

## Ephesians 5:22-33

**Intro:** This is not the only passage on marriage in the Bible, but it is the clearest and most illuminating. It is also important to recognize that Paul has been teaching the Ephesian believers the riches God has in store for the church. Here, he is revealing the amazing truth that when God instituted marriage—He had Christ and His covenant with the church in mind!

--Paul then exhorts husbands and wives to reflect something of God's heart in that ultimate covenant. This passage is instructive on *the way marriage should be*. This is how marriage works best.

--It's important for us to recognize the point of this passage for three reasons:

1) We cannot ever measure the validity of God's design or commands off of abuses thereof.

\*Many so-called Christian marriages are not actually reflective of this ideal.\*

2) Paul is not guaranteeing a lack of abuse. Just because one partner faithfully plays their role in obedience to God does not mean that the other partner is guaranteed to do the same.

--Many faithful spouses—men and women—have watched their marriage fall apart *on one side*. Then again, many faithful spouses have held their marriage together because of their faithfulness *on one side*—until healing came *to both sides*. \*Doesn't always happen but has in God's grace many times.\*

--Paul is not addressing how we should respond to the abuse of marriage roles. That is addressed in other places. Here he is describing the true, God-pleasing submissive roles for husbands and wives in a God-honoring marriage. \*Even if your marriage is more one-sided, it is important to know you are pleasing to God and can live with a clean conscience!\*

3) It is important for married and single people to know what true Biblical expectations are! So many marriages fall apart because of false, unbiblical expectations.

\*Schaeffer (True Spirituality): *"I am not to set myself at the center of the universe and insist that everything bend to the standards that I have set upon my own superiority. I am not to say, "I must be thus," and if it is not thus, there is nothing but psychological despair. Some people are totally caught in this, but all of us have something of it within ourselves, swinging pendulum-like between conceit and despair.*

*This is true not only in the psychological area, of course; it is true in all the relationships of life. One does not have to have had much pastoral experience to have met married couples who refuse to have what they can have, because they have set for themselves a false standard of superiority. They have set up a romanticism, either on the romantic side of love or the physical side, and if their marriage does not measure up to their own standards of superiority, they smash everything to the ground. They must have the ideal love affair of the century just because they are who they are! Certainly many of the multiple marriage and divorce situations turn upon just this point. One couple refuses to have less than what they have set as a romantic possibility, forgetting that the Fall is the Fall. Another may want sexual experience beyond what one can have in the midst of the results of the Fall. You suddenly see a marriage smashed—everything goes to bits, people walking away from each other, destroying something really possible and beautiful—simply because they have set a proud standard and refuse to have the good marriage they can have."*\*

## Verses 22-24:

--(22) Here we find the Word of Christ directly to the wife. Each wife is called to submit to her own husband—not all men in general. *\*For most of us, you picked him!\**

--The Greek word for **submit** (*hypotasso*) is used in respect to wives numerous times in Scripture. This is not an isolated or misunderstood passage.

*\*Colossians 3:18: Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.\**

*\*Titus 2:4-5: That they admonish the young woman to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.\**

*\*1 Peter 3:1: Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives.\**

--All these Scriptures use the same Greek word as here in Ephesians.

--To give some context of the obedience asked, the word **submit** is also used in the context of our submission to human leaders or government as in **(Rom. 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13)**.

--**as to the Lord**. . . means that a wife's obedience to her husband is regarded as part of her obedience to the Lord. It also means that Christ Himself is dishonored by the wife's refusal.

--It is important to understand that Christ's commands are always an expression of Himself. In fact, the very first NT usage of the Greek word **submit** is in relation to Jesus Christ.

*\*Luke 2:51: He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart.\**

--It is important for every wife to see that Christ is not asking them to do anything He has not already done. He didn't just serve, He is a servant.

--(23) Here we see the connection that will be drawn throughout—for both husbands and wives. In every marriage that is pleasing to God, there is something reflective of Christ and the church.

--The wife is to live in recognition of the fact God ordered marriage so that **the husband is head of the wife**. This was true from creation on. The woman was created a helpmeet for man *before* sin every came into the picture. *\*Sin has since made it difficult!\**

--Still, Paul routinely appeals to God's original order when speaking of the male role of headship ordered and ordained by God.

*\*1 Corinthians 11:3+8-9: But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. . . For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.\**

--God created men and woman different to purposefully reflect something of His own heart and nature—the husband in leading and loving and the wife in submitting and respecting.

--**and He is the Savior of the body**. . . I believe Paul adds this to make clear the “tone” or “aim” of headship. Christ is head of the church to save us! His strength and authority are life-giving not life-breaking. *\*All headship that wounds a marriage is an abuse of God's design.\**

--(24) In 22 Paul gave the nature of the wife's role. In 23 the ground. Here we find the extent.  
--Wives are to be submissive to their husbands **in everything**. This Christ-appointed and Christ-displaying role reaches everywhere! \*Not just the things wives don't care about—or where you feel like you should.\*

--Now, of course, this is true in extent or scope, but not in degree. The husband's headship is appointed by Christ, as is the wife's role in submitting to Christ-appointed headship. Once any husband goes beyond the bounds of what pleases Christ—the wife need no longer obey. \*Just as we would in terms of human government.\*

--I would also like to add here, that the submission commanded of a wife does not exclude other common and Biblical commands—such as those in regard to addressing wrongs, correcting faults, even bringing issues to the church. \*If your husband wrongs you—tell him! If you need help—seek it. If you need prayer—ask. If you need accountability—go to the church.\*

### **Verses 25-27:**

--(25) Here we find the Word of Christ directly to us husbands. We are called to take on the role of sacrificial and giving love to our wives. Lack of love to them is lack of love to Him!

--Adam sought to escape his own judgment by blaming Eve. You and I are not to emulate him. We are called to emulate Christ who loved us while there was nothing in us to draw His love.

\*Lewis (The Four Loves): *"The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church—read on—and gave his life for her (Eph. 5:25). This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is—in her own mere nature—least loveable. For the Church has no beauty but what the Bridegroom gives her; He does not find, but makes her, lovely."*\*

--Christ left His world for our world and died there. \*Christ's love doesn't grant us what will harm us (this love is not blind and foolish)—but He did come to offering Himself as a willing sacrifice.\*

--(26-27) What was the intent of Christ's self-giving love?

1) **that He might sanctify**: To sanctify is to set something aside for God and His purposes. Is our aim in marriage to see our wives sanctified?

2) **and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word**: To cleanse something is to wash it from the pollution and guilt of sin. Are we seeking to have our wives be clean in Christ?

--How is does this cleansing come about? By washing her with the Word of God.

--Many commentators feel Paul's reference to water is actually baptism. There is nothing in the context to suggest such. If anything, it was a reference to the use of water in ritual cleansing. This is picked up numerous times in the NT.

**\*Hebrews 10:22: let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.\***

--Paul clearly explains that God's work of washing us comes through the truths of His Word—baptism being one of many. Jesus echoed the same to the disciples.

**\*John 15:3: *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.\****

--Are we helping our wives to be washed in the Word of God? Daily?

**3) *That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.***

--Christ's purpose is to have His Bride as all He intended her to be. He will be faithful to complete to work He has begun in her. We hear something of this desire in Paul's heart to the Corinthians.

**\*2 Corinthians 11:2: *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.\****

--Paul had also revealed this heart of God right in the beginning of the letter.

**\*1:4: *Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.\****

--This is Christ's revelation to John at the end of all things:

**\*Revelation 19:7-8: *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb as come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.\****

--So Christ took His bride while she was still rebellious, unclean, blemished, imperfect and unholy—far removed from His glory and His character. But in love, He has made and will make her, like Him.

--So a husband's wife is to remain his first love—love is to be maintained and undiminished. The husband's love follows through to the very end. In contrast, to insult your wife's beauty or give up your concern for her wellbeing, is to insult the God who made her and is an indictment against the head directing her.

--Christ's love desires to see His bride perfected—at her golden best. Loving our wives means being concerned with them and their welfare—their perfection.

--Once we are in a marriage covenant do we no longer care about one another? Is it a sign of love if a husband no longer cares if a wife is dirty, or foul, or unkept? Of course not! We love even when beauty is lost but not *because* it is lost. Love is committed to the end.

**\*John 13:1: *Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.\****

#### **Verses 28-29:**

--(28) **So. . .** in like manner, Christ has His body—the church, and the husband has his body—the wife. Therefore all husbands **ought**—the word means a debt or obligation—**to love their wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.**

--Wives are not a possession but a very part of ourselves—one with us.

--(29) How does Christ interact with the church? He actively:

1) **Nourishes:** The Greek word (*ektrepho*) is used only here and in **6:4** where it is translated *bring them up*. It has the idea of nurturing to maturity. \*We should be the worst version of ourselves on the day of our marriage—because we mature!\*

2) **Cherishes:** The Greek word (*thalpo*) is used only here and in **1 Thes. 2:7** where it speaks of a mother cherishing her own children. The word literally means *to brood* or *to keep warm*. \*So yes, we must allow our wives to touch us with their cold hands and feet!\*

--Loving our wives involves more than protecting and providing for them. Are they sanctified? Are they cleansed by the word? Are they growing? Are they nourished and cherished?

### **Verses 30-32:**

--**(30)** Here Paul cannot help but acknowledge how Christ has loved him in this same capacity by saying **we**. Christ loves the church—as individuals—not just a group ideal.

--**(31)** Here Paul quotes from **Genesis 2:23-24** to impress what God's original intention was in marriage: One man. One woman. Two separate coming together as one.

--All husbands leave submission in the home to become the head of his own home. All wives leave submission in their home to become the submitted wife in her own home. A new covenant establishes new relational priority and function.

--The new marriage relationship becomes the primary relationship in God's eyes because it is reflective of the relationship He always intended between Christ and the church.

--Every married couple shares something exclusive in their binding and intimacy.

--**(32)** That is why Paul says ***this is a great mystery!***

--Paul speaks of one other great mystery in Scripture.

**\*1 Timothy 3:16: *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*\***

--**(33)** Having traveled to the edge of human knowledge and understanding, Paul brings the Ephesians back down into the flesh and blood reality of this life.

--**Nevertheless.** . . Don't lose the practical in the spiritual. The two are ever tied. Spiritual life and understanding will produce fruit in daily life and obedience. \*Can't have one without the other.\*

--Husbands love.

**\*1 Peter 3:7: *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*\***

--Wives respect. Disrespect is what a man would never endure from another man but will from you because you are his wife. \*Physically, verbally, etc.\*

--I am not ashamed of Christ's commandments. There is no better command or design of marriage in all the world. When marriage is lived this way—there is nothing that can be said against it. You and I are called to be witnesses. Nothing more. Nothing less.

--If you need help—turn to Christ and he will give you what you need to be His husband or wife in your marriage.