

# ***Husbands and Wives***

Ephesians 5:21-33

## **INTRODUCTION**

Every house has rules. Right? Paul, as an apostle, is saying, “Listen, this is how a *Christian* home is run. These are the relationships. And these are the rules.”

Let’s summarize what we have discussed about men and women in marriage thus far:

### **Man’s and Woman’s Relationship to God and Creation (Genesis 1:26-28)**

- Man and Woman are Both Created in the Image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)
- Man and Woman are Called to Multiply God’s Image in the Earth (28a)
- Man and Woman are Both Called to Subdue and to Rule (Genesis 1:28b; Genesis 2:5, 8-9a, 15)

### **Man’s and Woman’s Relationship to One Another BEFORE the Fall (Genesis 2)**

**Man and Woman are Created Equal in Worth and Call, Yet Distinct in Role and Responsibility**

#### **The Image of God in Man as HEAD**

Paul points to this Genesis 2 account to teach the “headship” of men over women as part of the Creation order.

*<sup>3</sup> But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,<sup>4</sup> and the head of Christ is God. (1 Corinthians 11:3)*

Seven Reasons Why I Believe Man was Given Headship over Woman BEFORE the Fall

1. The Man is the central character of the creation account (chapter 2)
2. Male and Female are collectively called “Man” (Genesis 1:26; 5:1-2)
3. The Man was created first (2:7)
4. The Man was commissioned first (2:15)
5. The Man was taught God’s will directly, implying he is the one to teach it to others (2:16)
6. The Woman was created FOR the Man (2:18)
7. The Woman was created FROM the Man (2:21)

#### **The Image of God in Woman as HELPER**

*<sup>18</sup> The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” (2:18)*

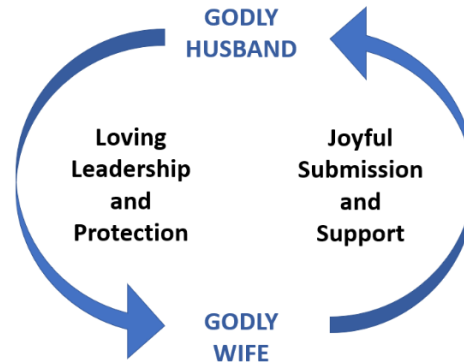
- “helper” (*ezer*)—help, support, aid. This is a key word describing the woman’s ROLE to the man.
- “suitable for him” (*kenego*)—like him, corresponding to him, matching him. This is a key word describing the woman’s EQUALITY to the man.

## THE CURSE

### Man's and Woman's Relationship to One Another AFTER the Fall (Genesis 3)

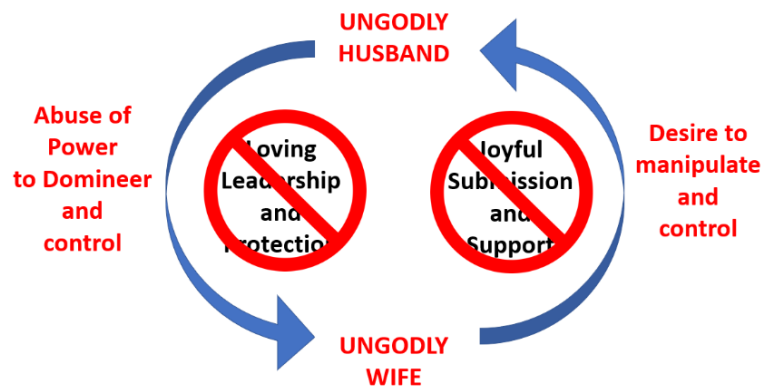
Before the Fall, Adam was clearly established as the Leader and Eve, the Helper. Before sin, this was to be the pattern:

*NOTE: We see this relationship expressly taught in Ephesians 5:22-33.*



AFTER the fall, we see that this curse pronounced upon the woman:

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said,  
"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."



In Genesis 4:1-6, we see an account of God coming to Cain and warning him to repent of his sin of anger and bitterness toward his brother. Specifically, God warns Cain saying that sin is waiting to attack him. Its "desire" is toward you (i.e. to control/master you), but you must rule over it."

Thus, in summary...

#### **How did the Curse damage this relationship?**

- It caused the Woman to no longer joyfully submit/support her husband but desire instead to master/control her husband
- It caused the Man to dominate/rule over his wife because of his strength/power/privilege

#### **How does the Cross bring healing to this relationship?**

- It calls for and empowers the wife to joyfully submit/support her husband. In so doing she is following the example of Christ to the Father.
- It calls for and empowers the husband to lovingly lead his wife and to sacrificially serve her. In so doing, he is following the example of Christ to His Bride.

## A Word About Singlehood

- For some, it is a spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 7:7). These should remain content as singles (1 Corinthians 7:27)
- For others, it is a significant challenge and should actively pursue marriage (1 Corinthians 7:9)
- Being single is far less complicated, especially in an age of increased persecution/pressure (1 Corinthians 7:26-27)
- Being single is a privilege to be leveraged (1 Corinthians 7:32-35).
- Being single is a season to grow—in contentment, intimacy and service.
- Being single is not easy and deserves the support and encouragement of the Church.
- There are principles in the theology of surrounding males and females/husbands and wives that apply to singles as well.

## Submitting to One Another

Ephesians 5:21—<sup>21</sup> *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

This is the “hinge verse” that launches us into a new section. And it is in fact connected to the previous section. In chapter 5, verse 18 Paul says: <sup>18</sup> *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit...*

What is the result, or the fruit of the Spirit? There are actually five verb participles attached to this command:

1. Speaking (“teaching”/“admonishing”—Colossians 3:16a)
2. Singing songs
3. Making music
4. Giving thanks
5. Submitting

Submit means “to arrange oneself under”. It was never figurative in the Bible and always was connected to authority. That is, someone in authority and someone under that delegated authority.

Do this, “...out of reverence for Christ.” (vs. 21)

## Wives Submit to Husbands (vs. 22-24)

<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.*

Couple observations/counsel:

- “submit yourselves”—this is a voluntary submission. NOT a subjugation. (vs. 22a)
- In submitting to your husband, you are submitting to Christ (22b)
- Embrace God’s design for headship, even if this culture rails against such a notion (vs. 23-24)
- Trust that there will be blessing in obeying God’s design
- Find a mentor—Titus 2:3-5

## Husbands, Love Your Wives (vs. 25-32)

<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>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

Couple observations/counsel:

- Your love for your wife is to look like Jesus’ sacrificial love for His Bride, the Church (25)
  - *In what significant and sacrificial ways are you loving your wife?*
  - *Consider asking your wife, “How can I love you more like Jesus?”*
- Jesus’ love for His Bride saved her, washed her, sanctified her, and finally presented her beautiful to Himself.
  - *How may your loving leadership contribute to your wife’s holiness, health and beauty?*
- Love your wife at least as well as you love yourself (27-29)
  - *Think of the many ways you “bless” yourself. Are you blessing your wife in the same ways, or more (Romans 12:10)?*
  - NOTE: This seems to come from the principle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> greatest commandment to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:38)
- This relationship is to reflect the profound beauty and mystery of Christ and His Church (30-32)
  - *Is my marriage reflecting the profound beauty and mystery of Christ and His Church?*
  - *If not, what may I do to reflect the character and ministry of Christ better toward my wife?*

Practical Counsel on How to Love Your Wife Well

1. Be gentle with her
2. Serve her around the home
3. Be proactive in decision-making
4. Seek her counsel when making decisions
5. Pray for her
6. Do not be passive in the spiritual leadership of the home
7. Do not be passive in parenting or discipline of the children
8. Do not be overbearing in parenting or discipline of the children
9. Compliment her
10. Romance her
11. Give her space to pursue meaningful friendships
12. Encourage her to develop as a whole person
13. Get a mentor (and be honest)—Titus 2:6-8

## A Word About Abuse

In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle specifically addresses husbands in their treatment of their wives:

*<sup>7</sup>Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

- “be considerate”—*ginosko*, meaning to come to understand by experience
- “treat them with respect”—to give the value, price, or honor that is due her.
- “as the weaker partner”—literally, not strong. Without strength, weak.

NOTE: This should be viewed as physical weakness, not moral weakness. I would observe that there is often an emotional beauty/fragility that men should handle very carefully as well.

### ***What do we mean by abuse?***

Any pattern of behavior that is used to intentionally hurt, intimidate, manipulate, or gain control over a family member.

This can take many forms:

- Verbal
- Emotional and Psychological
- Sexual
- Physical
- Spiritual
- Financial
- Technological

### **Biblical Counsel to the Abused Wife**

*Wives, what do you do if you find yourself in a relationship that you feel may be abusive?*

Couple Principles

- Discern if this is a pattern that should not be overlooked (c.f. Proverbs 19:11)  
NOTE: physical abuse should never be overlooked.
- Understand that it is NOT submission to overlook abuse. *Why?*
- Because while you are his wife, you are also a daughter of God (1 Peter 3:7b)
- As such, you may confront him, not only as his wife/helpmeet, but also as a sister in Christ

Thus, according to Matthew 18:15-17:

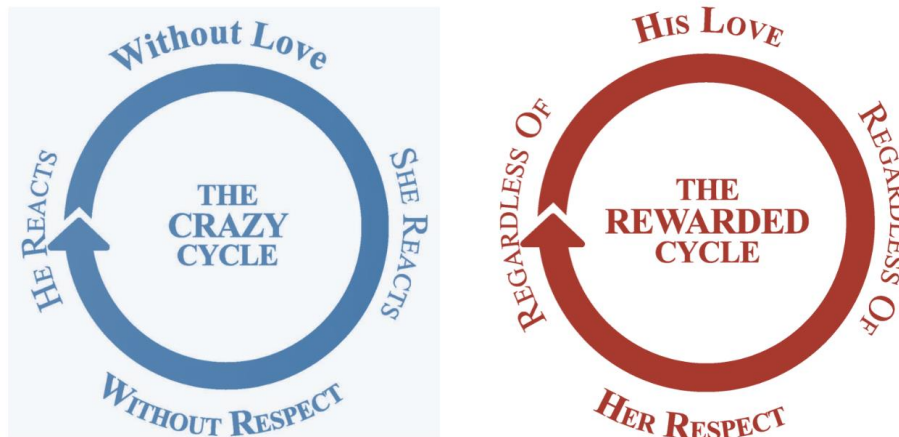
1. Confront your husband one on one. Do this in a manner that is intentional, thoughtful, serious, and as non-emotional as possible (18:15)
2. If he ignores this, ask another couple to confront him with you (18:16).
3. If he ignores the group, then go with that couple to the elders (18:17a)
4. If he ignores the elders, and eventually the church, then his profession of faith may be publicly disavowed (18:17b)

5. If the church publicly disavows his profession of faith AND he is continuing to demonstrate unrepentant abuse, then the 1 Corinthians 7:15-16 *may* apply. This decision should be made in counsel with the elders.

NOTE: Understand that once you begin the Matthew 18 process, you must be willing for there to possibly be church discipline against your husband. This may feel scary, but church discipline is a means of grace to you in this. Trust God's design and plan.

## Summary (vs. 33)

<sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



Source: From Dr. Emerson Eggerichs' *Love and Respect*

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## Questions for Personal Reflection/Group Discussion

1. How has the Gospel redeemed what was broken by the Fall (Genesis 3) between husbands and wives?
2. What principles are present for all men and all women in Ephesians 5:21-33?
3. Husbands, ask your wives: *How may I better love and lead?*
4. Wives, ask your husbands: *How may I better respect, support, and follow?*