

Marriage & Family

Submitting to One Another

Eph 5:18-33: Thinking about Roles of Husbands & Wives

The text (English Standard Version):

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 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. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 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. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Points:

1. The first main verb is "filled (with the Spirit)" in v. 18, and Paul then describes what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Being fulfilled with the Spirit means:
 - a. We address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.
 - b. We sing to the Lord with our heart.
 - c. We make melody to the Lord with our heart.
 - d. We give thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - e. We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
2. The submitting in v. 22 ("Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord") has been supplied in English translation; it is a continuation of thought from v. 21.

- a. The Greek literally reads: “The wives to their own husbands as to the Lord.”
 - b. Therefore, the idea of submitting to one another continues throughout this text. Therefore, the wife is to submit to the husband in a special way AND the husband is to submit to the wife in a special way.
3. The wife is to submit to her husband as the church submits to the Lord. How does the church submit to the Lord?
- a. We know from the opening of Ephesians that Jesus is the head of the church (Eph 1:22-23).
 - b. Therefore, as the Lord Jesus has authority over the church, the husband has authority over the wife.
 - c. Of course, the question is often raised: “What kind of authority does the husband have over the wife? How domineering should the husband be with his wife?”
4. We have a very clear explanation of that question in the following verses.
- a. Remember, however, before we look at those verses, the idea of submission has already been introduced in relation to one another. The word “submission” is not in the Greek of v. 22, but it is supplied from the previous sentence (verse). There is a mutual submission of the wife to her husband and the husband to the wife. The husband is to submit to the wife by leading her.
 - b. How is the husband to lead the wife?
 - Because the wife is to submit to her husband □ as to the Lord, □ it stands to reason that the husband is to lead his wife in the way that the Lord leads the church.
 - How does the Lord lead the church?
 - While the Lord does have authority over the church, he exercises that authority for the church’s benefit. Likewise, Christian husbands will exercise their authority/headship for their wife’s benefit.
 - Notice the how Jesus □ headship benefits the church:
 - Jesus loved the church; he demonstrated that love in his actions. Christian husbands will love their wives and demonstrate that love in their actions.
 - Jesus demonstrated his actions in sacrifice for the church; he gave himself up for her. Christian husbands will sacrifice themselves for their wives (e.g., energy, resources, even their own lives).
 - Jesus did this for the church’s own good—that he might sanctify, cleanse her, and present her to himself as a glorious church.

Therefore, Christian husbands will exercise their headship for their wife's good, never for their own good.

○ Notice that more is written in this passage about a husband's leadership than a wife's submission. There is FAR more

responsibility placed upon the man than on the woman. It is my belief that it would be easier to be a woman than a man with these requirements!

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