

EPH. 5.22-33: "The basics of marriage"

**22 Wives,
[be subject] to your own husbands,
as to the Lord.**

The phrase "be subject" is implied, it is not in the Greek. A literal translation of the Greek would be this:

"Wives, to your husbands as to the Lord."

*Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ.
(The Message)*

[The wife's] obedience to her husband is to be regarded as part of her obedience to the Lord¹;

**23 For the husband is the head of the wife,
as Christ also is the head of the church,
He Himself [being] the Savior of the body.**

HEAD: the leader of the home or over the home

CHRIST HEAD: Jesus is the head of the church, He is the leader and is over the church.

SAVIOR OF THE BODY: it is only because of the saving grace of Jesus Christ that the church even exists. Every single member of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has been saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. If there were no Savior there would be no church.

**24 But as the church is subject to Christ,
so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything.**

SUBJECT: in subjection to;

[OUGHT TO BE]: in subjection to their husbands as head of the home as Christ is head of the church.

Now here is what we have to get: when we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we place ourselves under subjection to Jesus. The marriage relationship is no different. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His church, and because Christ is the head of the church, the church is to be in submission to Christ – following His lead and obeying His word. And as Paul wrote, so too is the relationship between husband and wife. The husband has been given spiritual headship of the home and the wife is to submit to him as that leader. Now this does not mean she is under any obligation to follow him if he is leading her to do anything immoral, unbiblical, unethical, or illegal.

¹ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 227-28.

**25 Husbands,
love your wives,
just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,**

LOVE: literally a direction of the will, to intentionally do for another person what is best for them out of a respect for them and a desire to want the very best for them. In order for this to happen there must be sacrifice and a dying of self. Jesus gave His life on the cross for the church; His death was sacrifice. Jesus gave all of himself for the church as husbands are to give all of themselves for their wives as an example of the sacrifice of Christ for His church.

Husbands go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving , not getting (The Message).

**26 so that He might sanctify her,
having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**

Christ has showed his love for the church by giving his life for it. He did this to cleanse the people who would make up the church from their sin and to set them apart as God's special people. This cleansing, sanctifying action was applied to them when they were washed in the verbal proclamation of the gospel, that is, when they heard the gospel preached, believed it, and were sealed as God's special people by the Holy Spirit².

**27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory,
having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing;
but that she would be holy and blameless.**

The relationship between husband and wife³:

- 1, The husband's love for his wife is peculiar and exclusive love. This is a love he has for no other as Christ has this exclusive love for His church;*
- 2. The bride belongs exclusively to her husband as the church belongs exclusively to the Lord;*
- 3. This relationship is intimately exclusive more than any other relationship;*
- 4. The husband and wife should take delight in each other as Christ takes delight in His church.*

One more point needs to be said of Christ and His church: what is true of the church collectively is true of its members severally; each is the object of Christ's peculiar love⁴.

**28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.
He who loves his own wife loves himself;**

² Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 385.

³ Hodge, 231-33.

⁴ Hodge, 232.

29 *for no one ever hated his own flesh,
 but nourishes and cherishes it,
 just as Christ also [does] the church,*

NOURISH AND CHERISH: As Christ nourishes and cherishes the church, so too are husbands to nourish and cherish their wives.

NOURISH: to help grow to [spiritual] maturity;

CHERISH: to give great concern for; to tenderly care for; it can also mean to comfort

There should be no starvation for love in the Christian home, for the husband and wife should so love each other that their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met. 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 fulfillment⁵

30 *because we are members of His body.*

Because as Christians, as children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, we have been made to be members of His body, the church. This means we are to have the same love and respect for our wives as Christ does for the church.

31 ***FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE,
 AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.***

FOR THIS REASON: for what reason? That Christ loves and cherishes the church so much He gave His very life for the church.

LEAVE: to leave means to leave.

We leave in three ways:

1, Physically – move out!

2. Emotionally – don't go crying to momma or daddy every time you have disagreement; work it out together as husband and wife.

3. Financially – support one another and provide for each other, don't continue to depend on your parents for financial support.

JOINED: to begin an association with someone, to join yourself to and become part of another person; to stick closely to another person.

BECOME ONE: before the wedding there is "you and me"; after the wedding there is only "we".

32 ***This mystery is great;***

⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich (Ephesians)* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1976), 145.

but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

33 *Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must [see to it] that she respects her husband.*

There are 5 types of love a husband gives his wife⁶:

1. DYING love: *willing to set his own self aside for the sake of the wife; (the late Baptist preacher and pastor Adrian Rogers once said that before any wedding there has to be 2 funerals: both bride and groom have to die to self before getting marring and being made one.)*

2. PRAYING love: *spending time with the Lord on a regular basis lifting up his wife;*

3. ATTENDING love: *paying attention to her needs and ministering to her;*

4. CLINGING love: *faithful until death parts them, and faithful only to her.*

5. ALL OUT love: *holds nothing back in wanting the best for his wife.*

Barclay's list of a man's love to his wife⁷:

1. SACRIFICIAL love: *as Christ loved the church and gave His life for her;*

2. PURIFYING love: *through confession and baptism, Christ purified the church (set it aside, called it out as His own)- His children – as His own; husbands should love their wives as someone set aside solely for him and him alone.*

3. CARING love: *the husband should love his wife as his own body; real love cherishes;*

4. UNBREAKABLE love: *man breaks with father and mother to be joined with his wife until death parts them, and they become one flesh;*

5. REDEEMED love (my own interpretation): *in a Christian marriage there are three partners: husband, wife, and Christ.*

The word “respect” means literally to fear. In the New Testament it means to reverence someone⁸. It can also mean to give honor and deference to. The word usage means continuous action, something that always happens. To respect means to be made to feel important, not to belittle or talk down to.

A proper understanding of this word “fear” goes back to vv. 21-22:

“and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord.”

If we truly love the Lord, then we will be in subjection to Him. We will not dishonor Him, we will not disregard Him, we will not think lightly of Him; we will obey Him because He is Lord and Savior. When the wife respects her husband, she does not dishonor him, she does not treat him with disdain; she values his opinion, she does not think lightly of him, she subjects herself to him

⁶ From a sermon preached by Bro. Ben at Ellaville Baptist Church, June 24, 2009, entitled, “The marriage that honors God.” This sermon has also been modified and included as part of Pastor Ben’s premarital counseling material.

⁷ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Daily Study Bible, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 173-74.

⁸ Zodhiates, 965 under “phobeo”.

because he is the head of the household. She is not beneath him, and he is not to lord himself over her; they are together in life, side-by-side.

This issue of love and respect should begin long before the wedding. If couples do not learn the biblical concepts of love and respect towards each other before they get married, they are going to travel some difficult waters until they learn what it means. This is why I will not perform any marriage unless I take the couple through pre-marital counseling, and the sooner they get counseling the better they will be prepared for their marriage. I would suggest at least 6-8 months prior to the wedding, that way if there are issues that need to be worked out, they can work them out before the wedding day. Marriages are hard enough without going into them with unresolved issues.

Now let me say a word here about those who are divorced and thinking about remarrying. You still need premarital counseling because you need to make sure that if there are any unresolved issues from your first marriage they are dealt with before the wedding day. This may take time, this may involve forgiveness and reconciliation but it is essential if you want your next marriage to begin on a solid foundation.

What does it take to make a good marriage? HARD WORK! If anyone ever tells you that marriage is not work then they either have not been married or they haven't been married very long. You see at some point the honeymoon is over and you have to get down to learning how to live with one another as husband and wife for the rest of your life. Some days are easier than others, some days are valley days – dark and difficult; other days are mountain top days – the days of celebration and bright future. They all add up to what makes a marriage. No marriage is immune to the valley, and all marriages need mountain top experiences that celebrate coming out of the valley.

In her book, *Choosing Marriage* which I strongly endorse. Debra Fileta wrote the following about marriage:

We're more concerned about the flavor of our wedding cake than about how we'll manage conflict and communications. We're so busy creating the perfect wedding announcement that we fail to discuss creating the best atmosphere for our future marriage⁹.

The root of all marital problems is sin, and the root of all sin is selfishness. Submission to Christ and to one another is the only way to overcome selfishness, for when we submit, the Holy Spirit can fill us and enable us to love one another in a sacrificial, sanctifying, satisfying way, the Christ loves the church¹⁰

The question is not whether marriage will work, but whether we will work our marriage. Marriage is demanding, and not enough of us are willing to invest enough of ourselves in the relationship to grow an exciting, enriching, effective marriage¹¹;

⁹ Debra Fileta, *Choosing Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 14.

¹⁰ Wiersbe, 146.

¹¹ Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The Communicator's Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 233.

So married love looks like the cross. The love which flows from the cross, and which must be the dynamic of marriage, is not a love you can achieve but the love you have received. Christ empowers us to implement in marriage the love with which He has loved us¹²;

¹² *ibid.*

THE PICTURES OF MARRIAGE:
The basics of marriage
Eph 5.22-33

INTRODUCTION: to begin with I want you to draw a box at the bottom of your note taking sheet that you can write the name of one church family. I want you to think of a church family that either comes regularly or maybe has not come in a while; I want you to write their name down and commit to pray for them over these next 5 weeks. Pray for whatever God leads your heart to pray for them. And here is part of that challenge: I want you to bring their name to this altar and pray for them at least once a week in worship, or maybe even more, and here's why. It's easy to sit in the pew and pray, but there is more of a commitment to come to this altar and pray, and if we want to see God move in a great way in the families of this church then we have to be moved from where we are comfortable to where God needs us and that is at His altar in prayer pleading for the families of this church.

This series of message is about marriage and relationships; first, let me define the words marriage and relationships. When I speak of marriage I use the term as identified by God who created marriage. The first occurrence of the word “marry, marriage, or married” can be found in Gen. 20.3, and it means to be joined with another as husband or wife. The term marriage is the biblical term which means the lawful union of one man and one woman for life; that is the term marriage I will be using because that is the only marriage that honors God.

When I use the word, “relationship”, I am referring to a man and woman who have a dating relationship, that may very well lead to marriage; it is more involved than merely becoming friends. I do not mean two people of the opposite sex who are living together but not

married; that is not a relationship that honors God. So I want to be clear here so there is no misunderstanding. I use the terms marriage and relationships in the Biblical sense.

What does the Bible teach us about the basics of marriage and relationships? What is it we need to know to make sure our marriages or even our relationships are on a solid foundation to weather the ups and downs of life? I have four goals for these five messages on marriage and relationships. Because I have four goals this also means that to get the most benefit from these messages you have to be here; so make a commitment right now to be here for these messages. Here are my goals:

1. I want your marriage (or relationship) to honor God.
2. I want your marriage to be the marriage God is pleased to bless.
3. I want your marriage to last.
4. I want your marriage to be a blessing to this church.

Now you may be asking, well, Bro. Ben, what if I am divorced, what do I do?

Three points here and I want you to write them down:

- 1, Divorce is not the unpardonable sin.
2. God is the God of grace, forgiveness, and healing.
3. Make a commitment to submit yourself to God and His word going forward in any future relationships you may have.

Ephesians 5 gives us three pictures of the marriage relationship:

The first picture is this:

I, THE CHRISTIAN AND THE PICTURE OF A DISCIPLE (v. 21)

If we are going to have a proper understanding of the marriage relationship between husband and wife, then we have to begin with two verses:

Matt. 6.33: But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Eph. 5.21: And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

You and I have to understand that as children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, we are also disciples of Christ. And because we are disciples of Christ, we are His followers, His pupils, His learners. If we are not pursuing a growing relationship with Jesus Christ on a personal level, daily, then we are fooling ourselves if we think that our marriages and relationships will be what God desires them to be.

To be subject to one another in the fear of Christ means that as a church family, we are responsible to one another and for one another as we are all responsible to the Lord as His children and family of faith. So right up front, if you want your marriage to be what God desires it to be, then you must be pursuing God on a daily basis in your own life first, foremost, and always.

II. WIVES AND THE PICTURE OF RESPECT (w. 22-24, 33).

Be in SUBJECTION

Be RESPECTFUL

Paul gives two commands in these verses about the wife:

BE SUBJECT: this command is not in the Greek but it is an implied command. The literal translation is this: "Wives, to your husbands as to the Lord."

Here is the bottom line, when you gave your life to Christ you subjected you life to Him for the rest of your life. If you have not learned to be in subjection to the Lord, you will not be in subjection to your husband.

What does that mean? It means you recognize your husband as the head of the household; you may and will have differences of opinion and that's fine. But at the end of the day, the husband, biblically, is the head of the home as Christ is head of the church.

Notice. V. 23: understand the word HEAD as leader.

SAVIOR OF THE BODY: this is a reference to the church as the body of Christ.

v. 24:

SUBJECT: in subjection to;

[OUGHT TO BE]: in subjection to their husbands as head of the home as Christ is head of the church.

Now here is what we have to get: when we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we place ourselves under subjection to Jesus. The marriage relationship is no different. Marriage is a picture of Christ and His church, and because Christ is the head of the church, the church is to be in submission to Christ – following His lead and obeying His word. And as Paul wrote, so too is the relationship between husband and wife. The husband has been given spiritual headship of the home and the wife is to submit to him as that leader. Now this does not mean she is under any obligation to follow him if he is leading her to do anything immoral, unbiblical, unethical, or illegal.

v. 33

The word “respect” means literally to fear. In the New Testament it means to reverence someone¹³.

It can also mean to give honor and deference to. The word usage means continuous action, something that always happens. To respect means to be made to feel important, not to belittle or talk down to.

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“and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husband, as to the Lord.”

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The wife is to be the picture of respect because she respects the Lord, and – don’t miss this men – her husband loves her in such a way that respecting him is easy. If the husband wants his wife to respect him, then he must love her.

The second picture is this:

II. HUSBANDS AND THE PICTURE OF LOVE (vv. 25-29, 33.

Let’s go back to Matt. 6.33: if we, as men, are seeking God’s kingdom and His righteousness first, then we will understand God’s love for us, and we will understand how we are to love God. The Bible tells us to love God with everything we have, that’s the great commandment:

MATT. 22.37: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the kind of love that Paul speaks of in Eph. 5.25: husbands love your wives as Christ also loved the church.

LOVE: literally a direction of the will, to intentionally do for another person what is best for them out of a respect for them and a desire to want the very best for them. In order for this

to happen there must be sacrifice and a dying of self. Jesus gave His life on the cross for the church; His death was sacrifice. Jesus gave all of himself for the church as husbands are to give all of themselves for their wives as an example of the sacrifice of Christ for His church.

Husbands go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving , not getting (The Message).

vv. 26-27:

Explained in this way:

The church is the family of God, created by Jesus Christ as those who by faith trust in Him as Savior. He showed his love for the church by giving his life for it. He did this to cleanse the people who would make up the church from their sin and to set them apart as God's special people. This cleansing action was applied to them when they were washed in the verbal proclamation of the gospel, that is, when they heard the gospel preached, believed it, and were sealed as God's special people by the Holy Spirit¹⁴.

The love of the husband for the wife must be and should be as powerful as Jesus' love for the church.

And guys here an important point so write this down:

A wife will gladly respect her husband that loves her with the love Christ has for his church.

Now you see how important it is to be growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ if you want a marriage that honors God.

Two more important words for husbands with regard to their wives

v. 29:

¹⁴ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Evangelical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 385.

NOURISH: to help grow to [spiritual] maturity

CHERISH: to give great concern for; to tenderly care for

There should be no starvation for love in the Christian home, for the husband and wife should so love each other that their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs are met. 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 fulfillment¹⁵

The Christian should be the picture of the disciple;

The wife should be the picture of respect;

The husband should be the picture of love.

The fourth picture is this:

III. THE CHURCH AND THE PICTURE OF CHRIST (vv. 30-32)

FOR THIS REASON: for what reason? That Christ loves and cherishes the church so much He gave His very life for the church.

LEAVE: to leave means to leave.

We leave in three ways:

1. Physically – move out!
2. Emotionally – don't go crying to momma or daddy every time you have disagreement; work it out together as husband and wife.
3. Financially – support one another and provide for each other, don't continue to depend on your parents for financial support.

¹⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich (Ephesians)* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1976), 145.

JOINED: to begin an association with someone, to join yourself to and become part of another person; to stick closely to another person.

BECOME ONE: before the wedding there is “you and me”; after the wedding there is only “we”.

What does it take to make a good marriage? HARD WORK! If anyone ever tells you that marriage is not work then they either have not been married or they haven't been married very long. You see at some point the honeymoon is over and you have to get down to learning how to live with one another as husband and wife for the rest of your life. Some days are easier than others, some days are valley days – dark and difficult; other days are mountain top days – the days of celebration and bright future. They all add up to what makes a marriage. No marriage is immune to the valley, and all marriages need mountain top experiences that celebrate coming out of the valley.

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We're more concerned about the flavor of our wedding cake than about how we'll manage conflict and communications. We're so busy creating the perfect wedding announcement that we fail to discuss creating the best atmosphere for our future marriage¹⁶.

This is why pre-marital counseling is a must and why I will not perform a wedding without it.

¹⁶ Debra Fileta, *Choosing Marriage* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2018), 14.

What are the basics about marriage and relationships that we learn from Paul?

- 1. God wants to bless your marriage; honor Him with it.*
- 2. Marriage takes work; be 100% committed to it.*
- 3. Strong marriages equal strong churches; be part of it.*
- 4. Satan is after your marriage – protect it!*

INVITATION:

Here's the invitation and listen carefully:

FIRST, step one in any relationship is THE NO. 1 RELATIONSHIP and that is by trusting Jesus Christ. I want to invite you this morning to trust Christ and we'll pray here in just a minute

SECOND, no marriage, no relationship can survive without prayer. I am going to ask you beginning now and for the next five weeks, pray for two marriages: yours and one other church family. Bring those prayers to this altar. If you are not married pray for godly relationships in your own life, and for one church family.

THIRD, commit to be here every Sunday for these messages. I will be posting my full sermon manuscript with additional information on the church website for your information.