



18 Ephesians 5:22-33 Husbands love your wives.

*<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>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. (NIV)*

Let us pray.

Wednesday night we took a look at the first part of this passage. We talked about the true meaning of the statement "Women submit to your husbands." Ephesians is all about figuring out who we are in the Lord, and the second part of the book tells us how to live it out together. Paul gives a section on marriage, and he begins with wives. We covered submission in detail on Wednesday and now we'll summarize that and move on to husbands loving their wives as Christ loves the Church.

I started by saying that God has made an order for things and that He intentionally set up families with men as the head of the household. God created Adam, and then created Eve to "complete" him (not to "compete" with him). This does not mean that the husband has complete autonomy, but rather the husband and wife are "heirs together" of the grace of life, working together to grow closer to Christ.

Each person in the marriage relationship has different gifts. Let's say a woman is more capable of running the household—this can still be done with the man as "head" of the home and with the woman still having a submissive attitude towards him. However, a husband must bring certain gifts to the household himself—financial security, stability, and protection. The problem is that the word "submit" has become a byword for oppression, which it was never meant to be. I brought it up last week to introduce the word "submission." True submission is all about respect. In preparing these two messages I've come to learn that many

books have been written about the love and respect that must exist in a marriage for it to survive. This is exactly reflected in the scriptures.

I told the group on Wednesday that I've never heard of a mature believing husband telling his wife that it is her role to submit. Likewise, I've never heard of a mature believing woman telling her husband that he is to love her as Christ loves the church. Mature believers already know this because they are in the Word and in fellowship with God.

God created marriage and He certainly knows best how it will work. Years ago, Sandy and I read a book called *His Needs Her Needs* which was eye-opening for both of us.<sup>1</sup> In the book the author presents a hierarchy of needs and the sum reality of those is that men need the respect and admiration of their wives for the marriage to survive. On the other hand, a wife needs to feel safe, secure, and significant. I will propose to the congregation this morning that when a man loves his wife as Christ loves the Church, she will feel all of those things.

Staying with the first part of this scripture for a minute let me list some truths that we uncovered about a wife being submissive to her husband. We learned that women long for a man to provide sound and loving leadership in the relationship. Most men today would really rather not have to provide that kind of leadership, but it is the role to which God has assigned them.

I gave what I think is a pretty good summary of what biblical submission is.

“Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts... It’s the disposition to follow a husband’s authority, and an inclination to yield to his leadership. It is an attitude that says, “I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don’t flourish in the relationship when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works.”<sup>2</sup>

We also made some clarifications as to what submission **does not** mean:

- 1 Biblical submission doesn't mean agreeing with your husband about everything. However, biblical submission means that a woman doesn't disagree disrespectfully.
- 2 Biblical submission doesn't mean that a woman leaves her will and her brain at the altar. There is some very errant teaching in some Christian circles that the woman's will and intellect is supposed to sort of disappear into the man's will and personality. That isn't

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<sup>1</sup> His Needs Her Needs, William F Harley Jr, ISBN-10:0800737717

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, <https://gracequotes.org/quote/submission-is-the-divine-calling-of-a-wife-to-honor-and-affirm-her-husbands-leadership-and-help-carry-it-through-according-to-her-gifts-its-the-disposition-to-follow-a-husba/>

biblical. Biblical submission, however, is learning to voice your thoughts and ideas in a way that honors your husband's role.

- 3 Biblical submission doesn't mean avoiding influencing your husband. There may be times that a woman understands that there is a need to influence her husband. Women see problems that men don't see. I have learned to listen to my godly wife. She sometimes sees problems way before me.
- 4 Biblical submission doesn't mean putting the will of your husband before the will of God. When a husband is on a path of disobedience a woman is under no obligation to put his will over God's will. In fact, it is sin for her to put her husband's fleshly will over God's will.
- 5 Biblical submission never means that a wife is to respond out of fear. A husband that bullies and pushes his wife out of fear or intimidation is guilty of the worst kind of abuse and knows nothing about the role of being a husband. Submission to a husband does not entail being abused by a dictator.

Verse 25 says, "Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church" and then begins to describe exactly what that kind of love looks like. When I was younger, it was easy to get my mind around the idea that my love for my wife has to be sacrificial. It is so against the flesh to do so, but the scripture tells us that a husband has a HUGE part in setting up the environment of the marriage. And, if he gets the love thing right, it is a natural step for his wife to admire and respect him. In talking this over with Sandy, she brought up the idea of thinking through what Jesus provides for His Church. She said that it can be summed up in security. As author Harley explains in the list of hierarchies, a woman must feel secure to be loved properly. This led me to think about the security that God gives each of us.

Think for a minute about Isaiah 41:10. *"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand"* (Isaiah 41:10, NASB).

- 1 God makes His children safe. A husband should help make his wife feel safe. Scripture tells us, *"The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him."* (Psalm 28:7, ESV).

When a man is loving his wife like Christ loves the Church, he provides safety for her. He gives her his strength and he protects her like a shield. He is there to defend her and to help her to be all that she is supposed to be. He is there for her to lean upon. When I am there for Sandy to count on, she responds by having more and more respect for me.

Some husbands (perhaps most husbands) never understand how a great part of their love for their wives must include being there as her protector and her shield. 1 Peter 3:7 tells us that 'women are the weaker vessel.' That doesn't mean they are inferior. It

means they are worthy of our protection. A noble man wants to be a rescuer. That's part of the stuff that God puts into men who are going to act like men.

2 God provides security for His children. A husband should provide security for his wife. Security is a BIG WORD. But this is KEY! Giving your wife flowers or a thoughtful card are nice, but if you aren't working and providing for her, those flowers and nice words don't help her to feel secure. It may give her a little emotional security, but she needs more than that.

### Financial Security

God provides for each of us everything we put in our mouths, on our bodies, and over our heads. If our meals weren't from Him we wouldn't be praying and thanking God for them. He provides for our physical needs. Men, you do the same. I grew up watching a man provide consistently and continually for his wife and family. On the first of the month my mother never had to ask, beg, or suggest that my father needed to give her money for the family's needs.

Men, if you want respect (true biblical submission) from your wife, start providing for her financially. Some men in this room have come to me with marital problems, and you know that the first thing I hone in on is whether or not you are making your wife feel secure about the finances. Do not expect your wife to float the family boat by her income. I know men want to dream and do some pretty crazy stuff, and you can do all of that, but do it with what is extra AFTER you've taken care of your wife's basic financial security. Note that taking care of her "basic financial security" does not mean that husbands must provide for a wife's every whim like clothes, makeup, expensive hobbies, past failures, or supporting extended family members that have fallen on hard times. The husband is to provide for the wife's basic needs first. The husband and the wife must be reasonable and work together to build a sound financial base.

### Emotional Security

A man cannot fill all of the emotional needs of his wife, but he can fill a lot of them. He can take steps to make her feel more secure in her relationship with him. I am blessed to have a wife that is willing to share me emotionally with many other people. She enables me to extend my ministry to others. Her giving attitude allows me to love many, but I always try to make her know she is my first and greatest love (after Christ). We have an emotional bond that we guard. We often just share nothing more than a brief moment of conversation together. We might just have a cup of coffee together or hold one another's hand. We always try to have a little daily prayer together. That is part of the security that a man must provide if he is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church. Men, it is not a suggestion. It is a command.

Paul tells us a lot in the last sentence of this discussion (verse 25) about submission and love. Do you notice which comes first? It is loving your wife as Christ loves the Church. You see, when a man consciously makes his wife feel safe, secure, and significant, and if the woman is emotionally well, she can't help but responding with her admiration and respect. It is a strange

thing. Without receiving respect it is difficult for a husband to love and provide. And without the real kind of love that a woman needs (a love filled with all kinds of security), it is difficult for the woman to respect and admire the husband. The marriage can go downward very quickly. If either party is operating in the flesh, they'll just want more and more without giving back. It will be all about them.

Paul tells us how this thing called marriage can look when both husband and wife are in the Word and in sweet fellowship with the Lord. When one is doing their part and the other is not, it reduces marriage to an awful burden and often a nightmare. It become abusive to the wife or the husband. We usually think of abuse being toward a wife, but I see many marriages where the wife abuses the husband. Such things should not be so. I have often told you that we all have 3 basic needs that God put within us: 1) the need to be loved and accepted, 2) the need to have value and worth, and 3) the need to have an identity (to fit in).

Neither husband nor wife can look to the other to totally fill those 3 needs. Only Jesus can do that. If a husband looks to the wife to make him feel loved and accepted and to have value and worth it will only lead to frustration and conflict. If the wife looks to the husband alone to fill those needs, it will only lead to frustration and conflict. The Apostle Paul gives us some great teaching here to make our marriages work. So, if you are married, do these things. If you're single and you might end up married, do these things. This is not just a good way; this is God's way.

#### Eternal Security

The most wonderful thing that Jesus gives any of us is the eternal security that we have in Christ. That is a level of security that a husband and wife cannot provide for each other. When we put our faith and trust in Him, we are secure in every way. And not only that, we are secure forever! Wow... that's the ultimate picture of how Christ loves His Church.

Let us pray.

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