

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION

- A. Overview of Ephesians 5:22-6:9
 - 1. Paul addresses six groups concerning submission.
 - a. Concerning wives and husbands - Part 1 (5:22-33)
 - b. Concerning children and parents - Part 2 (6:1-4)
 - c. Concerning slaves and masters - Part 3 (6:5-9)
- B. The principle is found in Ephesians 5:21, where Christians are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- C. Paul's sequence for addressing each group.
 - a. The first partner mentioned is to be submissive or obedient.
 - b. The second partner is to show submissiveness by his care and concern for the first partner.
 - c. Both partners are to behave toward one another as service to the Lord.

EPHESIANS 5:22-33, *WALKING IN WISDOM, PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SUBMISSION (Part 1)*

- A. Wives are to submit to their husbands (22-24)
 - 1. A wife's submission to her husband is an expression of her submission to the Lord (22), ***Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.***
 - a. *submit*
 - 1) The word is absent in the Greek text but is inferred from verse 21. It means *to obey*.
 - 2) Luke 2:51, *And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*
 - 3) Titus 2:4-5, *and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.*
 - 4) John Stott, *Submission is a humble recognition of the divine ordering of society.*
 - b. *your own*
 - 1) There is a limit of female submission to one's husband not to all males.
 - 2) Submission does not mean women are inferior to men, 1 Peter 3:7, *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*
 - c. *as to the Lord*
 - 1) A wife's submission to her husband is her service rendered to the Lord.
 - 2) Submission deals with position not worth, 1 Corinthians 11:3, *But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.*
 - 3) There is a difference between personhood (man and woman) of which all are equal before God and a God-given role (husband and wife).
 - d. What biblical submission is not.
 - 1) It is not inferiority, Genesis 1:27, *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*
 - 2) It is not giving up your personal identity.
 - 3) It does not condone abuse.
 - 4) It does not mean blind obedience or passivity.
 - 5) It must not involve participating in conduct contrary to Scripture.
 - e. What biblical submission is.
 - 1) It is living like Jesus which was submissive, John 8:28, *So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.*
 - 2) Submission involves respect, 1 Peter 3:1-2, *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct.*

- 3) Submission demands developing a godly character, 1 Peter 3:3-5, *Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands,*
 - 4) Submission is doing what is right, 1Peter 3:6, *as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good...*
 - 5) John Stott, *Submission is not tyranny but responsibility.*
- f. Evidences of authority and submission.
- 1) Man has authority over nature, Genesis 1:28, *And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*
 - 2) Husbands have authority over their wives, Ephesians 5:22.
 - 3) Parents have authority over their children, Ephesians 6:1.
 - 4) Leaders have authority over those they govern, 1 Peter 2:13-14, *Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*
 - 5) Employers have authority over their employees, 1 Peter 2:18, *Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.*
 - 6) Spiritual leaders have authority over those they lead spiritually, 1 Peter 5:2, *shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;*
2. The reasons for submission come from creation and redemption (23)
- a. The husband is head of the wife as seen in creation (23a), ***For the husband is the head of the wife***
 - 1) According to creation, the husband’s headship is a fact and the basis of his wife’s submission.
 - a) Woman was formed as a helpmate to man, Genesis 2:18, *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”*
 - b) A husband’s authority over his wife was noted at the Fall, Genesis 3:16, *To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”*
 - 2) This headship is not cultural but universal.
 - a) Cultural aspects can be seen as Paul discusses *head coverings*, 1 Corinthians 11:6 and *silence*, 1 Corinthians 14:34.
 - b) Some say that since slavery was abolished, a wife’s submission should be abolished too. John Stott, *Slavery is a dehumanizing institution, with no justification in any biblical doctrine. A husband’s headship, however, is rooted in creation.*
 - c) Jesus confirmed the universal nature of headship/submission, Matthew 19:4-6, *He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*
 - 3) The issue of headship has been distorted by many cultures, as noted by William Barclay,
 - a) *The Jews had a low view of women. In the Jewish form of morning prayer there was a sentence in which a Jewish man every morning gave thanks that God had not made him “a Gentile, a slave or a woman” ... In Jewish law a woman was not a person, but a thing. She had no legal rights whatsoever; she was absolutely in her husband’s possession to do with as he willed,*
 - b) *The whole Greek way of life made companionship between man and wife next to impossible. The Greek expected his wife to run his home, to care for his legitimate children, but he found his pleasure and his companionship elsewhere ... In Greece, home and family life were near to being extinct, and fidelity was completely non-existent.*
 - c) *The degeneracy of Rome was tragic ... It is not too much to say that the whole atmosphere of the ancient world was adulterous ... The marriage bond was on the way to complete breakdown.*
 - d) Current event in Saudi Arabia.
 - 4) Such abuse is not biblical submission and that is why Paul ties proper headship/submission to an understanding of Christ’s headship over the church in the last part of verse 23.

- b. Christ is head of the church as seen in redemption (23b), *even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.*
 - 1) The headship of the husband is compared to the headship of Christ over the church.
 - a) Christ is so closely tied to the church that it is called *his body*.
 - b) The husband is tied in the same way to his way since the two have become one body, Genesis 2:24, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*
 - 2) The headship of Christ is evident in redemption.
 - a) Jesus is the Savior of mankind and specifically, the church.
 - b) His headship is not centered in control but in care.
 - c) John Stott, *...her submission is not to be an unthinking obedience to his rule but rather a grateful acceptance of his care... Whenever the husband's headship mirrors the headship of Christ, then the wife's submission to the protection and provision of his love, far from detracting from her womanhood, will positively enrich it.*
 3. Submission is the proper response of God ordained authority of the church to Christ, and of the wife to the husband (24), *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*
 - a. Paul concludes this section on submission by emphasizing the importance of submission by the church to Christ.
 - b. *in everything* would not include that which is contrary to the will of God.
 - c. Max Anders, *...God has placed all of us in differing positions of authority and submission. The man may be in authority at home but submissive at work. The woman may be in submission at home and in authority at work. The point is, all social order depends on people's willingness to work together and ability to determine who is the head of certain endeavors. God's intention is that the husband be the head of the relationship with his wife.*
 - d. John Stott notes that submission may be understood as *partnership*. *Partnership' is a good word too, so long as it is remembered that the contribution which each brings to it is not identical but distinctive. Hence a man finds himself by being a man, and a woman finds herself by being a woman. Genuine self-discovery and self-fulfilment do not come from striving to be somebody else or from imitating the opposite sex.*
 - e. Warren Wiersbe, *Headship is not dictatorship.*
 4. I believe negative issues concerning submission may be addressed better after we review the husband's responsibility to love his wife.
- B. Husbands are to love their wives (25-32)
1. A husband's love for his wife should imitate the love of Christ for the church (25), *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,*
 - a. A husband's responsibility to his wife is to love her.
 - 1) An interesting note from Thomas Constable, *In the Greco-Roman world in which Paul lived, people recognized that wives had responsibilities to their husbands but not vice versa.*
 - 2) Here, Paul clearly states the responsibility of a husband to his wife, to love her.
 - a) The word used is *agape* which carries the meaning of seeking the highest good for another person.
 - b) Ephesians 2:4, *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,*
 - c) Ephesians 5:33, *However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*
 - 3) *Agape* love is based on commitment not just emotion.
 - a) Such love is sacrificial where the husband places the wife's needs before his own.
 - b) It involves self-denial by doing what pleases his wife instead of doing things that please him.
 - c) Max Anders, *After instructing wives to be subject to their husbands, he instructs husbands to love their wives so completely and so righteously that the wife need never fear or suffer from her life of submission.*
 - b. The manner by which a man is to love his wife is the same way as Christ loved the church.
 - 1) Christ loved the church sacrificially by dying on the cross to provide for her salvation, Ephesians 5:2, *And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*
 - 2) Christ not only died on the cross but took on the form of man to accomplish His sacrifice for us, Philippians 2:6-8, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

2. Christ's sacrificial love for the church was evidenced by His commitment to make her holy (26-27), *that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*
 - a. The purpose of Christ's sacrificial death was to make the church holy.
 - 1) *Sanctify* means to *set apart, to be holy*
 - 2) Paul deals with two aspects of holiness here, justification (past event) and glorification (future event).
 - 3) Justification deals with position and glorification with the final result.
 - b. *having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word* (justification)
 - 1) Paul begins with justification and the new position one has when faith is placed in Christ alone. The church is set apart to Jesus Christ.
 - 2) He describes reception of the truth from the Word of God as having one's sins washed away as water washes dirt away.
 - a) Titus 3:5, *he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,*
 - b) 1 Corinthians 6:11, *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*
 - c) Hebrews 10:14, *For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.*
 - c. *so that he might present the church to himself in splendor...* (glorification)
 - 1) Paul describes the working of glorification which is the process by which a Christian fully lives what he believes.
 - 2) Jesus will receive His church which will be perfect.
 - a) Philippians 1:6, *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
 - b) 1 Thessalonians 5:24, *He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*
 - 3) Paul is emphasizing the loving work of Christ in our lives which is the reason why the third aspect of salvation, sanctification, is not mentioned.
 - a) Sanctification is the present activity of a believer choosing what is right.
 - b) It is the participation of the believer with the Holy Spirit in conforming him into Christ's image.
 - c) Some theologians called glorification by the term, ultimate sanctification.
 - d. Application of verses 26-27
 - 1) Max Anders, *If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, his love and care will have a sanctifying influence on the wife, who will experience personal benefit and progress as a result.*
 - 2) John Stott, *The church's head is the church's bridegroom. He does not crush the church. Rather he sacrificed himself to serve her, in order that she might become everything he longs for her to be, namely herself in the fullness of her glory. Just so a husband should never use his headship to crush or stifle his wife, or frustrate her from being herself. His love for her will lead him to an exactly opposite path. He will give himself for her, in order that she may develop her full potential under God and so become more completely herself.*
3. A husband's sacrificial love for his wife is like loving himself (28-32)
 - a. Loving one's wife is the same as loving oneself (28), *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*
 - 1) As Christ loves the church as His own body, that's how a man should love his wife.
 - a) Paul applies the truth of verses 25-27 here and in verses 29-30.
 - b) In marriage, a man and woman become one flesh so a man's wife becomes part of his own body, Genesis 2:24, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*
 - 2) When a man loves his wife it is as if he is loving himself.
 - a) It is hard to grasp the greatness of Christ's love as noted in Ephesians 3:19, *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*
 - b) Paul brings it down to the reality of the *golden rule*, Matthew 7:12, *So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*
 - c) H. D. M. Spence, *His wife is part of himself, so that not to love her as himself is not only a sin against law, but a sin against nature.*

- d) William Barclay, *There is something very wrong when a man regards his wife, consciously or unconsciously, as simply the one who cooks his meals and washes his clothes and cleans his house and brings up his children.*
 - e) Warren Wiersbe, *If both are submitted to the Lord, and to each other, they will be so satisfied that they will not be tempted to look anywhere else for fulfillment.*
- b. A person properly cares for himself even as Christ cares for the church because we are part of His body (29-30), ***For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.***
- 1) Paul emphasizes his point in verses 28 by declaring that a human does not hate his own physical body.
 - a) Therefore, it is natural for a man to love his wife because they are one body.
 - b) Harold Hoehner, *As the church is the extension of Christ, so is the wife an “extension” of her husband.*
 - 2) Only an abnormal person doesn’t nourish and cherish his own flesh.
 - a) *Nourish means to feed, bring up, Ephesians 6:4, Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*
 - b) *Cherish means to take care of, provide whatever is necessary, 1 Thessalonians 2:7, But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Here are some basic needs that most wives feel. They need to feel wanted, to have their husbands acknowledge their equality, to feel secure, and to feel fulfilled. They also need to enjoy sex without feeling like an object, to bear and love children with their husbands, and to enjoy companionship with their husbands.*
 - 3) This care for one’s body is the way Jesus treats the church.
 - a) He nourishes and cherishes the church.
 - b) His motivation to do so is because Christians have become part of His body.
 - c) John Stott, *He has incorporated us into himself, made us part of himself in a profound, indissoluble union.*
 - d) Warren Wiersbe, *The church is His body and His bride, and the Christian home is a divinely ordained illustration of this relationship. This certainly makes marriage a serious matter.*
- c. A wife is part of the husband because it was God’s original design (31), ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”***
- 1) Paul states that the bond between husband and wife is greater than that between parent and child.
 - 2) He reminds us of the fundamental importance of marriage as he looks back to Genesis 2:24, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*
 - 3) William Barclay, *He is as united to her as the members of the body are united to each other, and would no more think of separating from her than of tearing his own body apart. Here indeed was an ideal in an age when men and women changed partners with as little thought as they changed clothes.*
- d. The union of man and woman pictures Christ and the church (32), ***This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.***
- 1) The mystery revealed is that the relationship between a husband and wife is the same as that which exists between Christ and the church.
 - 2) Paul spoke in Ephesians of the mystery of the church which is the church composed of Jews and Gentiles. Now, they mystery is further revealed by comparing it to marriage which is composed of husband and wife.
 - 3) Thomas Constable, *One of the purposes of marriage is to model Jesus Christ’s relationship with the church. He leads, loves, and serves the church. The church reverently submits and is subject to Him. When husbands and wives fulfill these responsibilities to one another, their marriage models the relationship between Christ and His bride.*
 - 4) Warren Wiersbe, *Adam had to give part of himself in order to get a bride, but Christ gave all of Himself to purchase His bride at the cross. God opened Adam’s side, but sinful men pierced Christ’s side. The believer’s union with Christ is even closer and, unlike human marriage, will last for all eternity.*

C. Restatement of the responsibilities of husbands and wives to each other (33)

1. Listen up (33a), ***However***

- a. *However* can mean *in this way, as follows.*
- b. Paul implied a mystery in the marriage relationship and the church but what follows is no mystery.

2. Paul gives one overarching responsibility for the husband and one for the wife.
 - a. A husband is to love his wife as himself (33a), ***let each one of you love his wife as himself,***
 - 1) Ephesians 5:28, *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*
 - 2) John Stott, *We have seen that the love he has in mind for the husband sacrifices and serves with a view to enabling his wife to become what God intends her to be.*
 - b. A wife is to respect her husband (33b), ***and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***
 - 1) *Reverence* can mean *fear* but the proper translation is *reverence or respect*.
 - 2) Thomas Constable, *Respecting* means voluntarily lifting up another person for special consideration, treatment, and obedience. *It involves having consideration for his responsibilities and needs and praying for him. Words of encouragement that have a positive focus and build him up show respect for a husband as does doing things that please him.*
 - 3) John Stott, *So the 'submission' and 'respect' he asks of the wife express her response to his love and her desire that he too will become what God intends him to be in his 'leadership.*

CONCLUSION

- A. A husband is to love his wife as himself.
- B. A wife is to respect her husband through submission.
- C. A godly marriage pictures the relationship of Christ to the church.