



Every Spiritual Blessing

EPHESIANS - WEEK 14

This is Marriage

The word tithe literally means “tenth.” The tithe was an obligatory offering from the law of Moses requiring 10 percent of an Israelite’s

firstfruits. Because God provided the harvest, this first part was returned to him. It was a reminder to Israel that all things we have are his. It was a show of thankfulness for his provision. It also provided for the Levitical priesthood, festivals, and the needy.

Over the next 10 weeks, we're going to look at 20 verses on tithing to give ourselves an overview on this significant practice.

1. THE FIRST TITHE (GEN. 14:19–20)

Abram had just returned from defeating the armies of the four kings, rescuing his nephew Lot, and reclaiming his possessions, and he's met by an enigmatic priest of God Most High named Melchizedek. The priest attributes Abram's victory to God—possessor of heaven and earth—and he blesses Abram.

In gratitude to God's authority and blessing, Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of his possessions. He doesn't do it to *invoke* God's blessing; he does it in *response* to God's blessing.

2. JACOB'S TITHE (GEN. 28:20–22)

Jacob responds to a dream he has received from God by building an altar and vowing that, as God is faithful to him, he will give God a tenth of his belongings.

“You can always give without loving, but you can never love without giving.”

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Here

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Frank Shelter and Anthology Church.

Closing prayer

INTRODUCTION

If you think being called a sinner is offensive, if you think being told that you think too highly of yourself is offensive, if you think being told to be completely humble is offensive, if you think being told that you had nothing to do with your salvation

is offensive, that becoming a Christian wasn't the best decision you ever made because God chose you, if you think any of that is offensive and problematic, along with anything else Paul might have said so far — you ain't heard nothing yet.

Today, we're going to look at touchy subject of Christian marriage, specifically the biblical teaching of submission and headship. Yes, certain questions come to mind. Why should a woman have to submit to her husband? Why

should men have authority? Doesn't this lead to abuse?

Here's something to keep in mind when you either object to something about the Christian faith or hear an objection to the Christian faith — there isn't anything we haven't heard before. There are no new objections. The Christian faith is 2000 years old and these have been coming from day one.

But when people state their objections, they generally feel like they're stating something that no one has ever addressed.

To come close to what the Apostle Paul means here in his letter to the Ephesians, our understanding of Christian marriage must be soaked in this truth:

Big Idea: Christ was submissive and Christ is Lord. (Christ is the Head of the Church who

submitted to the Father's will in everything.)

So, with that truth at the center of our discussion, let's resume our study in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:22-33

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

In the culture we live in today, this verse is read

and then dismissed. In the church today, this verse is read and then qualified and qualified and qualified. We basically want to skip down to the verse where he speaks of husbands giving themselves up for their wives as Christ did for the church and we move right from there to mutual submission, etc.

Let's not do that today. Let's begin with verse 22 and let it sink. (Read it again.) Can you feel it? What is that sinking feeling?

Well, even the most radical feminist would agree with our first point today.

1 Point #1 - Women are as proud as men.

And this is not a positive. This is not a compliment. But let's begin with that thought: women are as proud as men. That is the ancient battle of the sexes — whose pride will triumph in the end?

Telling any proud person (male or female) to submit will cause one of two reactions. If the proud person thinks you are no better than they are, then they will react with a rankling of rising indignation. The internal feeling will be the building up of an explosion. And that explosion will generally express itself verbally.

Now, if the person telling them to submit is a superior in terms of authority and they know it they will experience that same sinking feeling,

which is simply the rising indignation, except in this case it's being suppressed. It's being pushed down.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord is a pride agitator. It stirs it up, brings it to the surface.

Let's lay aside the qualifiers about abusive men and monsters and everything else, unless that's who you married. And if that's who you married there are other problems. And those are real

problems, but this isn't a sermon about varying circumstances surrounding the command. The command is...

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord

What does it mean to submit? Concede. Agree. Give in. Or we can just go back to Ephesians 4:2 — be completely humble and gentle.

Or do you gripe until you get your way? Or do you pout until you get your way? Or do you just move forward because you want your way?

This is a word against the grain of culture. It's going the exact opposite direction. And you will feel its pressure.

It's not about inferiority or superiority or anything else culture wants to make it about. This verse (and others like it) is about one thing and one thing only.

2 Point #2 - Christ is Lord.

It's simply that — Christ is Lord. If you're a Christian, Christ is Lord. If you're not a Christian, Christ is Lord. We say this over and over again — being Lord means He defines of reality.

He has created you, male and female, distinct from each other and distinct in your roles and how you will actually flourish as a person in the marriage relationship in spite of what you think.

The question is, “Do you trust him as Lord?”

This is not a complicated, hard to understand passage and that’s the problem. We’re not talking about veils here.

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

We may be closed next week. We'll see.

3 Point #3 - Everything in life is about God.

Everything in life is for the sake of God's glory. This is another concept that self-centered sinful human beings will always struggle with. But as everything in life is for the sake of God's glory, so is marriage.

As everything in life somehow reflects something about the God who created it, so does marriage. Marriage reflects the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Marriage reflects the gospel. Marriage tells us the gospel story. That's really what marriage is about — the gospel.

Marriage is an analogy about the gospel.

Let's break it down.

Christ is God the Son. Is God the Son inferior in any way to God the Father? No. He is equal to God the Father in every sense. Is God the Son submissive to God the Father in everything? Yes.

John 6:38

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

Philippians 2:5-8 (NIV)

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

“If God had the gospel of Jesus’s salvation in mind when he established marriage, then marriage only works to the degree that it approximates the pattern of God’s self-giving love in Christ.” (Timothy Keller)

**6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with
God something to be used to his own
advantage;**

7 rather, he made himself nothing

- Exact opposite of culture

**by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.**

**8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself**

**by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!**

If this is the call of all Christians everywhere, then why are we shocked at the teaching of Paul on marriage?

God the Son has a different role than God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The Son is submissive to the Father.

If you will look at the lives of Christians in the

New Testament and in biographies of great Christians throughout history who were all submissive to Christ you will find nothing doormat-ish about their lives. Yet their lives were lived in full submission to Christ.

- Harriet Tubman - she led the underground railroad during the Civil War.
- Josephine Butler's faith prompted her to challenge the status quo of the Victorian era

by beginning a ministry to women and children in prostitution.

- Dora Yu, one of the Chinese Bible Women, was used by God to bring the famous Christian author Watchman Nee to faith in Christ through her preaching of the gospel.
- Women were the last disciples at the cross and the first at the empty tomb.

Your fears about this verse (if you have them)

have nothing to do with being a great Christian. Your fears (if you have them) are completely and utterly cultural. In other words, they are worldly fears.

If you want to be a great Christian...

Matthew 20:16

16 So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Speaking in strictly human terms, if you want to have the upper-hand in your marriage — then be the greater servant.

Again, this verse is simply about the Lordship of Christ. You submit to your husband's leadership because Christ is Lord. Not because your husband is.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

4 Point #4 - Husbands are called to be the kind of husband Christ is to the church.

Six times the apostle Paul says that Jesus “gave himself” for his people. He “gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age” (Galatians 1:4). He “gave himself as a ransom” (1 Timothy 2:6). He “gave himself for us to redeem us” (Titus 2:14). “Christ loved us and gave himself up for us” (Ephesians 5:2). And it’s

also a personal giving of himself: he “loved *me* and gave himself *for me*” (Galatians 2:20).

As God has so loved you, love one another. Paul takes this command and links it to Ephesians 5:25: Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and *gave himself up for her*.

What does it mean for a Christian husband to *give himself up for her*?

David Matthis (executive editor of DesiringGod.org) has written, “God doesn’t call

husbands to ‘be the head.’ He simply says the husband *is* head (Ephesians 5:23). The question is not whether the man will be head, but what kind of head will he be? An absent one? A lazy one? An evil, abusive one? Or will he be a true husband, the kind Jesus is to his church?”

Jesus showed us his model of leadership or headship.

Mark 10:42-45

42 And Jesus called them to him and said to

them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you.

This shows us that we’re talking about a different style, a different mentality, a different model of leadership.

But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to

serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In an article Matthis wrote, he gave four questions a husband can ask himself to see if he's loving his wife the way Christ loves his church.

1. First, am I loving myself or loving her? Selfishness seeks your own private good at her expense. Self-interest finds your good in hers. That's what Paul means by love your wives as your own body. *Giving in* is a lazy, selfish kind of “sacrifice.” *Giving of yourself* is

typically demanding and depleting, but it is gloriously rewarding to find your good in hers.

2. Second, am I serving my wife dutifully or joyfully? Begrudging service is often a form of giving in. It's doing something for the sake of keeping peace, but not because you find it a joy to make her happy.
3. Third, am I catering to sin or pursuing holiness? First, it's a question for you. In undertaking this "sacrifice," are you giving in to your own sinful tendencies, or are you

pursuing real holiness (which is typically the harder, not easier, option)? Then, turning to consider your wife, will this sacrifice cater to her sin, or contribute to her holiness?

4. Lastly, is your supposed sacrifice for your wife convenient for you or costly? A lot of times as men we don't lead, we give in. And we mistake this giving in as giving ourselves up, but it's not. We give in because we don't want to deal with the fallout of our decision. We don't want any flak.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Her interests are your interests and when you make her interests your interests you are doing what is best for the relationship.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

“Paul stands out for honoring women in a culture where they were often ignored. He overturns the culture here by admonishing husbands to nurture

their wives with terms that were typically used for women: nurture and cherish.”

30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Marriage refers to Christ and the church and to understand marriage apart from that is to have an incomplete understanding of marriage.

It's the same problem with the secular therapeutic model which sees you as only a material being. They leave out the spiritual element and therefore have an incomplete understanding of what it means to be human. And if your description is wrong your prescription will be wrong.

33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

5 | Point #5 - Because Christ is Lord husbands should love their wives and wives should respect their husbands.

Marriage problems are spiritual problems. The problem in most marriages is that one of you or both of you are not submitted to Christ as Lord.

Christ is our Savior. Why? Because he submitted to the Father. He gave himself up for us. He became a slave to human arrogance that we could be set free for godly submission. First to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Second, to everyone else.

The same thing that makes the gospel glorious is the same thing that makes marriage glorious. The self-sacrificial love that Christ exercised on our behalf, dying for us, giving himself for us in submission to the Father, putting the Father's will above his own — all that and more is rooted in a marriage relationship.