

“Heaven in Your Home”

September 15, 2024

Ephesians 5:21-33

I. Introduction

As we come to these verses about “*submission*,” and relationships in the home, I come with a little fear and trepidation. Denominations, individual churches, even families have split over the understanding and application of these verses. But even though it would be nice to skip over these words from Paul, they are God’s Words, and we do need to consider them. Paul is writing about the relationship of Christ and the church as well as the relationship of Christian husbands and Christian wives.

As we saw last week, believers who are walking in love, in light, in wisdom and in the Holy Spirit are to “**submit to one another.**” Submission is the willingness to consider the needs of others above one’s own self-interests. It is also a military term meaning to arrange or rank under. The main idea is that of surrendering one’s rights to another person. **1 Peter 2:13-15** says, “**Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors... For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men.**” A nation cannot function without the authority of its rulers, soldiers, police, judges, and so on.

Similarly, a church cannot function without someone being in authority. In **1 Cor. 16:15-16** Paul told the Corinthian Christians to submit to their faithful ministers “**and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it.**” It isn’t that church leaders or any other leaders are inherently superior to those they are leading. In their standing before God, all believers are equal in every way. **Turn to Galatians 3:26-28.** All believers are one in Christ, but no institution—including the church or the home—can function without a system of authority and submission.

Paul began this section of “Christianity for Dummies” with the admonition that Christians submit to one another. The believer’s reverence for God is the basis for his submission to other believers. By nature, we want to promote ourselves, but the Holy Spirit enables us to submit ourselves one to another.

In today's Scripture, Paul applied the principle of submission to the first institution created by God—marriage—the relationship between husband and wife.

II. Submission in Marriage

A. The Role of Wives Paul began by writing about the role of wives: **“Wives, submit to your husbands.”** Paul was giving an application to the preceding verse about **“submitting one to another.”** Every obedient, Spirit-filled Christian is a submitting Christian. The husband who demands his wife's submission to him but does not recognize his own obligation to submit to her ignores God's standard for the marriage relationship and cannot correctly function as a godly husband. Here Paul began by emphasizing the role for all believing wives: **“submit to your husbands.”** Later, he will show that the responsibility of the husband is much greater and more demanding.

Paul gave two reasons for the command for believing wives to submit to their husbands. **First, it is the will of Christ**—the spirit-filled wife submits to her husband because that is the Lord's will. She is to submit to her **“husband as to the Lord.”** The second reason for submitting to her husband is the fact that **God has appointed him to be head of the family: “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.”** Just as Christ is the head of the church, the husband is head of the wife;

Such submission is to be a voluntary response to God's will with the wife giving up her self-interests to rank herself under her husband. When a Christian wife submits herself to Christ and lets Him be the Lord of her life, she will have no difficulty submitting to her husband. This doesn't mean she becomes a slave to her husband; for her husband is also to submit to Christ and to her.

A husband is not to treat his wife as a servant or as a child, but as an equal for whom God has given him care and responsibility for her provision and her protection, to be exercised in love. She is not his to order around, responding to his every wish and command. As Paul is going to explain in greater detail, the husband's primary responsibility as head of the household is to love, provide, protect, and serve his wife and family—not lord it over them according to his own personal whims and desires.

Husbands and wives are to have a mutual possessiveness as well as a mutual submissiveness. They belong to each other in absolute equality. The husband no more possesses his wife than she possesses him. He has no superiority and she no inferiority, any more than the one who has the gift of teaching is superior to the one with the gift of helps. As Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#), they, like all Christians, are equal parts of Christ's body. However, in the family, the husband is the head of the household. But *"Headship is not dictatorship."*

If both husband and wife are both living under the lordship of Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, there can only be harmony. This explains why a Christian should marry a Christian and not become **"unequally yoked together"** with an unbeliever as it says in [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#). Only Christian's can know what real love—agape love—is. If a Christian is submitted to Christ, neither husband nor wife will try to establish a home that disobeys the Word of God.

Peter taught exactly the same truth as Paul did regarding the relationship of husband and wife—[turn to 1 Peter 3:1-7](#). The idea is that the wife willingly functions under her husband's leadership. Peter, like Paul, emphasized the mutual possessiveness of husbands and wives when he used the words **"your husbands; your wives."**

B. The Standard for Husbands Paul had much more to say to the Christian husbands than he did to the wives. He started off by setting a higher standard for husbands—more than just submission, Paul wrote: **"Love your wives just as Christ loved the church."** The Lord's demonstration and continuing love for His church is the husband's pattern of love for his wife. Paul gave four qualities of this divine love that husbands are to have for their wives; that Christ has for the church. The first quality is:

1. It is a sacrificial love. **"Love (sacrificially love) your wives, just as Christ loved (sacrificially loved) the church."** Jesus willingly, and [Hebrews 12:2](#) adds joyfully, gave Himself for the church, so, in a similar way, the husband in love, must give himself willingly and joyfully for his wife. A husband is not commanded to love his wife because of what she is or is not. He is commanded to love her because it is God's will for him to sacrificially love her. Jesus was sacrificed not for the lovely or the worthy but for

the unlovely and the unworthy. If every appealing characteristic and every virtue of his wife disappears, a husband is still under just as great an obligation to love her. If anything, he is under greater obligation, because her need for the healing and the restorative power of his selfless love is greater. This is the kind of love Christ has for the church and is therefore the kind of love every Christian husband is to have for his wife—a sacrificial love. AND if a loving husband is willing to sacrifice his life for his wife, he must certainly be willing to make lesser sacrifices for her. He puts his own likes, desires, opinions, preferences, and welfare aside if that is required to please her and to meet her needs. In submission to Christ and his wife, such a husband dies to self in order to live for his wife, because that is what Christ's kind of love demands. **Turn to Philippians 2:5-8.**

2. It is a purifying love—Paul added, **“To make her holy, cleansing her through the word.”** For husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His church they must love with a purifying love. God's love doesn't simply condemn wrong in those loved but seeks to cleanse them from it. God told those He loved in **Isaiah 1:18**, **“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool.”** Love wants only the best for the one it loves, and it cannot bear for a loved one to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful. When a husband's love for his wife is like Christ's love for His church, he will continually seek to help her get rid of—escape from—any sort of sin. He will seek to protect her from the world's contamination and protect her holiness, her virtue, and her purity in every way. He will never make her do anything which is wrong or unwise or expose her to anything that is less than good. The marriage relationship is one of constant growth when Christ is the Lord of the home. Love always builds up and enriches those it loves.

3. It is a caring, affectionate love. Then Paul wrote, **“Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.”** This is the third quality of this love: it is a caring, affectionate love. As much as he cares for the welfare of his own body, the husband must care for the welfare of his wife. With such a love, the husband will no more do anything to harm his wife than he would to harm himself. His desire is to nourish and care for her just as he nourishes and cares for his own body. When she needs strength, he

gives her strength. When she needs encouragement, he gives her that. And so, it goes with everything she needs. Writing of God's love, [Philippians 4:19](#) says, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." In a similar fashion, the loving husband seeks to affectionately—lovingly—supply all the needs of his wife. She is a God-given treasure to be loved, cared for, nourished, cherished, and protected.

4. It is an unbreakable love. To show the 4th quality of this love, Paul quoted from [Genesis 2:24](#), "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." The word "united" (other translations use "cleave to") means to be glued or cemented together. Husbands and wives are to leave their parents and be united or cemented to each other. They break one set of ties as they establish the other, and the second is more binding and permanent than the first. This is the fourth quality of a husband's love for his wife: it is an unbreakable love.

In particular, Paul was referring to God's plan in the Garden of Eden before the impact of sin. Eve was created as a helpmeet for Adam. She was taken from his side, not made from the ground as were the animals. Adam was incomplete until they were together. God fashioned her, and I think she was the loveliest thing in creation when God brought her to Adam. She was the perfect helpmeet for Adam. She compensated for what he lacked. She was made for him, he was made for her, and they became one.

In [John 10:28](#) Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." Just as the body of Christ is indivisible, God's ideal design for marriage is that it be indivisible. [Turn to Matthew 19:3-6.](#) Just as Christ is one with His church, husbands are one with their wives. Therefore, when a husband harms his wife, he harms himself. A husband who violates his marriage violates himself. A husband who destroys his marriage destroys a part of himself.

C. The Summary The Christian marriage is a picture of the church and its relationship to Christ. A Christian marriage is to be loving, holy, pure, self-sacrificing, and mutually submissive because these virtues characterize the relationship of Christ and the church. Paul then summarized his discussion on marriage with the final command: "The husband must (avgapa,w) love his wife and the wife must respect

her husband.” When Christian husbands and wives walk in the power of the Spirit, yield to God’s Word and His control, and are mutually submissive, they experience much happiness and blessing, God is brought much honor, and the world sees an example of the power and love of God for His people—the church.

III. Conclusion

If you are married, this is the plan God has for a successful, fruitful, happy relationship. But as Paul wrote, such a Christian marriage is a picture of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His church—His children. Whether or not one is married, each person here can experience the sacrificial love of God. But to experience the love Christ has for His church; to experience the fullness of the Spirit, a person must submit himself to God by making Jesus his Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:9). Then as Romans 8:9 says, “The Spirit will come to live in you.”

But if you want to experience all the happiness and peace and fruitfulness God has for you, married or unmarried, there must be a sincere desire to glorify God. This is why the Holy Spirit was given; in John 16:14 Jesus said, “He, i.e. the Holy Spirit, will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” To be victorious, every Christian needs to be continually filled with the Spirit. We do not use the Holy Spirit; He uses us. There must be a deep thirst for God’s fullness and a recognition that we can’t do His will without His power. Then we can claim the promise of John 7: 37-38: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By faith submit to Christ; by faith ask Him for a continual filling of the Spirit; by faith receive His power. And when you find yourself joyful, thankful, and submissive in all situations, you will know that God has answered. Then, paraphrasing 1 Cor. 10:31, “Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, you will bring glory to God.”

Having spent this hour and the past several weeks thinking of love, it seems appropriate to close by reading 1 Corinthians 13. Whether or not you are married, if you are filled with the Spirit, this love for God and others will be seen in your life.