

Who's On First? – Biblical Roles for Marriage – Eph 5:22-33

We're 5 weeks into our series on marriage

Among other things, we're gonna talk about the "S" word this morning – submission
Some of you come to this topic with a strong aversion due to past experience, pride, or selfish thinking – you have a real problem even hearing the truth

Others of you know what God has to say about roles in marriage, but have a hard time putting into practice

And a few of you don't have clue what God says about roles in marriage, but want to I hope to inform you, breakthrough your hang ups, and most of all, encourage you to relate to one another *God's* way in your marriage

Important to understand that biblical roles do not denote privilege or rank
Bible teaches that husbands and wives are *equal* in value and worth, yet different in their roles and responsibilities; And *unequal* only in authority

When a husband and wife fulfill their roles as *God* has designed them in marriage, they not only honor and glorify him, but they experience the oneness he desires

So let's turn to **Eph 5:22-33** and discover the biblical roles for marriage

Two main points regarding roles in marriage this morning; The first is . . .

Wives – submit to your husband (v22-24)

Submit – voluntarily and joyfully yield to the discretion and decisions of another
To place yourself under your husband's authority; That's biblical submission

- o Some would object that this doesn't apply to us anymore – it's cultural
Can't dismiss it as cultural, because Paul appeals to something that never changes, something that is non-cultural, as the basis for his teaching – namely, Christ's headship over the church
Christ's headship and the church's submission to him has nothing to do with the calendar year, the culture, or your specific circumstances
So this is for all time, in all places, for all marriages
- o Others would make it meaningless by saying *mutual* submission is in view here based on v21 – the wife is to submit to the husband, and the husband to the wife
But that doesn't hold because . . .
 - The *meaning* of the word submit doesn't allow it
In the 40 or so NT uses, the word submission is used to describe the position of one person under the authority of another, by virtue of their role
So mutual submission is a contradiction of terms – can't mutually submit if one person is in authority over another
 - Nor does the phrase *submitting to one another* (21) *have* to mean mutual submission
There are several instances in the NT where the phrase *one another* means "as appropriate" due to the context within which it's used
That's the case here; Otherwise the meaning of *submit* would have to change
 - Finally, if mutual submission were in view here, v25 would read – "Husbands, *submit* to your wives"
But it doesn't say that, nor could it and still use the analogy of Christ loving the church

Submit to your husband, but understand that submission is *not* an absolute surrender of your will, or a permanent zipping of your lip

It's not spineless consent, degrading humiliation, demeaning servitude, passive resignation

Rather, it's a disposition/inclination to yield to your husband . . .

• In everything (v24)

This means even when you don't feel like it; Even when you disagree

Even when he's being dumb; Even when he's going to make a bad decision

Submit to him in everything

- o That in no way means you have to remain silent
That *may be* the best approach in some situations
But most of the time you should express your opinion, and the decision should be made *together* – Husbands, did you hear that?
- o Wives – when you *do* express your opinion, do so respectfully
Choose the right words
Let him know that if he decides contrary to your opinion, that's okay –
No matter what, you support him – tell him that
It goes a long way toward softening him and influencing him
But you have to mean it

Invariably, three "What if" questions come up

1. What if my husband is a jerk? What if he doesn't deserve my submission?
His lack of love toward you, does not excuse your lack of submission toward him
God will hold him responsible for his role, and you for yours
My wife likes to say that in cases like that, your submission is like bowing down before your husband so God can get better aim☺
Whatever the case, do the right thing trusting God for the results and the blessing
2. What if he asks me to do something wrong – morally or legally?
That's where draw the line – this is not *doormat theology* where you let him walk all over you no matter what
You *cannot* follow him into sin, or fail to do what is right
Acts 5:29 – Peter and the apostles were being told not to preach any longer
And they responded by saying – *We must obey God rather than men*
You too must obey God rather than your husband when the two conflict
You need to lovingly but firmly, resist
But even in resisting, you should show him your dislike of doing so, and express to him your longing to see him lead in righteousness
3. What if he's hurting me physically, or putting our family at risk by indulging in illegal activities?
If that's the case, God has provided several measures of protection, and it's your responsibility to take advantage of them
If he's neglecting you or abandoning you – go to the church
Start with a sister in Christ, then godly men in his life, SG leader, one of pastors
If he's abusing you verbally – go to the church
If he's indulging in illegal activities – go to the church *and* the state
If he's abusing you physically – go to the church *and* the state

God established the church as an instrument of holiness in our lives, and he established the government to be an instrument of protection
Don't wait until it's so bad that nothing can be done – get help

Secondly, submit to your husband . . .

- **As your leader (v23)**

Christ, as *the head of the church*, is our leader, authority, protector, provider
So too is the husband as *the head of the wife* – he's to be the leader, authority, provider, and protector of you and your family
Follow him; Yield to him; Trust him; Depend on him

If he doesn't lead, if he's passive in his role – don't take the reins
He will *never* lead if you do that – it will just make the problem worse
Aggressive leadership on the wife's part actually encourages passive husbands
Don't do it; Let things fall through the cracks a few times
Don't compensate for his lack of responsibility or laziness
If he still doesn't do what he should, then he's neglecting you and you should go to the church and get help

Submit to your husband . . .

- **As to Christ (v22,24)**

22 – *as to the Lord*; 24 – *as the church submits to Christ*

When you submit to Christ, do you do so grudgingly? I hope not

He desires our joyful, wholehearted, eager submission
So too with your husband – your submission should be a joyful thing, not an act of drudgery
It should be a willing and wanting disposition of your heart, remembering that your husband is the man God has given to *receive* as your mate

I usually find that a lack of joyful submission to their husband, starts with a lack of joyful submission to Christ
Your problem with submitting in your marriage may not lie with your husband at all
It may be your lack of submission to Christ
If you don't fully submit to him, you'll never fully submit to your husband
If you don't joyfully submit to him, you'll never joyfully submit to your husband
It's critical that you get your heart and life right with Jesus, in order to submit and get your life and heart right with your husband

- **With respect (v33)**

33 – *Let the wife see that she respects her husband*

Let her hold him in high regard; not look down on him, or think badly of him
It's like respecting the law – you follow it and uphold it because it's the right thing to do; and because it's the best thing to do – society works best that way
Same is true of respecting your husband – you follow and support him because it's the right thing to do, and the best thing to do for your marriage

Wives, do you realize – just like you can't do without love from your husband, your husband can't do without respect from you
Surveys show that he cares *less* that you love him, and *more* that you respect him
It's like air you breathe – You desperately want his love; He desp'ly wants your respect

He wants to know that you hold him in high regard; that you look up to him, that you admire him

If you constantly nag at him, or are mad at him a lot, he interprets that as lack of respect
Address his issues or weaknesses, yes; But do so without disrespecting him
Most of the time the difference lies in your facial expression, tone of voice, body language, and your heart
Submit to your husbands with respect

Assignment #1 – Wives, tell your husband 3 things you admire about him this week

That the first part of this passage; The second part is . . .

Husbands – love your wife (v25-33)

25 – *Husbands, love your wives* – care for them and about them unceasingly and unconditionally; despite their lack of love, respect, or submission
That's the kind of love being spoken of here; There are no caveats

Notice it doesn't say – Husbands, rule over your wife; Exercise that headship; Use your power and position; Lord it over her
No; Instead we are repeatedly urged to *love* our wives
Headship will come naturally as we mature in Christ; Love won't
We need to constantly focus on it

And if that's not a high enough standard, love her *as Christ loved the church* (25)

Wives – you have to know that any husband who takes this seriously is overwhelmed by that statement
At least your standard, your end of the analogy is the church – a well intentioned, but still fallible group of people
Our end of the analogy is Christ – infallible and God
Husbands are to love like he loves; that's a tall order
Enough to make even the proudest man quit before starts
But one that we must always strive for in the strength that God provides

Part of that is loving her . . .

- **As a servant-leader (v25a)**

Christ loved us as a servant-leader

Luke 22:27 – *I am among you as the one who serves.*

A large portion of his life was serving others, and all of his death was an act of service
If you're to love as Christ loved, you have to lead as he led

Being a servant-leader does *not* mean . . .

Quiet manipulation to get what you want
Becoming passive and disengaged, giving little or no direction to your wife/family

It *does* mean . . .

Actively participating in the decisions and activities of your family
Taking the initiative to accomplish what needs to be done
Fully considering her desires when making decisions

Love your wives as a servant-leader – it's your God-given role

- **Sacrificially (v25b)**

And gave himself up for her – he died for us

And as husbands, we should be willing to give up our lives for our wives
If that just meant literally, it would be pretty easy
The opportunity doesn't really come along that often
Every husband wants to be a hero in the eyes of his wife

Much harder is giving up the things of *this* life, for your wife
Giving up your dreams and desires; wants and wishes; interests and hobbies; business
or financial goals; even your own needs – all for the sake of your wife
You should be willing to sacrifice everything, no matter what the cost, for her benefit
Oh how we have to die to ourselves, every single day in our marriages
Love your wives sacrificially

o The following verses can get a little confusing as he switches back and forth between the
responsibilities of husbands, and the example of Christ
Some of it bears explanation (read it and comment)
26 – Christ sanctifies us, or sets us apart for himself, having saved us or cleansed us from
our sin with the truth of his word, symbolized by the waters of baptism
27 – could he have used any more words to say, I want a pure church!”
Christ is committed to our purity, holiness, splendor, and beauty
He will settle for nothing less in his relationship with us
In the same way (28), we should settle for nothing less in our marriages

Which is why husbands, you should love your wife . . .

• **As yourself (v28-30)**

28-30 – Just like Christ loves the church as his own body, you should love your wife as
your own bodies
Just like you care for your body with food, sleep, exercise, rest
Just like you cherish your own body by protecting it, staying out of harms way
Do the same with your wife
Nourish her with attention and affection
Cherish her as your most valuable/treasured gift from God
Protect her emotionally by not allowing anyone to demean or disrespect her
Protect her physically where possible from the many risks of life
Protect her spiritually by not allowing sin or garbage into your home

Nourish and cherish her with the same fervor, passion, and desire for beauty and splendor
as Christ does with his bride, the church
You'd be a fool not too
Not only because she's one with you – *He who loves his wife loves himself* (28b)
But because you will see her flower in beauty inside/out like you've never seen before
You will be blessed by her more than you ever thought possible
And blessed by the satisfaction that you're pleasing the Lord
Love your wife as yourself – you'd be crazy not to

o V31 he cites Gen 2:24 as proof that just as a husband and wife are one, so Christ and the
church are one
Just to make sure we get it, he says, *This mystery is profound* – this mystery of
oneness; And it *refers to Christ and the church*
In other words, the oneness of your marriage is meant to display the unity between
Christ and the church

This is not just a cerebral exercise that we live day in and day out
It's a beautiful mystery of oneness and fellowship with Christ

Having reached that peak, that pinnacle thought, he comes full circle in v33
Even though I'm talking about Christ and the church here, make sure you don't miss the
point – fulfill your responsibilities in your marriage
Which brings me to the final point as well – this one from Prov 31:28-29

Husbands, love your wife . . .

• **With praise and honor (Proverbs 31:28-29)**

After describing the excellent wife in Prov 31, the text says –

*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her; “Many
women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” (Prov 31:28-29)*

1 Pet 3:7 also refers to the husband *honoring* his wife

Praise and honor is the husband's response to his wife's core role as a suitable helper

Do you know what you get apart from praise and honor? Nothing
You get no growth in your relationship; No joy; No encouragement
No impetus to press on; No desire to be with each other; No protection from temptation
Absolutely nothing – at best, you have a co-existence of convenience
At worst you have a miserable marriage with a disaster waiting to happen

Husbands, good things happen when you lavish your wife with praise
Get over your pride and start offering compliments
Get past the awkwardness and just start do it

You say, “Pastor Rob, you don't know my wife. There's nothing to praise.”
If she's breathing, start there; Everyone has something to be praised
If you can't think of anything, more than likely you've become lazy/complacent, taking
her for granted
More than anything else, praise/honor will fuel her in her role as your God-given partner
and companion, as well as in her response of submission/respect

Assignment #2 – Husbands, praise your wife, face to face, 3 times this week

Summary

Wives – submit to your husband; Husbands – love your wife

If you have half an ounce of wisdom, you won't throw this in each other's face
You won't hammer each other with *these* truths, or any others we've covered
Instead, you'll be humble
You'll let your spouse process what their learning and being convicted of
You'll be patient with their change

Pray – Be glorified in me as a husband or a wife, now or in the future

Close

Next week . . . All in the Family – Raising Kids God's Way