word of God renews our minds. **The Word of God is the best wrinkle and blemish remover!** If you aren't spending time in the Word, you aren't applying the blemish remover. Apply it to yourself first, then to your wife. The Lord wants every one of us to be in splendor, holy! That is what is drop dead... – no – come to life gorgeous to Jesus.

That is a little hard, for me as a man, to relate to, but I can relate to it when I see my wife do something so kind and loving that my heart is warmed by the inner beauty I see. It makes me love her even more. That is what Jesus is working into us as we read His Word and let it transform the way we see the world, including this Biblical view of marriage. (Colossians 3:10) Is there a higher view of marriage in any other culture than this incredible portrait that God is painting here? But there is more.

²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. The two become one. If you realize you are one, and you throw away all the exit signs in your marriage, and you just commit to making it work no matter what, then you **start to focus on what your spouse brings to the union** instead of focusing on the things that displease you. You start asking how your qualities can work together to bring balance and add to one another.

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. Instead of competing and demanding, you start to look for how you can bless and help your spouse. Husbands that give themselves in love to their wife will want the best for her health, her spiritual life, her goals in life, and every aspect of their other half. Men, can you say that you nourish your wife's God given dreams and goals? Do you even know what they are?

Look how Jesus nourishes and cherishes us as His bride! He is our great provider, our healer, our guide, our light and our salvation. He is everything to us because His love is so great for us. If He did not withhold His own life, is there any good thing that He would withhold from us? (Romans 8:32) Has the Lord nourished and cherished you? Let's see your hands! OK then – that is how you husbands are to care for your wife. Once again, the picture is very clear. It's impossible without God; but you have the Holy Spirit if you are in Christ! (Philippians 4:13)

³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Sound instruction from (Genesis 2:24) Don't make your wife live with your mom. They'll be at the other's throat. Your wife isn't your mama and your mama will expect her to be – so find another place to live. You've established a new home and it will have its own unique ways of dealing with life. You have to work that out with your spouse, and you should do most of that before you get married,

Commented [notes23]: Romans 12:2 (ESV)

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [notes24]: Colossians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Commented [notes25]: Romans 8:32 (ESV)

³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Commented [notes26]: Philippians 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Commented [notes27]: Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

which means before you start sleeping together because then you can't think straight. Amen? You are no longer an individual. The two of you are now one. (1Corinthians 6:16) You are a compound being. Accept it and work through the difficulties. I've never met a Christian couple that has been married for more than 50 years that wish they'd have separated earlier. Many had hard times, but they are always glad they worked through it. Hold fast to your wife men! The reason the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence is because it's growing over a septic system!

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. This is really all about you and Jesus. Paul kept telling us that throughout the passage, but here he lets us know that marriage is a picture, a profound mystery. God is preparing us for the Wedding Feast of the Lamb. (Revelation 19:7) He is using marriage to help us understand our eternal marriage to the husband who nourishes us and cares for us, the One who is washing away all the stains, wrinkles and blemishes with His Word. He's getting us ready to lovingly submit to the One that in love laid down His life for us. He's getting us ready for that perfect union with Him when we can no longer say that we are our own, but are forever united with Him. (Song of Songs 8:5)

³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Paul didn't end on the mystical, but returned to the every day practical application. Men, women want above all else to be loved. Love your wife with the very love of God, sacrificially, realizing that it is God's will and in your best interest. You may never understand her, but you can still ignore those things that displease you and love her for the good things God has put in her life. Your love will earn her respect.

And women, your husband longs to have your respect. I see these men with amazing qualities and hear their wife say they can't find anything to respect. You aren't looking very hard. No, he isn't Jesus, but the more you discover and value the qualities God gave him, and voice that respect, especially in front of others, the more likely he is to be more like Jesus and give you the love you desire.

Men and women, this is the wisdom of God for your good. Ignore it to your peril. And above all, don't miss the fact that God is preparing you for an eternal marriage with His Son, Christ Jesus. Are you letting Him apply the wrinkle and blemish remover every day?

Questions

- 1 How can different roles still be equals?
- 2 What is Paul's reason for gender roles?
- 3 What does the picture of the wife's submission represent?
- 4 What does God ask of us husbands?
- 5 Describe the Bible's exalted view of marriage.
- 6 Why should husbands nourish and cherish their wife?
- 7 What is the best blemish and wrinkle remover?

Commented [notes28]: 1 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

Commented [notes29]: Revelation 19:7 (ESV)

⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

Commented [notes30]: Song of Songs 8:5 (NIV)

⁵ Who is this coming up from the desert leaning on her lover? Beloved Under the apple tree I roused you; there your mother conceived you, there she who was in labor gave you birth.

- 8 Why does the grass look greener over there?
- 9 What is this passage really about?
- 10 What do women desire?
- 11 What do men desire?