

# EPHESIANS

ENGAGING THE POWER OF GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

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ABUNDANTLIFE  
FOURSQUARE CHURCH

# GRACE IN MARRIAGE

## Week Seven

### Ephesians 5:21-33

*And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of His body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.*

*For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of His body.*

*As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (NLT)*

## COMMENTS AND THOUGHTS

**Ephesians 5:21** *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (NIV).* People often misunderstand the concept of submitting to another person. It does not mean becoming passive. *Christ — at whose name every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:10) — submitted His will to the Father, and we honor Christ by following His example. When we submit to God, we become more willing to obey His command to submit to others, that is, to subordinate our rights to theirs. The Bible emphasizes the equality of all believers in Christ (Galatians 3:28), but the Bible teaches all believers to submit to one another by choice. This kind of mutual submission preserves order and harmony.*

Submission provides evidence that we have Spirit-controlled relationships, and it requires the Holy Spirit's guidance and restraint (Ephesians 4:2-3). Our motives should be "reverence" for Christ. We treat one another rightly because it is right and respectful and because one day we must give account to Christ of how we have lived and treated one another.

**Ephesians 5:22-24** *Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything (NIV).* Submission in the church should follow from submission in the home. The home is the foundation for relationships and personal growth. In a marriage relationship, both husband and wife are called to submit. The relationships between husbands and wives are a microcosm of the larger picture of church relationships and our relationship with the Lord.

Wives are to submit voluntarily to their husbands as to the Lord. The words “as to the Lord” mean “as is fitting to the Lord.” This does not mean that the husband is “lord” over the wife. Our concept of submission must come from that which exists between Christ and the church: Christ loves the church, and she submits to Him. Christian marriage involves mutual submission, subordinating our personal desires for the good of the loved one and submitting ourselves to Christ as Lord.

The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. In other words, the husband is the spiritual head of the family, and his wife should acknowledge his leadership. “Head” normally means leader, ruler, or authority as in 1 Corinthians 11:3, where God is described as the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman.

Real spiritual leadership involves service and sacrifice. Christ as head of the church is also its Savior. Christ gave His life for the church. So, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands who are willing to serve and sacrifice. For the wife, submission means willingly following her husband’s leadership in Christ. For the husband, it means putting aside his own interests in order to care for his wife. Submission is rarely a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Christ and where each is concerned for the happiness of the other. A man of quality is never threatened by a woman of equality.

**Ephesians 5:25-26** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word (NRSV).* Husbands are to love their wives. Husbands and wives should submit to each other (5:21) just as both should love each other. Thus, “submission” reaffirms the new covenant of equality as well as the affirmation of marriage in which the partners voluntarily and joyously submit in order to seek each other’s best. Husbands and wives are equal, but they have different job descriptions given to them by God’s Word.

Husbands are called to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. That Christ “gave Himself” indicates a sacrificial, substitutionary surrendering of Himself to death. Christ sacrificed Himself for the church because of His love for it. Husbands, then, should be ready to make whatever sacrifices are necessary for their wives. Marriage is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender, self-sacrificing care.

#### **How should a man love his wife?**

- He should be willing to sacrifice everything for her.
- He should make her well-being of primary importance.
- He should care for her as he cares for his own body.

Christ's death sanctifies and cleanses the church. He cleanses His people from the old ways of sin and sets them apart for His special sacred service. Christ cleansed the church by the "washing of water." This most likely refers to baptism, but this is only a metaphor, for baptism is a picture of the cleansing that has occurred because of Christ's sacrificial death.

**Ephesians 5:27** *So as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish (NRSV).* Christ gave Himself up for the church in order to make the church holy — so as to present the church to Himself in splendor. The "presentation" pictures a future wedding; this is like the betrothal period, which for the Jews was as binding as marriage. The church is making itself ready, as a bride would be preparing for her wedding. The phrase "without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind . . . holy and without blemish" again pictures the bride's preparations in order to be ready. It was traditional for a bride to take a ritual bath just before her wedding as a symbol of her chastity. Similarly, the sacrament of baptism demonstrates the Christian's desire that God should find him or her pure and faithful when Christ returns to claim His bride, the church. The church does not make itself holy and blameless; instead, it has already been made so through the blood of Christ. But the church should be growing toward Christlikeness as it awaits the arrival of Christ at His second coming.

**Ephesians 5:28** *In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (NRSV).* The husband and wife become "one flesh" through marriage (Genesis 2:24). So Christ and His church become "one" through spiritual union. Christ "gave Himself" for the church (Ephesians 5:25), so husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. The spiritual and physical union between a husband and wife is as total and complete as the union a person has with his or her own body. When a man loves his wife, he loves himself, for she is so much a part of him. This is a beautiful picture of the mutuality that should be a part of every marriage. The husband loves his wife not as an extension of self-love, but because it is advantageous both to her and to himself. The Greek word for "love" is *agapao*, referring to that giving love that seeks the highest good for the other. When a husband loves his wife with this kind of love, they both will benefit.

**Ephesians 5:29-30** *For no one ever hates his own body, but He nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of His body (NRSV).* The fact that no one ever hates his own body refers not to self-centeredness but to self-preservation, the natural self-concern that causes people to feed and care for themselves. As a man nourishes and tenderly cares for his own body, he should also do the same for his wife, who is one with him. Why? The example given by Christ, who nourishes and cares for His body, the church. As Christ nourishes and cares for believers, so husbands must imitate Christ in their loving concern and care for their wives. Christ provides the basis for the husband's loving attention to his wife's needs. For the husband, and indeed every believer, receives this loving attention from Christ because we are members of His body.

**Ephesians 5:31** *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (NKJV).* The union of husband and wife merges two persons in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean one person’s losing his or her personality in the personality of the other. Instead, it means that each person cares for the other as though caring for himself or herself, learning to anticipate the other’s needs, helping the other person reach his or her potential. In marriage, the husband and wife complement one another. In the same way, Christ and the church must function together. Christ needed the church in order to assume His position as its Head. Christ is the Head of the church as the husband is the head of the wife (1 Corinthians 11:3). Christ and His church are joined together (John 10:28-29).

**Ephesians 5:32-33** *This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband (NRSV).* “This is a great mystery” might better be translated, “There is a profound truth hidden here.” The mutual love and loyalty, loving headship of the husband and loving submission of the wife, riches bestowed, intimacy and oneness, and self-sacrifice that should describe every marriage, he saw in these a picture of Christ and the church.

Husbands should love his wife as himself. This is the core of Christian marriage. Each wife, in turn, should respect her husband. Where husband and wife love and respect each other, they have both a healthy marriage and a healthy family life in which to bring up children.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does submission mean to you?
2. How do you respond to the idea of submitting to others?
3. Are you willing to place the interests and desires of others ahead of your own?
4. What are the current societal views of submission?
5. Why can submission be so challenging?

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**WHAT WILL YOU  
DO WITH WHAT  
YOU HAVE LEARNED  
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