



Godly Wives

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Ephesians 5:21-24, 32-33

Clint Pressley

*<sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

*<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

*(Pastor prays)*

By anyone's admission, on either side of the ongoing debates, we live in strange and different times. And many of us believe, as a society, we have placed ourselves on a path of self-destruction, especially when it comes to marriage. As Christians, that hold to the faith once and forever delivered to the saints, we believe that marriage is a creation ordinance given to us by God for the purpose of human flourishing and gospel example. Marriage brings the man and woman, both created in the image of God, together in a relationship that represents Christ and the church. That's partly what Ephesians chapter 5 is about. And it's providential that we would land on this passage while the marriage rhetoric is heating up in our country. You are witnessing, in our generation, the outright erosion and degradation of marriage. Modernity has

weakened it. Divorce has cheapened it, and this latest debacle has crippled it. The fact is that marriage just doesn't mean much anymore. But we need to look at the issue, under the issue. There's more at stake than meets the eye. When you read Ephesians 5 in its entirety, you find out there is so much more at stake than two people that love each other and want to spend their lives together. That is a beautiful and glorious thought that is a gift from God. But there is more to it than that. There's more than the satisfaction and happiness you feel. There is so much more at stake than you being attracted to your spouse or making each other happy. To some degree we have allowed Christian pop-psychology to so cloud the issue of marriage, we have forgotten the issue under the issue.

So things like books, "His Needs, Her Needs" or reading the "5 Love Languages", these are good books to read but we get stuck there on relationship issues and forget that marriage is a gospel issue. And that's what Paul writes about here in Ephesians 5. He is taking our attention off of ourselves and onto how to live the gospel in the context of marriage. He addresses the role of the wife and the role of the husband as they strive to have a gospel marriage and it is significant that throughout this passage, and all the marriage passages, that husbands and wives are reminded of their responsibilities and not their rights. Today we focus on wives, being reminded:

### A Godly Marriage Sends a Gospel Message

Let's look at the wives first and everybody's favorite word, submission.

#### **The meaning of submission**

Let's read the passage again and see what does it mean to submit.

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To get at it you must disinfect the word from all the cultural germs on it and penetrate into its essential Biblical meaning. Let's undo the word. The Greek word is Hupo-Tasso, which is a compound word, two words together.

Tasso is to arrange something or put it in order. Hupo simply means under. So hupo-tasso is to put yourself under or below someone else. Submission, in the context of Christian marriage, is the voluntary act of an equal putting herself under the leadership of her husband and doing so in the Gospel intent.

Submission is not an attempt to exalt a husband. Submission is an effort to exalt Christ. So there's the meaning of the word.

### **The matrix of submission**

Matrix. Let me show you what I mean here. To see this you have to back up to verse 21, submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. Look at the phrase, submitting to one another. Look, as a general Christian principle driving who you are, you arrange your life so that you put others before yourself. It's the Christian rubric, the matrix of submission. Paul will say in Philippians 2:3, *Do nothing out of selfish ambition*. In fact, you can't read this whole section about husbands and wives and children and servants correctly without reading it with verse 21 as an umbrella statement, submitting to one another out of the reverence to Christ. Submission is the prevailing Christian attitude and for gospel purposes, Paul puts a finer point on wives. This marriage is the gospel and part of your gospel-centered life is learning to take your Type A, strong personality, and put it under your husband. That's meaning and matrix.

### **The manner of submission**

The manner of submission is found in verses 21-22. Verse 21, *Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*. In other words, as you stand in awe of the love of God, for you as a sinner, as you stand in awe of the grace of God in your life. Part of your act of worship is the voluntary submission you give to your husband. Verse 21 gives a general Christian principle. If you stand in awe of Jesus, you submit to one another. Verse 22 gives a more distant role to the

wife. Wives, submit to your own husbands, nobody else's husband. By the way, this is in the context of the home, in marriage. This says nothing about women leading in business or politics. This says nothing about a woman being president. This is about your attitude toward your own husband and verse 22 says to submit to him as unto the Lord. That doesn't mean to submit to him as if he is the Lord. Paul is saying, as a display of your love for Christ and the gospel, it's not dependent on his attitude, it's not conditional. Don't stay, well, if he would love me as Christ loves the church, then I would treat him better. Verse 22 tells you that you do this as an expression of your love for Christ and it becomes a picture of the gospel. In fact, Peter says in 1 Peter 3:1-2, *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, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.* The manner of submission really becomes a matter of the heart so here's what we do. We look to...

### **The model of submission**

To see this we look at Philippians 2:5-7. *Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* So that your model for life and submission becomes Christ. Your attitude and ambition in marriage is to honor and emulate Christ so that your husband and your kids and people that aren't Christians, look at you and see Christ. This brings us to the fifth point.

### **The motive of submission**

The motive of submission in marriage is not a devolving of your worth in Christ. Men and women are equal. If they weren't equal, then there wouldn't be any reason to instruct wives to put themselves under the leadership of their husband. And the motive is found in the passage as Paul reminds us that our home is designed to be a picture of Christ and the church. It is to be a picture of the gospel so that our lives, wives, husbands and children, are centered on the gospel.

## The mystery of submission

In verses 31-33, Paul says, <sup>31</sup> *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* <sup>32</sup> *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* <sup>33</sup> *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.* This reminds us that all we do, even marriage itself, brings us back to the gospel of Christ. That reminds us that although God is holy and we are sinners separated from God, Christ died as our substitute on the cross. And by repentance and faith, we can be saved. Living gospel lives is building gospel marriages.

*(Pastor prays)*