

Ephesians: Forwarding God's Care  
God's Care Forwarded  
*Caring for Spouses*  
Ephesians 5:21-33

Intro: Marriage was begun by God for the good of man. It is permanent in its nature and holy in character. From the beginning, God's intent was clear—a man would marry a woman and they would live together until one of them died. That continues to be the nature of the promise made in most wedding ceremonies—"till death do us part."

The husband-wife relationship is one of mutual love, trust, and respect. It is fundamental to the health of the family, the church, and the community and deserves special attention in all cases. It is the metaphor for the love of Christ for his church.

**I. Reverence Christ in your Marriage:** *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ* (Eph. 5:21)

- A. We interpret marriage in Christ. We identify obligations we have as followers of Jesus in the marriage covenant.
- B. We are following the example of Jesus as applied to marriage. We are seeking to emulate him in this relationship of love. Jesus was not married, so we cannot watch him within this covenant. But he does have a church, and we can see how he relates to the church and the church to him.
- C. Paul will use the relationship of Christ and his church to help us understand our obligations in the covenant of marriage. In doing so, he helps us understand both covenants more fully.
- D. "Reverence for Christ" calls for submission. We are honoring Christ in our submission to one another because:
  1. He is our servant in salvation & sanctification. Marriage is a covenant of service both ways. We serve one another in marriage just as we serve one another in all walks of life.
  2. He washes our feet in his care and sustenance every day. We follow his example by washing the feet of one another. Craig Taffaro in St. Bernard Parish made the news, though reluctantly, by washing the feet of his employees in the parish office. He was not seeking press, he said, and was embarrassed by it. Rather, he was seeking to express his heart to his friends.  
\*\*\*Gutting houses was a form of footwashing.  
Marriage is about a man and a woman washing each other's feet. It is a covenant of self-giving love.
  3. He drinks the cup of suffering for us. We follow Christ by drinking together the cup of life in marriage. Marriage is a promise of mutual suffering. If one suffers, the other suffers. We will share the pain as well as the joy. Do not think that this nuptial cup has no pain in it. If you think it is only delight and comfort, you are deceived. All human relationships hold the promise of delight and the warning of pain.

**II. WIVES, RESPECT YOUR HUSBANDS:** *Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord* (v22). *The wife must respect her husband* (v33).

- A. The way of Christ calls for SACRIFICE. This respect is self-sacrificing in that it sets aside the PRIDE that seeks first place in favor of a humility that serves the other.
- B. "Submit" (hupo-tasso, "under appointment") is a word commonly used in a military sense for the chain of command among soldiers. In a nonmilitary sense it refers to a voluntary attitude of giving in, assuming responsibility, cooperating, and carrying a burden.
  1. The military was an exclusively male institution in the first century, and it is generally a male-dominated institution in our own day and time. The word "submit" addresses a need of the man in the marriage. Charlotte said of Larry, "he loved his church, and he loved the military."
  2. At face value, "submit" refers to an attitude that both husband and wife should readily assume in the marriage relationship: voluntary giving in, carrying the burden. This is Christ-like, the servant heart. It is likely that the man in your life will understand your love for him when he sees you respect and honor him. This communicates to him what his tenderness and devotion communicate to you—love. He will feel unloved when he senses pride, arrogance, or an air of superiority in you. If you respect and honor him, he will die defending you while you enjoy your breakfast in peace.
- C. The word "respect" is the word for "fear," phobeo. It means to venerate or reverence. Your husband needs your respect in this way or he does not feel your love.

**III. HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES:** *Love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* (v25)

- A. The way of Christ calls for SACRIFICE. This love is self-sacrificing. It sacrifices all the demands of self in favor of the one being loved. All your interests are set aside so that the interests of the one you love may be met and served.
- B. "Love" is the word agapao. It is the word for God's love, unconditional love, love that flows out in self-sacrifice. It is not the word for romantic love, as we might expect.
  1. The husband gives himself up for the wife just as Christ did for the church. Husbands, lay down your lives.

2. Your self-giving love will have a profound effect upon your wife. She wants to respect and honor you, but sometimes you make it difficult. She is fighting her own flesh in seeking to give you respect, and it is all the harder when she is also fighting your flesh, your selfishness.

\*\*\*These murder-suicides that we read about are often about lovers and spouses. They illustrate how life itself is bound up in the marriage. To kill another person in your anger and grief is pure selfishness. To kill yourself is complete despair. Selfishness and despair always go together. Hope and love go together also.

3. If you will fall into the ground and die to yourself, you may give life to a beautiful marriage. And in your death to self, you are also likely to present to yourself a beautiful bride, liberated by your love to be all she is called to be.

4. The respect of the wife and the love of the husband work together to achieve the glory of God and the maximizing of their own giftedness and relationship.

C. Love of self involves two things that pertain to love of wife

1. Nourishes—"feeds". You eat to keep yourself alive.

\*\*\*As you know, I was sick last week. Actually, I could not really eat for two days, and it took me a couple more before I could eat I knew I needed nourishment, and so I fed my body a potato and some banana and toast. I nourished my body because I do love myself. Eph. 5:29 is a proverb: we all love ourselves. We know that in fact some people hate themselves. If you hate yourself you are not likely to love others. Loving yourself may be the first step to loving others.

The loving husband nourishes his wife. He gives her all that she needs to spread her wings and fly, to achieve her full potential in this life and in the next.

2. Cherishes—"cares for." This is the word *thalpo*, "to keep warm." It calls to mind a woman holding her infant close to her breast to keep him warm or a hen sitting on the eggs. We care for our own bodies. When I was having chills, I pulled the cover up around me. If I love my wife and she is having chills, I pull the cover up around her body. I keep her warm at all costs. I cherish her by demonstrating my love in the most practical ways possible. This is my duty as a husband.

3. We follow the example of Christ in his love for the church as we nourish and cherish our wives.

**IV. LEAVE AND CLEAVE:** *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"* (v31, quoted from Genesis 2:24).

A. Marriage is the act of making a new home. As such it requires a leaving that is often painful on both parts but necessary for the health of the new entity that God is creating.

B. Cleaving is the continual unity that marriage requires. Sometimes you are holding each other in bear hugs. Sometimes you are hanging on to fingertips with centrifugal force trying to tear you apart. All relationships have bear hug days and fingertip days. We cannot maintain emotional intensity at a high level continually. In fact, it would not be healthy.

C. "One flesh" is more than procreation, although that is certainly an important part of it. Children are a heritage of the Lord, a gift from him. We are blessed by their presence.

"One flesh" also refers to the union of sexual expression that happens in the confines of a marriage covenant. Sex has the purpose or reconciliation, of unity. It is a beautiful way that God designed the man and woman to enjoy the intimacy of each other in the bond of marriage. Practiced within the covenant for a lifetime, it affords a joy and peace and security found in no other way except through the marriage covenant.