

**05/05/24      “A Wife’s Submission – Part 2”  
Ephesians 5:22-24**

Welcome...

Ephesians 5:22-33...

I have a great level of joy in preaching this morning for a number of reasons. First, because I just trust the word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.” We are not simply reading Paul’s opinion that he wrote some 2000 years ago but really what it is - the word of God, which is at work in us who believe.

The second reason for my joy is you my dear friends. I'm in a wonderful community of believers. I'm surrounded by brothers, and sisters in Christ, and I get to interact with you, my family of God every week, and I know your heart. And I have been surrounded by godly sisters in Christ who have told me how much they appreciate the clear teaching of Scripture and who earnestly want to obey God’s commands. Acts 17:11 says, “Now the Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians for they not only heard what Paul was teaching but they examined the Scriptures daily to see if what he was teaching was true.” I am thankful for wives who want to understand God’s instruction to them in His Word.

And I know that next week, when I'm preaching, to my brothers in Christ, I'm going to be preaching to the same desire to test the teaching against God’s Word and prayerfully apply what is true. Men who really want to be Christ-like husbands to their wives, they want to learn how to live out intentional, self-sacrificing love and be faithful to lead and shepherd their families.

The third reason for my joy is that God’s design for marriage is such a needed topic for this day. In such a gender-confused world, God’s instruction to men and women based on God-given gender is incredibly inspiring. I think more than ever, our culture needs to hear the truth, and see the truth of a Christ-centered marriage lived out. You and I have the privilege to live out the Word of God and be a model of biblical leadership and submission so that as Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, the world will see our “good deeds and come to glorify our Father in heaven.”

So, for those three reasons, I have a great level of hope and joy as I preach today.

**Main point: Ephesians 5:22-24 explains three aspects of a wife’s submission to her husband.**

**The Manner of a Wife’s Submission in verse 22**

**The Motive of a Wife’s Submission in verse 23**

**The Model of a Wife’s Submission in verse 24.**

My prayer is that through the ministry of the Word of God, wives will be empowered by the Holy Spirit and live out God’s instruction so that as Titus 2:10 says, “you will adorn the truth of God in every respect.” I ask you Christian husbands to pray for your wife and pray with your wife.

As we go through Ephesians 5 today and what it says to husbands in weeks to come, I pray that everyone will have the same attitude toward the word of God that the psalmist declares in Psalm 119:32, “I run in the path of Your commands for You have set my heart free.” There is such a joy and freedom in Christ that comes from living life the way that God has intended and laid out for us.

**I.      The Manner of Submission**

Verses 21-22 actually reads like this in the original Greek text, “Be subject one another in the fear of Christ, wives to your own husbands as to the Lord.”

As I shared in last week’s sermon, the context and syntax of verse 22 mean that the wife’s submission is the evidence of being Spirit-filled. Verse 18... followed by participles in verses 19-21... Then specifically applied in marriage.

To state it another way, the submission of a wife to her husband can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit each day. Wives, you need the help of the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to empower you to be a helpmate to your husband and to honor and submit to your husband.

Definition: Biblical submission is the attitude and action of willingly and wholeheartedly respecting, yielding to, and obeying the authority of another.

The Bible does not tell husbands to be subject to wives, or parents to be subject to their children (thus nullifying all parental authority!), or masters to be subject to their servants.

But the Scriptures wisely gives instruction to regulate the use of authority by husbands (who are to love their wives as Christ loved the church Eph. 5:25–33), by parents (who are not to provoke their children to anger in Ephesians 6:4), and by masters or employers (who are to be Christlike in how they treat their employees in Ephesians 6:9).

Colossians 3:18, Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

1 Peter 3:1, In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

Titus 2:5, Older women are to teach younger women to be subject to their own husbands.

Ephesians 5:22, Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

The voice of the verb is not active but middle voice meaning submitting oneself under the God-given authority of another. This does not imply superiority of the husband or inferiority of the wife. We will see next week that the husband is love and cherish his wife as Christ does the church and 1 Peter 3:7 says the husband is to “show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.”

Notice again Ephesians 5 verse 22...

The wife is called to give the same honor, respect, and submission to her husband as she gives to Christ. This immediately takes this command from simply being about a human relationship to actually being about the wife’s relationship with Christ. Look past your imperfect husband and look to the perfect Savior and submit to your earthly husband with a heart of obedience to Christ.

But here is the challenge, the dilemma, the problem. It all comes down to one word: sin. That’s what makes submission such a challenge. And by that I mean sin on the part of the wife, and sin on the part of the husband.

Every Christian husband, and every Christian wife have been saved from the penalty of sin, and one day they will be saved from the presence of sin when we join the Lord in heaven. But while we are still in our flesh, we battle with indwelling sin. Paul explains his own experience in Romans 7. Look at Romans 7:18-20 with me...

Our sinful hearts make it very hard for us to submit to God, it makes it hard for us to obey His commands. We don't yield easily to authority, we tend to fight it, and on the other side, we tend to abuse authority and try to dominate others.

Then there's the issue of knowledge. A wife knows her husband very well. She knows him better than any person on the face of the earth knows him. She sees the pattern of indwelling sin work its way out in his life and she begins to lose respect for her husband because he is inconsistent, or hypocritical, or harsh, or lazy, or sinfully angry, or any one of a number of other outbreaks of indwelling sin.

But here is the truth, even if her husband were sinless, even if he were flawless, she would still have trouble submitting because she has her own sin nature too. And the proof is every godly Christian woman will say how difficult she finds it to submit to Christ. All of us do. We all can say with the apostle Paul as Romans 7 says, "In my inner being, I delight in God's law, but I have trouble obeying it."

One of the articles I read this week was entitled, "Me? Submit to him? You don't know my husband, you don't know the challenges I face."

John Newton, who you probably know as the writer of Amazing Grace, but who was also a pastor in 18th century Britain. He used to tell newlyweds this, "You may think that your biggest problem spiritually speaking is the prospect of a bad marriage. But every bit as big of a spiritual danger is the prospect of a good marriage."

Why would he say that? He said it because he knew the propensity of each person in their fallenness to look to their spouse to give them what only God can provide. The biggest problem in marriage is idolatry.

There is something so powerful and fulfilling about marriage, that unless you deliberately prevent it, you will look to your spouse to give you what only God can give you.

You will look to your spouse's love, your spouse's time, your spouse's respect, your spouse's affirmation to give you meaning in life and to give you your own sense of value- all the things you should only be getting from God.

So, John Newton prayed, "Oh Lord, save us from the wonderfulness of marriage." Marriage was designed by God to lead us to the Savior and worship Him. God designed marriage to have a vertical love with Him so that there can be a horizontal love with one another.

This is what Paul is saying in Ephesians 5:22, "Wives submit to your husband as to the Lord." Those last four words, "as to the Lord." Immediately the text takes from the horizontal to the vertical, from simply thinking that a wife's submission is just about a human relationship to actually being about a wife's relationship with God.

That is the manner of submission, notice next:

## **II. The Motive of Submission**

Verses 22-23...

After reading verse 22 the wife may ask, "Why should I do that? What's the reason you're giving me for that verse?" Verse 23 is the answer. "For," or, "because," or "since the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior." That's the reason why it answers the question why? So in other words, the ground for her submission is his status, his position in her life as her head. That's the reason why she submits.

We saw last week in Ephesians 1:20-23 that the word "head" means authority. "God placed all things under Christ's feet rulers, authorities, powers, dominions everything and made Him head over the universe." In Matthew 28:18 Jesus came to the disciples and said, "All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me."

Now, one thing we note in both Ephesians 1 and Ephesians 5 is that this headship is beneficial to the body. It causes the body to live and flourish and thrive. Verse 23...

Christ is the head of the Church, His body of which He is the Savior. Jesus is not a domineering dictator here; He is the savior of the Church, and so his headship is beneficial to her.

A definition of headship would be helpful. We can define the husband's headship this way: in the marriage of two equal human beings, husband and wife, the husband bears the primary responsibility to lead the marriage in a God-glorifying direction. The husband is commanded to lead and love his wife in a Christlike way.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ." He is talking about an order of authority.

As we saw last week, biblical authority is never given for the advantage of the one in authority or so that he can suppress those under authority. Rather, God delegates authority for the blessing and protection of those under authority, so that they will become all that God wants them to be.

Also, the one in authority is accountable to God for those under his authority. This does not mean that a husband must make every decision, but he is responsible for every decision made. If he is negligent with that responsibility or he abuses it for his own advantage, he will answer to God!

Notice also that verse 23 is a simple indicative statement. There's not an imperative or subjunctive here. What do I mean by that? The husband is declared to be the head, the husband is the head of the wife, he's not encouraged to be the head, he's not commanded to be the head. Nothing is said about what kind of head you should be here, that'll come in next week's passage when husbands are called to love their wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

In verse 23 it's not the husband ought to be the head of the wife or is expected to be, he just is.

### **III. The Model of a Wife's Submission**

Verse 24...

The supreme and ultimate model of submission is Jesus Christ Himself, who submitted to the Father and went to the cross to save you and me.

But also notice verse 24 says the church is subject to Christ, not that Christ is subject to the church. Christ is our head as the church is the bride of Christ.

In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said...

A yoke was made of wood, hand-carved to fit the neck and shoulders of the animal to prevent pain or discomfort. Under the yoke, the animal would obey the commands of its master.

Here is the fundamental moment of conversion, when you yield to the yoke of Jesus, the king. You're not going to fight His commands, you're going to submit to His commands. And so that submission must come from the heart. It comes from a transformed heart, as we've been saying a heart of love to the Lord, and it's in that way a wife is going to honor and submit her husband's leadership.

Verse 24 says... in everything. There's no area that either the husband or wife could say, that this idea of headship and submission is irrelevant to that, or doesn't fit there. Basically, there is no topic or area of life, which the wife can say that's off-limits or the husband could say it's off-limits.

“In everything” means in every topical area of life, and down to its details. So, that would be money and possessions, it would be life management, it would be scheduling it would be parenting, church involvement, careers, ministry, mission, anything and everything. You put a heading over that's relevant to their marriage.

As her husband's helpmate, a wife's submission does not mean she cannot give him advice and counsel, or that she cannot confront him when there is a sin pattern in his life.

There are limits to a wife's submission. You don't need to submit to every husband. You don't submit to a sister in Christ's husband or to every man. Verse 22 says be subject to your “own husband.”

This implies a sense of belonging that the wife has over the husband like the husband has over the wife. Her body belongs to her husband and his body belongs to her. That's what 1 Corinthians 7 teaches beautifully, it says In Song of Solomon, 2:16, “my lover is mine and I am His.”

1 Corinthians 7:3-4 says, “The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”

So the man doesn't have freedom to be unfaithful to his wife. In some cultures they may look the other way and say, “Men will be men, nothing you can do to stop it. They're going to be adulterers one way or another.”

No! Christians have from the beginning said that is not true and it's a sin to be judged. A wife's submission is limited. She is to submit as to the Lord, but her husband is not the Lord and he is going to lead his wife into sin she must say as the disciples, “I must obey God rather than man.”

You must never follow God-ordained authority into God-forbidden activity. Let me say that again, you must never follow God-ordained authority, into God-forbidden activity.

Now, more specifically, "what if my husband is a non-Christian, what do I do then?" Consider 1 Corinthians 7:13-16 and 1 Peter 3:1-6. 1 Corinthians 7 says if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her she must not divorce him. Instead, she must live with him there to do life together. Paul says, The husband is in some sense sanctified or set apart by having a godly wife. Clearly Paul does not mean he's definitely going to be saved, because he says at the end, you don't know that you're going to save your husband, but if he's willing to live with her they should live together.

You do your best as a Christian wife in that situation to follow whatever leadership he gives that's not leading you into sin. When it comes to the raising of the children, you should raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, you should say. I've got to bring them to church. This is what's commanded.

Obviously, the more belligerent or obstinate he gets about that the harder it gets, I understand that but fundamentally do what you can to submit to your husband when he doesn't contradict the word of God. Your overall demeanor should be one of loving submissiveness.

Same thing in 1 Peter 3 that was read earlier by Adrian. The idea in 1 Peter 3 is that that without a word, you can win over an unbelieving husband when he sees the purity and submission and beauty of your life. The gentle and quiet spirit, so you're not murmuring or complaining or arguing with him. When it says without a word, it means

you don't nag your husband into the kingdom. You don't manipulate him into the kingdom, you just share the Gospel, and pray, and live your life, and pray and pray and pray some more.

What about abusive situations?

Nowhere in Scripture does it condone a wife being abused physically, sexually, or financially by her husband.

Jesus said to the disciples in Matthew 10:23, "But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next."

If you are being persecuted or abused by your husband, then do not let it continue unaddressed. I know it will take courage, but you need to come speak to the elders of the church. We care for you and want you to be safe. To leave an abusive situation unchecked and unaddressed is not submission.

Marriage is to be a picture of Christ and His bride, the church. When it comes to weddings, I often have the best view in the house as I stand about two feet in front of the bride and groom. I see everything: the tears of joy, the trembling hands, the anticipation of being able to spend every day and night as husband and wife!

How will the couple fare? Will he love his beautiful bride as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it? Will he be a loving, caring head who will provide spiritual leadership to his wife? I pray it will be so.

Will the bride grow in her love for Christ, give honor to her husband and submit to him as the Church submits to Christ? I pray it will be so.

Titus 2:5 says "Older women are to encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."

That means so people will not think negatively of the Bible or the Gospel. And then in Titus 2:10 it says, "in everything they may adorn or beautify the doctrine of God our savior." So it's both negatively, so that people won't malign the Gospel, and positively, so people would see how beautiful the Gospel is when they see how we live by faith and obey the Lord. A wife who honors, respects, and submits to her husband and a husband who lovingly leads his wife in a Christlike way is a powerful picture of the gospel.

Let's pray...