

Small Group Discussion Guide

Submission & Self-Giving Love

Ephesians 5:21–33

Opening Question (Icebreaker)

1. Have you ever heard a teaching about marriage or submission that confused or surprised you? What stood out about it?

OR

2. What is one example you've seen (in marriage or friendship) of someone putting another person's needs ahead of their own?
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Read the Passage

Read Ephesians 5:21–33 together.

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” – Ephesians 5:21

Key Idea

The instructions in Ephesians 5 only make sense in light of the gospel. Because Jesus gave himself for us on the cross, Christians are called to live lives marked by **mutual submission and self-giving love**. Marriage becomes a visible picture of Christ's love for the church.

Group Discussion

Understanding the Context

1. Why do you think Paul begins this section with “**submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**” (v.21)?
 2. The sermon compared the phrase “**below par**” in golf—something that only makes sense in the right context—to submission in the gospel.
 - Why do you think submission seems offensive or confusing outside the gospel?
 3. Paul connects marriage to the bigger story of **new creation and the gospel**.
 - How does that change the way we think about marriage?
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Wives and Husbands

4. Paul calls wives to **submit to their husbands as to the Lord**.
 - What are some common misunderstandings about this command?
 - What does it look like when submission is rooted in love rather than fear or control?
 5. Paul calls husbands to **love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her**.
 - What stands out to you about that comparison?
 6. Why do you think Paul gives husbands the command to **sacrificially love**, rather than to rule or control?
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The Example of Jesus

7. Read **Philippians 2:3–8** together.
 - How does Jesus redefine leadership and power?
 - What does his example teach us about submission and sacrifice?
 8. How does the cross change the way we understand **love**?
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Personal Reflection

(Allow a few quiet moments for people to think before sharing.)

9. Where in your life do you struggle most with **putting someone else's needs before your own**?
 10. In what relationships is God inviting you to practice **self-giving love** this week?
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For Married Couples (if applicable)

11. What are practical ways spouses can help one another **flourish spiritually**?
 12. Where do marriages today tend to drift toward **self-gratifying love** rather than **self-giving love**?
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For Everyone (Married or Not)

13. Mutual submission is meant to characterize the entire Christian community. Where do you see opportunities to practice this in everyday life?

Examples:

- Work
 - Family
 - Friendships
 - Church
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Practical Challenge for the Week

Choose **one intentional act of self-giving love** this week.

Examples:

- Serve your spouse in a way that costs you something.
- Encourage or support a coworker or family member.
- Ask God to help you put someone else's needs ahead of your own.

Pray each day:

"Holy Spirit, help me love like Jesus today."

Closing Prayer

Invite the group to pray together:

- That God would shape our understanding of love through the cross.
- That marriages in the church would reflect Christ and the gospel.
- That the Holy Spirit would help us practice **mutual submission and sacrificial love** in everyday relationships.