

# The Role of Husbands and Wives

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*Ephesians 5:22-33*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. A little girl had just heard the story Snow White for the first time.
  - 1. So full of enthusiasm that she could hardly contain herself, she retold the fairy tale to her mother. After telling about how Prince Charming had arrived on his beautiful white horse and kissed Snow White back to life, she asked her mother, “And do you know what happened then?”
  - 2. “Yes,” said her mom, “they lived happily ever after.”
  - 3. “No,” responded Suzie, with a frown, “they got married.”
- B. Sadly, many marriages are just like that. However, if we followed God’s instructions, marriages would be extremely happy.
- C. Christians are to submit to one another in the fear of God, v. 21.
  - 1. This verse serves as a heading for this section of Scripture.
    - a. Paul here outlines who should submit to whom.
      - 1) Wives are to submit to their husbands.
      - 2) Children are to submit to their parents.
      - 3) Slaves are to submit to their masters.
    - b. Christians really are to submit to one another, but what does it mean for Christians to submit to one another?
      - 1) Submission is an act of humility; we Christians are to be humble.
      - 2) We submit to one another as we put others’ needs before our own — “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than yourself” (Phil. 2:3).
  - 2. Are you submitting yourself to your fellow Christians?
- D. Let’s see how Christian spouses can submit to one another.

## THE ROLE OF WIVES, vv. 22-24

- A. Wives are to submit to their own husbands as to the Lord, v. 22.
  - 1. “Submit” means to recognize the authority of another; wives are to respect the authority of their husbands.
  - 2. This submission is to be “as to the Lord.”
    - a. Women are to submit themselves to their husbands just as they submit themselves to Christ.
    - b. In telling slaves to be obedient to their masters, Paul told them they were to work “as to the Lord and not to men” (Col. 3:23) - We find that same principle here.
    - c. Part of a woman’s submission to Christ is her submission to her husband.
- B. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, v. 23.
  - 1. In the New Testament, “head” stands for authority — “the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3).
  - 2. Christ is head of the church.
    - a. Being the head of the church, Jesus has authority over the church.
      - 1) The Father has put all things under Jesus’ feet and gave him to be head of all things for the church (Eph. 1:22).
      - 2) Jesus is “head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18).
    - b. Because Jesus is the head of the church, he determines what the church does.

- 1) He has every right to determine how the church worships.
- 2) He has every right to determine what the church teaches.
- c. Jesus determines what the church does through his Word.
3. The husband is head of the wife — Being the head of the wife, the husband has authority over her — A husband must love his wife the way Jesus loved the church — Such love will not allow him to be a tyrant.
- C. Christ is also the Savior of the body — Jesus saved the church from hell.
- D. As the church is subject to Christ, the wives are to be subject to their husbands in everything, v. 24.
  1. In order to be faithful, the church must follow the teachings of Jesus.
  2. In order to be faithful, the wife must follow the lead of her husband — The wife is to be subject to the husband “in everything.”
- E. Some believe that based on these instructions, Paul had a problem with women.
  1. Such is far from true.
  2. In any organization, there must be a leader and followers.
    - a. In marriage, God has ordained men to be the leader and women to be the followers.
    - b. This does not mean that women are inferior to men.
      - 1) “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).
      - 2) Men are dependent upon women.
        - a) “As woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman” (1 Cor. 11:12).
        - b) What Paul means is that women bring men into the world — without women the human race would cease to exist.
- F. Women, are you submitting to the authority of your husbands?

## **THE ROLE OF HUSBANDS, vv. 25-31**

- A. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, v. 25.
  1. This is the highest measure of love.
    - a. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (Jn. 15:13).
    - b. Jesus went to the cross and died for his bride, the church.
  2. This is the measure of love that husbands should have for their wives.
    - a. If need be, a husband must give his life for his wife.
    - b. Just as Jesus loved the church sacrificially, a husband must love his wife sacrificially — A husband should put his wife’s needs before his own needs.
  3. A young man once went to see a well-known preacher to confess a fault.
    - a. He told the preacher, “I’m loving my wife too much!” In fact,” he said, “I’ve put her on such a high-plane, I fear it’s sinful.”
    - b. “Do you think you love your wife more than Christ loved the church,” inquired the preacher.
      - 1) The husband didn’t dare say that he did.
      - 2) “Well, that’s the limit to which we may go,” said the preacher.
  4. William and Mary Tanner were crossing a railroad track some years ago when Mary’s foot slipped and became wedged between the rail and a wooden crosswalk.
    - a. Frantically she tried to get loose as a train approached around the curve. Her husband attempted to free her.
    - b. As the express came closer with its brakes screeching, Mary realize it couldn’t stop in time.
      - 1) “Leave me, Bill! Leave me!” she cried.
      - 2) Seeing his efforts were useless, he arose quickly and held her in his arms to protect her as much as possible.
        - a) While bystanders shuddered in horror, the train thundered over them.

- b) It was reported that just before the engine hit them, they heard the brave man cry, “I’ll stay with you, Mary!”
- 5. Husbands, do you love your wives the way Jesus loved the church?
- B. Christ gave himself for the church that he might—
  - 1. Sanctify the church, v. 26.
    - a. “To sanctify” means “to set apart.”
    - b. The idea here is that Jesus gave himself for the church so that he could set the church aside as his.
    - c. Christians have been sanctified, set apart, for Christ.
      - 1) While writing to the Corinthian church, Paul wrote, “to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2).
      - 2) The will of God is our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3).
  - 2. Cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, v. 26.
    - a. This is an obvious reference to baptism.
    - b. As individuals are baptized into Christ, they are cleansed from sin.
    - c. There has been some discussion as to what is meant by “by the word.”
      - 1) This could refer to a baptismal formula, but the Bible doesn’t give a set formula.
      - 2) This possibly refers to Scripture.
  - 3. Present her to himself a glorious church, v. 27.
    - a. This obviously refers to the Second Coming when the church will be presented to Christ.
    - b. The church will have no spot or wrinkle or any such thing.
    - c. The church will be holy and without blemish.
    - d. There will be no spot on the church, because the church has been cleansed by Jesus’ blood.
- C. Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies, vv. 28-29.
  - 1. Some are bothered by this statement.
    - a. Earlier in this paragraph, Paul said that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church.
    - b. However, here, Paul is telling husbands to love their wives as their own bodies.
    - c. Many believe that Paul is weakening what he has just said.
  - 2. However, one needs to notice the reason husband should love their wives as themselves.
    - a. No one ever hates his own flesh.
    - b. On the contrary, he nourishes and cherishes his body.
      - 1) One takes care of his body — he feeds and washes his body.
      - 2) In like manner, a husband must care for his wife.
        - a) Husbands are to give honor to the wife (1 Pet. 3:7).
        - b) “Honor” here actually refers to being precious. We husbands need to treat our wives as the most precious thing in the world.
  - 3. The Lord nourishes and cherishes the church.
- D. Jesus nourishes the church, for we are members of his body, v. 30.
- E. A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, v. 31.
  - 1. This is a direct quotation from Gen. 2:24.
  - 2. A man must leave the comfort and security of his parents’ home to begin his new home — He should no longer be dependent upon his parents.
  - 3. The two shall become one flesh.
    - a. Although this does refer to the sexual union, that is not all that is meant here.
    - b. A husband and his wife are to become one unit; they are to work together as though they are one.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. Paul has been discussing Christ and the church, v. 32.
  - 1. He has really been talking about the relationship Christ has with the church.
  - 2. He uses the analogy of a husband and wife to apply to Christ and the church.
  - 3. Marriage is so important that it is analogous to Jesus' relationship with his church.
- B. However, each husband should love his wife, and the wife should respect her husband.
  - 1. This is the third time in this paragraph that Paul has told husbands to love their wives — He wants to impress upon us that husbands must love their wives.
  - 2. Wives are to respect their husbands.
  - 3. Husbands, do you love your wife? Wives, do you respect your husband?