

EPHESIANS
SUBMISSION IN MARRIAGE

Wednesday, September 30

Reading: Ephesians 5:21-33

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

Ephesians 5:21 says that one mark of a Spirit-filled believer is to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Paul will now take time to apply this principle to various relationships. First, he deals with submission in marriage. Paul compares this relationship with Christ and His church.

To the wife, Paul says to submit to her husband’s leadership as part of her reverence for the Lord. As head of the home, the husband is responsible to God for His wife and family. He will be held accountable for how he cared for and led them. Thus, the wife should support her husband. This in no way means she is subservient or a doormat to his whims and wishes. Remember this is all in the context of submitting to one another. Christ willingly gave Himself for His bride, the Church. We submit to Christ’s authority because we know He has our best interests at heart. This is the way a Christian marriage should work as well.

Paul now turns to the husbands. Instead of simply giving instructions however, he makes a grand comparison. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her. This is a love that SACRIFICES. It is a love that is willing to give up having his own way to meet the needs of his wife. It is a willingness to die for his spouse.

It is a love that SANCTIFIES. While he cannot cleanse his wife in the way the Christ’s death does for His church, a husband should always strive to show his love by encouraging her spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth. Her purity, honor, and joy should be his primary concern.

It is a love that CHERISHES. Just as he loves himself, so a husband is to love his wife. She is to be his God-given treasure and he will do anything to provide for her happiness and well-being. He will treat her with tender love, respect, and protection.

It is a love that is SECURE. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 which establishes God’s plan for marriage. They are “one flesh” cemented together (‘united’). Just as Christ does not throw us away when we sin, Christian couples should not break apart when there are problems. They work through them together by the power of the Holy Spirit. If husbands followed Christ’s example there would be no issues of submission for the wife because her husband’s goal would be to give up his own desires to do what is best for her and what will provide for her happiness.

LESSON: “As Christ Loved the Church.” The sanctity of marriage is important because it is a living picture of the union of Christ and His Church. While it may be imperfect, Christian spouses should be an example to the world of the love of Christ shown on Calvary. How does your marriage reflect Christ’s love for you? What areas might you need to work together on to honor Christ in your marriage?

“When Christian husbands and wives walk in the power of the Spirit, yield to His Word and His control, and are mutually submissive, they are brought much happiness, their children are brought much blessing, and God is brought much honor.” ¹

¹ John MacArthur. MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, p 305