

# EPHESIANS

## **Ephesians Week 14 - Ephesians 5:21-33**

December 10, 2023 - Pastor Jason Carter

**Ephesians 5:21-33** NIV "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>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.<sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup>for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.<sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."

### **Today's message is about submitting to one another in the context of marriage.**

If you are single, you can think through what it means to honor God at work under authority, whether you are "marriage material", and how to lay down your life for another in all relationships.

If you are married, are you submitting your life for your spouse as you do to Jesus?

**We believe that biblical marriage is expressed between a man and a woman. This is God's design and this is the perfect expression of love, devotion and sacrifice. It is compared to the way Jesus loves His bride, the church.**

Throughout Paul's writings, we see:

**Romans 12:10** "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves."

**Ephesians 5:19-21 NKJV** <sup>19</sup>"speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>**submitting to one another in the fear of <sup>[a]</sup>God.**"

We see this beautiful picture of submission in the picture of Christ and the church. First Jesus submits Himself to the will of the Father. Sacrifice to the point of death. Second, we in turn submit our life to Jesus and we give all for Him and to Him.

- The above verses do not specifically mention marriage, so whether single or married, how should we see these words play out in our relationships? What relationships?

- As Christ-followers, why does it matter?

Marriage is a beautiful, if not at times challenging, expression of love. It is such a joy to be in a committed marriage. It is also hard to be married and stay married in our culture. It demands commitment, selflessness, endurance and sacrifice.

- Divorce rates in our country is out of control. However, the rate of people getting married in certain demographics is going down as well. Why is this?

- Are Christian marriage/divorce rates any different? Do you have an opinion as to why or why not?

**To leave complete independence and to take on the posture of deliberately putting someone above your own needs is counter-cultural.**

- What does this mean and practically look like?

- Even for those who are not married, what does this look like in your life?

"To voluntarily place, arrange, or set myself under the will of another. It implies that *submission* is between *two equals*. It is an attitude of the heart that results in action. It is an intentional decision, a *heart posture*."

We see this submission (or deference) emulated in the Trinity- Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- The Father points to Jesus and says, "This is my Son in whom I am well pleased."
- Jesus points back to the Father and says, "I have obeyed everything the Father has asked of Me. I only do what my Father does" out of honor and submission.
- And everything the Holy Spirit does is to point people to Jesus and what He has done.

I see this in our church when **older and much more knowledgeable and seasoned Christians give deference to a younger pastor or director** even though they may know more. It is a picture of submission, honor, and respect.

If we do what the Bible says, it will lead to fruitfulness and flourishing in our relationships. It leads to honor, love, respect, trust, and depth because it is connected to the attitude of the heart. This is why we must strive to flourish. This isn't easy, but it is biblical and right.

- What are some practical examples of a flourishing marriage?

- Is your marriage flourishing?

**Example of a BAD definition of "submission":** Albert Einstein quote: "I treat my wife as an employee whom I cannot fire." He presented his wife with a contract that detailed **his expectations:**

A. "You will make sure (1) that my clothes and laundry are kept in good order. (2), I will receive my three meals regularly in my room. (3) that my bedroom and study are kept neat, and especially that my desk is left for my use only.

B. You will renounce all personal relations with me, insofar as they are not completely necessary for social reasons. Specifically, you will forego (1) my sitting at home with you. (2), my Going out or traveling with you.

C. you will obey the following points in your relations with me. (1), you will not expect any intimacy from me, nor will you approach me in any way. (2), you will stop talking to me if I request it. (3), you will leave my bedroom or study immediately without protest if I request it.

D. You will undertake not to belittle me in front of our children, either through words or behavior."

She reluctantly agreed, but unsurprisingly the marriage still fell apart due to his distance and the affairs he carried on with younger women who did not make emotional demands of him.

## This is not the biblical definition of submit.

- Notice the line that Albert was with women “who did not make emotional demands of him.” What do relationships of any kind look like when there are no mutual emotional expectations? Do they last? Why or why not?

### V. 21 “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

The Greek word for submit is **hypotássō** (Hoop-po-tasso) verb/action): “To voluntarily (and willfully) place, arrange or set myself under the will of another. It implies that submission is **between two equals**. It is an attitude of the heart (internal response) that results in action.” **It is an intentional decision, a heart posture.** It is a continuous command to initiate and participate in the action of submitting and putting myself under the authority of another.

**Jesus is our example. Phil 2:3-8** NIV<sup>3</sup> “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,<sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”

- Again, no mention of a marriage relationship, so no matter what stage of life you are in, what stands out to you in these verses?

Basically, in life and specifically in marriage, if we commit to this attitude of **“I genuinely desire your good so much so** that I will...” and align our thoughts and behaviors around these biblical expectations, your marriage will flourish. Not easy, not perfect, but two imperfect people in pursuit of God and each other.

The function of men and women in marriage is to **complement** one another. Both bring differences into the marriage that complement the other, serve the family they will potentially raise, and serve the world around them.

We love to read the Bible and think of others who need to change, what other people need to do. Paul is great about reminding each person to start with themselves. Jesus is our example. Paul continues to show how to love and serve one another in relationship, including our marriages.

- Anyone ever been guilty of this?

**v 22-24** “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

In this context, submit means: to come under out of respect, reverence, or honor

We can see there are distinct needs between men and women: **Respect and Love**. Both of these are signature desires each wants from the other. A man wants to be respected by his wife. A woman wants to be loved. Women can love their husbands and not respect him. Men can respect their wives and not love them.

- Explain how this is possible.

- What is the difference between love and respect? Share some practical examples of how men and women need these.

- True respect is given, not for who you may \*think\* or want your husband to be, but for who he already is. **It can not be "Once my husband finally lives up to my expectations, then I will respect him."**
- God says do it now- where and how he is at now.

**Carissa's words from a prior message she spoke:** "Submit to your husband out of reverence to the Lord, as the church submits and comes under Jesus. Therefore because my submission is as unto the Lord, **my husband does not need to earn my submission.**"

**1Pet.3:1-2 NIV** "Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, **if any of them** do not believe the word, they may be won over **without words** when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

**Carissa's words:** "This is such a hard truth and I have to remind myself (again) that Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything that He Himself did not do first. I also have to remind myself that I can't do this on my own. I am in desperate need of being "filled/controlled by the Spirit" (vs18)"

**We want to be clear:**

- We do not believe you should be under harsh treatment and abusive treatment. We would counsel a woman to leave an abusive situation for her own safety.
- The Bible also gives legal right to leave infidelity
- Those situations are not what is being discussed here

**The issue is, as a wife, will you submit to your husband? Husbands, are you the kind of man a wife would want to submit to?**

**What is the role of a man in marriage?**

V. 25 "Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ** loved the church and gave himself up for her..."

Greek: agapáō ("to love") is a God-kind of love that means actively doing what the Lord prefers, by His power and direction.

- **Men:** Is our love sacrificial like Jesus who literally gave His life up for us, even when we didn't/don't deserve it?

This love isn't something we can work up on our own. We must make the decision, the commitment, submitting ourselves to love our wives like Christ loves the church, and God will supply His love through us,

- **Do you believe this is possible? Have you experienced God meeting you with His strength to love (or respect) the way He calls us to?**

- **Carissa desires my love.** But what if she is not loveable that day? Or, what if she has not met my personal requirements? Those are called "If/Then" requirements. God's desire is that I honor her design and love her (as Christ loves the church).

**Men:**

What did Jesus do? He engaged with us, loved, served, sacrificed. He suffered and though He prayed that the cup would pass, still he said "Not my will, but yours..." In the midst of crucifixion, He forgave.

Your love for your wife will serve as a sanctifying force in both of your lives.

- What does this statement mean?
- Men: will you submit and love your wife?

V. 26 "...to make her holy, cleansing<sup>[b]</sup> her by the washing with water through the word,<sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.<sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.<sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body."

Men, think very seriously about how you treat and speak to your wife. Your love and leadership should cause her to flourish, to grow.

When we think of our leadership as a husband, think of Jesus getting on his knees and washing the feet of His disciples.

- Are you willing to live this way in your relationship?

**James 4:1 NIV** "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?"

In the moment, we may internally want to win the argument, but the backdrop of our life is bigger than the moment. We both want to honor the Lord. We both want a healthy marriage. We want to commit ourselves to each other. That is the only way it works. It can take years to understand one another, to appreciate the differences, as well as the dysfunction and brokenness where we came from.

It takes time to understand how to apply the Bible in practical ways in our marriage and grow into the responsibility of obedience. We both have died a little, we had to. And yet, the fruit of dying to self has produced almost 25 years of marriage. We are building a life together in pursuit of Jesus. It is imperfect. We have experienced joy, laughter and sorrow. And these 3 remain: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

- What remains in your marriage? If you are single, what is remaining in your relationships?

The Bible commands us to submit (come under) in our relationships with one another. I believe it does something in the person who is obeying as well as for the person the love and respect is bestowed on, and it impacts those around the marriage as well. A collateral effect.

- How so?

**Important Reality:** What you don't do that you are supposed to will come to be in the life of your kids. Ladies if you disrespect your husband, the fruit of that will be seen in your kids. Gentlemen, don't love your wife and the ramifications of that decision will cost your kids in ways you cannot imagine. You will see it. You have just given them permission to do what you have done and they will take it even further (just like with gossip, slander, cheating etc).

- Have any thoughts on this statement?

**V. 31** "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."<sup>[c]</sup><sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.<sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Notice Paul uses the word must. It's not optional. We bring ourselves into union for the creation of something new. Not just to fight for what we want or demand from our spouse. How will I

give my life in the service of Jesus and for the benefit of the one I made this marriage covenant with?

**PJ shared some thoughts he wrote for a marriage ceremony:**

We unconsciously believe marriage is about what we will get from it. But usually what we get from marriage is what we have put into it. Marriage is an amazing institution. It is more than a ceremony or a piece of paper you sign when all of the people have left. You both are different. More different than you both realize right now. And there is something so incredibly beautiful about that. God will use these differences to help you become who He wants you to be if you will allow it. These differences can be so attractive on one hand and so aggravating on the other. You will celebrate, cry, laugh and fight in your marriage. There will be days when you never want to leave the house because you are together. And there will be days you don't want to go home because the other person will be there. Because marriage is wonderful and difficult and complex and simple. It can be the safest haven in life's storms, where you learn to be vulnerable and imperfect and broken. And it can be the painful place where God uses your spouse to do heart surgery and to be a mirror to reveal where you need to change and grow up. Marriage is the place where there is nowhere to hide and no other place you would rather be. It is the place where you will be taken for granted and times where you get a glimpse of how special your spouse is that it takes your breath away.

God will use your marriage and your spouse to help you be the man and woman God designed from the very beginning when He had you individually in mind. And you get this special privilege to do it together. Cherish it. Fight for it. Embrace it. It is worth it. This church is the essence of marriage.

**We have a saying in ministry when things are difficult: "We get to do this."**

The same is true for marriage.

**Finally:** we are to submit to one another in the manner Jesus showed us when He left everything and came here to give His life for the sake of the church, of us.

- How can I better live like Jesus in this manner?
- Will you recommit to building a life together in your marriage?