



“Marriage in God’s Household”

Ephesians 5:22-33

Main Idea: Christian marriage should reveal Christ’s love for his church and the church’s love for the Lord.

Wives, display the way the church lovingly submits to Jesus (22-24).

There probably aren’t many verses that have been abused and misused as much as Eph. 5:22-24. This is a passage that is often discounted today, and these are verses that still make some squirm in their seats. The flesh wants to push back on these verses, desiring to reinterpret them in a way that seems to make better sense to the modern mind. However, God’s Word doesn’t give us wiggle room to do that. God’s Word is clear: Wives, display the way the church lovingly submits to Jesus.

There are some important things to consider about this type of submission. First, it’s a submission that’s grounded in faith in the Lord! Ultimately, as a believer, you are obeying the Lord and trusting the Lord for the outcome of your obedience. As the church trusts and obeys God’s Word, so you trust and obey God’s Word...not because your husband deserves it but because the Lord does! Second, submission is an act of worship, and requires great dependence on the Lord. As the church praises the Lord for what he’s done and fervently seeks the Lord for what only he can do, so the Christian wife submits to her husband out of worship for her Lord, praising the Lord for what he’s done and seeking the Lord for what he can only do. In other words, submission doesn’t have a negative connotation here. Remember, In Eph. 5:21, believers were already commanded to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ! The submission that God calls for here isn’t a submission to abuse and to mistreatment. It’s not a submission that’s humiliating and hurtful. This submission has a positive purpose. Submission in the marriage relationship is designed to emphasize the complementary roles of the husband and wife. In keeping with God’s design for creating a helpmate, it’s meant to encourage and reinforce the husband as the spiritual leader and shepherd of the home. Most importantly, the role of the wife is meant to teach her home and those looking in from the outside about how the church lovingly submits to Jesus. Ultimately, the wife is modeling every believer’s relationship to his/her Lord!

1. If you were talking with someone who was in or had been in an abusive relationship, how would you explain the call for wives to submit in a way that’s faithful to God’s Word and clear on God’s design for submission in marriage (not condoning sin)? How would you incorporate Eph. 5:21 into that explanation?
2. Why is it so important for wives to see obedience to this call in their marriage as an act of faith and worship? How does it truly require faith? Why is it truly worship?
3. Do you have a testimony of learning about how to love, to trust, and to obey the Lord through the witness of a godly mother (grandmother, friend’s mother, etc.)? Share, and then pray for the ladies in your small group.

Husbands, display the way Jesus lovingly gave himself for his church (25-30).

For men who have used verses 22-24 to justify abusive control and treatment of wives, they conveniently fail to read and to apply the rest of the passage. There are twice as many verses connected to the expectations of husbands than there are for wives, and faithfulness to God's calling in these verses for the husband completely rules out the possibility of exploiting submission for selfish and sinful purposes. While the wife's role is to display the church's relationship with Christ, the husband's role is to display Christ's relationship with his church. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her. Husbands are commanded to sacrifice for the purpose of building up their wives and not tearing them down. Husbands are told to love their wives as they love themselves, nourishing and cherishing their wives as Christ does the church. A husband must remember that he is one with his wife, such that everything he does to her affects himself and everything he does to himself affects her. The husband must remember that his wife is in Christ and a member of the church, just as he is. It's Christ that connects the husband and the wife together and Christ who is the head of his body, the church!

1. If you were talking to a husband who was abusing his wife, belittling her and controlling her, how would you share these verses with him to prayerfully help him see God's design for how he should love and treat his wife? How would you incorporate some of Ephesians 1-3 in that conversation about Christ's love for the church?
2. Why is it so important for husbands to see obedience to this call in their marriage as an act of faith and worship? How does it truly require faith? Why is it truly worship?
3. Do you have a testimony of learning about how to love, to sacrifice, and to build someone up in the Lord through the witness of a godly father (grandfather, friend's father, etc.)? Share, and then pray for the men in your small group.

Couples, display the gospel in the way you love one another in faith (31-33).

What a beautiful and powerful picture. In Christian marriage, the two become one such as in God's eyes, he no longer sees two individuals but a mysterious union of two into one. This is much more than a legal standing because of a marriage contract; this is a miraculous transformation of identity by God's grace through Christian marriage. The unity that God gives a couple in marriage is meant to display the ultimate unity that believers have with God through faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, as believers in God's household, even our marriages are meant to proclaim the gospel! There's great weight, men, on the witness of your treatment of your wife. You are meant to show your children, your church, and the world around you what Christ looks like in the way he loves his church! There's also great importance, women, on the witness of your treatment of your husband. You are meant to show your children, your church, and the world around you what the church looks like in the way it loves Jesus! What a profound responsibility that's only possible by God's gift of faith and the new life he gives those who believe.

1. How does this impact your view of two becoming one in marriage?
2. Have you thought about marriage as a way that the church proclaims the gospel and teaches or disciplines others to know what a relationship with Christ looks like? If so, what reinforcements or reminders did you get from this lesson? If not, how has God's Word in these verses changed your perspective on Christian marriage?
3. Pray for marriages in our church! Your prayers are needed for marriages that exist and for those yet to come. May the Lord use our marriages to display his grace!