

Family God's Way #4 - Husbands and Wives

by Bob Hoekstra

The sermon emphasizes the importance of mutual submission in marriage, where both husbands and wives submit to one another as servants, out of reverence and respect for the Lord.

Duration: 1:01:16

Scripture: Genesis 2:24, Matthew 6:33, Acts 5:27-29, Ephesians 5:22, Ephesians 5:28-33

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Submission To Authority"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living up to the heavenly pattern in marriage. He explains that marriage is a great mystery because it is meant to reflect the relationship between Christ and His bride, the church. The preacher highlights the excitement of John the Baptist when he spoke of Jesus as the bridegroom and his followers as the bride. The sermon concludes with the command for husbands to love their wives, following the example of Christ's love for the church. The preacher also mentions the importance of submission to both family and governmental authorities.

Transcript

We're in our fourth of six studies on Family God's Way, and you're invited to follow along on the outline. In our previous studies, we saw the Lord establishing, first of all, the family as the divinely appointed partnership to serve Him here on earth. Then we saw how family life was to function as the Lord had ordained it.

And then in our last study, we saw the dangers of false gods, that is, idols of the world all around us that want to destroy the family as God intended it to function. Now, in this study, we'll look at husbands and wives, husbands and wives. And we'll look at this spiritual principle that is so key of being subject to one another.

And then we'll ask the Lord to apply that to wives in the word here, then to apply it to husbands. And then we'll see this issue related to the original family pattern that we saw in Genesis. And then we'll look at the necessary resource to see all of these things come to pass more and more and more in our lives.

First of all, this spiritual principle in Ephesians 5 of being subject to one another. And while you're finding that place, a reminder, this is not only a word for husbands and for wives, but for those who minister to husbands and wives, and those who might someday be husbands and wives. And it's a word also to those who are single now.

And not only the obvious implication that you very well most likely will someday be a husband or a wife, but along the way, I think the Lord has tonight a very special word in addition to that issue that is for you in particular. Being subject to one another, Ephesians 5.21, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Christians are to be those who are submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Submitting to one another, being subject to, subordinating our interests, our needs, our desires, our preferences, even our well-being to those of another person. In other words, behaving as a servant does. And we're told in this verse that it is to be characteristic of believers to be submitting to one another.

In other words, there is mutuality in this command. There's reciprocity. I submit to you, you submit to me.

We submit one to another. It's just not that a few all submit to one or a few to many or any combination you want to put together. It's one another.

It touches every one of us. We're to be submitting one to another. Me to you, you to me.

This brother to this brother and this brother back to this brother and sister to sister back and forth. We are to be submitting one to another. Mutual submission is what we're called to in the body of Christ.

Each to the other. This has particular implication for the household unit and especially now as the application of this principle goes directly in to the family setting. So many have assumed that submission is only for the wife and not for the husband.

But I think the only way to come at that is kind of by a preferential desire as well as unhealthy tradition. We must take our path for life and ministry and submission from the Word of God. And the Lord tells us by his Word describing now the characteristic life of every believer, we're to be submitting one to another.

Now we'll see that there is unique and particular application to this truth. First we'll see it to wives, then to husbands, then in our next study together we'll see it to children and to parents. Each because of their unique role have a unique application of the principle.

But the principle is the same for all. We're to be submitting to one another, being subject to one another. And we're to do this in the fear of God.

The motivating factor behind this mutual submission is to be our attitude toward our Lord. Out of reverence for the Lord, out of respect for our God. Because he designed it to be this way and he as he came in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, and was incarnate man on the earth walking among us, he exemplified this principle as he lived among us.

So out of respect for the Lord, we're to live in submission to one another. Now notice, just at this point a reminder that our relationships in our families are to be ruled and guided by a third person. And that third person primarily here as we see the passage unfold is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Really it's all of the Godhead, but particularly emphasis is laid in this passage time and again on the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not to guide our relationships in the family by just tradition handed on to us, certainly not by the world around us, and not by our preferences or desires. But rather we are to do it out of respect for the Lord.

It's who the Lord is and how we're related to him that dictates how we relate to one another. So verse 21, submitting to one another in the fear of God, that's the Lord's way for all of us. The example of this is the

Lord Jesus Christ.

And the scriptures given will look at Matthew chapter 20. When God became man in the person of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, he came and walked among us living out this very command of submission, of an attitude of servanthood basically is what it is. We are to live as servants toward one another because Jesus was the servant of all.

Matthew chapter 20 verses 25 through 29. But Jesus called them to himself and said, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them. Worldly rulers lord over people.

And those who are great, that is out in the world system, exercise authority over them. They want to rule over people. Yet it shall not be so among you.

But whoever desires to become great among you, that is the followers of the Lord Jesus, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

The people of the world back then in the days of Jesus and before and certainly today, the people of the world measure greatness this way. By how much they can lord it over how many. Greatness in the world is how many people do you rule over? How many people are answerable to you? How many people do you exercise authority over? That's the way it works in the world.

Jesus said, verse 26, it shall not be so among you. Among the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, greatness is not lording it over people but as it were being under supporting as servants and helpers. Greatness in the lives of the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, greatness comes from servanthood.

Now Jesus showed us this. It isn't just that he said, listen, I'm the king, I'm telling you how to do it. If you want to be great, be a servant.

That would be sufficient really. I mean what he says goes. He is the king of kings and the Lord of lords.

But he gives it to us with even more power and more influence and more impact than that. He commands us to walk this path also on the basis of it being the path he walked. Verse 28, just as.

He's saying, here's what I'm asking you to do. Do it just as I did it. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

The Lord Jesus Christ came not to see how many people he could get meeting his needs but how he could fully meet the needs of all those who would open up their hearts to him. He would serve them. And of course he graphically did that in so many ways but particularly in the upper room when he took off his outer garment and took a towel as a servant, knelt down at their feet and went around and washed the feet of one after another of the disciples.

He literally, visibly took the role of a servant. And so it is to be in our lives. We are to submit to one another as servants.

See it's servants that submit or subordinate their interests, their preferences, their comfort, their ideas, their desires to those of another. That's what servants do. And that's what we're called to here.

You know in many ways we have this entire teaching of the scriptures on submission often far out in left field somewhere if not up in the grandstand. Often we miss what Jesus is commanding and illustrating here. You know people hear submission and they want to know, right, who's boss? Who'll say do and who'll do it? You know that's all.

Just tell me. Well that's the way it works in the world. Jesus said it shall not be so among you.

Speaking to those of us who follow the Lord Jesus Christ, that is not our way. We are to be submitted one to another. It just is another way of saying we are to be servants to one another.

Now this principle of mutual servanthood where we serve each other, look out for the interests and well-being of each other instead of ourselves, this is now taken into the family setting and first applied to wives. Verses 22 through 24. Ephesians 5, the context immediately shifts to family though it doesn't start out in family.

See verse 21 is a description of all believers as are the preceding verses. But once the general principle of submission or servanthood is laid in mutuality for all of us, then it shifts to the family setting and starts out with the wives. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is head of the church and he is the Savior of the body. Therefore just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Now in verse 22, we see here that wives are to be relating to their husbands as servants.

Wives, submit to your own husbands. Picking up the very phrase, the very issue of the previous verse, which is servanthood. And wives are to be servants to their husbands just as wives should be servants to the Lord.

See there's a constant parallel in this section of the word of God where family relationships are built on how we relate to the Lord. There are pictures there of how we are to relate to each other. Christian wives are to be servants of the Lord.

They're also to be servants of their husbands. And they're to be doing this as a way to show honor and respect toward the Lord Jesus Christ who was the servant. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

In verse 23, we're told that the husband is the head of the household just like Christ is the head of the church, the body of Christ. We are the family of God, the body of Christ. Our head that gives us direction and coordination is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that pattern is brought into the home. In the home, the husband is the head. Another parallel.

The husband is the head in the home, which means he should be giving leadership of direction and coordination in the home. And the implication, the wife as servant will be following that leadership of the husband. It certainly helps if some leadership is being given, brothers, right? I mean, it's one thing to want our wives to follow our leadership, but it's another thing to give them a lead to follow.

And the implication is certainly there for us as well. But wives are to follow here the leadership of the husband that's part of their servanthood role. Another interesting thing, though, about this parallel.

It is added that Christ is not only the head of the body, but he is the Savior of the body, the church. As Savior, Jesus is a gracious and loving rescuer. He's not a tyrant dictator.

I think we get the implication. Can you picture the Lord in his easy chair in front of his television, yelling to his church, bring me another beer, or even a ham sandwich? I mean, it just doesn't seem to fit, does it? Sorry to shatter our icons, but, you know, we get those pictures and patterns not from the Lord and his word, but from the world. You know, the captain of the ship sitting there in his laid-back rocker, strangely not paying a lot of attention to the course of the ship, but enjoying the galley.

It's not really the classic biblical New Testament picture. It is rather a picture of one wanting to be served, rather than serve. And it's a picture of sort of a little dictator, a little Napoleon, instead of a servant, head, leader, a Savior.

If Jesus is the Savior of the church, the parallel is there, too. He's the head of the church, and that gives us a picture as men, and also for gals, in leadership and following, but also as the Savior. He's a type for us men, as we minister in leadership in the home, we're to be graciously, lovingly rescuing our mate, protecting, guarding, and guiding, not demanding service.

So this is a pattern for the husband's role as he serves in the home. Now in verse 24, as the church is to Christ, so the wife is to be to the husband, in subjection in everything. Well, how is the church to be subject to Christ in everything? Well, we are to have a desire to follow him, to serve him, and to please him in all things.

Well, so the wife is to have that kind of parallel desire toward her husband. And the amazing phrase here added is, almost scares you to read it, especially if you're a woman. But reading in front of a lot of women is kind of scary, too.

Wives are to be submissive in everything. There I said it. In everything.

Wow. Everything? Well, I don't have my glasses on, but I think that's what it says. In everything.

That's what the Lord is calling the gals, the sisters in his family to be doing. Now, that's the picture of the church. We're to desire to serve the Lord, please him, and follow him in everything.

Now, for the church, there are no exceptions. Someone might say, well, are there any exceptions at all for the women? Well, you know, interestingly enough, I would like to suggest that there is a very significant one. A parallel picture of it that I think is to be applied in all of our lives, in every area of our lives, and certainly would touch women at home, is Acts chapter 5 verses 27 through 29.

In this context that we're about to read from, the disciples have been sharing the word of the Lord Jesus Christ all around Jerusalem. The authorities, the Jewish leaders who crucified the Messiah, along with the accomplices of Rome and the Gentiles, they didn't like this message of Jesus, a risen, resurrected Lord and Savior, getting around. So they had brought them in previously and said, stop preaching and teaching in that name.

And they went out and kept preaching and teaching in that name. They'd been told to. Jesus said, go everywhere and make disciples, that is, make followers of me, which involves a proclaiming of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So as we pick it up, that is the setting, and they'd been brought in again by the authorities. And remember, the governmental authorities are as much an institution of God as family is. Family is more critical, it's more prior, back from the beginning, but God also ordained the government, and in Romans 13 he told us

to be in subjection to it.

There are all kinds of submissions and subjections and serving roles that we're to walk in. Believe me, no individual or category of person has a monopoly on submissiveness, subjection, or servanthood. And we're all to be in subjection to the ruling authorities.

It's easier at times than others, right? And yet we're supposed to be in subjection. Now, is there an exception there? Oh yes, there is. Yes, there is.

Acts 5 27, and when they had brought them, the disciples, they set them, the authorities, set them before the council, and the high priest asked them, saying, did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name, the name of Jesus? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, but wouldn't that be great to get in trouble with the city officials? You've filled the entire city with this message of Jesus. What a wonderful thing to be in danger of. And they added, you intend to bring this man's blood on us.

But Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men. Now see, when those in authority over us do not command us to do things contrary to what the Lord has told us, we are to cooperate with them. All of us with the government, wives with their husbands, just to pick two parallels.

But when government authorities command us to do this and the Lord commanded that, we do that and not this. Now there may be consequences. There certainly are with governments often, and sometimes in households there are consequences, and sometimes are ungodly consequences.

But the principle is true nonetheless, that if those in authority over us command us to do things contrary to the will of God, we say, I'm sorry. I must obey God and not man. Church families are to be in submission to church leadership, though church leaders are to be servant leaders, not dictatorial tyrants themselves.

But if church leadership demands of those in congregations and fellowships to do things contrary to the will of the Lord, it's the responsibility of those in the congregation to say, I'm sorry. We must obey God rather than man. So that is the basic exception I think the Lord would bring into the submission authority relationship in the home.

And that is, dear sisters, if your husband is leading you in ways that are not contrary to what the Lord has commanded, but are contrary to your own desires and preferences, that's the challenge of faith. That's a test of faith, a test of submission, and the Lord says, submit to your husband in everything. It's easier when you're delighted with the path, you know, and you might even want to draw attention.

Sweetheart, I'm right with you. Think it might help in those other times when you're kind of dragging your heels, you know. But if the path is not a delight, but not contrary to the command of the Lord, the instruction is there.

Submit to the husband, follow his leadership in everything. But if that husband is demanding you go in a path, a direction, a way that the Lord has clearly already revealed is contrary to his will, I think the same principle would apply in every submission to authority pattern in the Scriptures. That is, if it is contrary to the will of God revealed, it would be, honey, I'm sorry, I can't do that.

Now, there are going to be many ways to approach that, and I would suggest not necessarily going, well, I see now you really are a godless heathen. I won't take a step in that direction. I'm God's woman, you

know.

That probably isn't the way to do it. But in meekness, in gentleness, but in obedience to your Lord, honey, I'm sorry, I want to follow you. It's the command of my Lord.

It's the desire of my heart. But you're asking that which is contrary to my Lord. He's God.

He's King. He's my life. He's my all in all.

It hurts to say no to you, but to say yes to him, I have to say no. I can't. And sometimes that's a great test of faith, too.

And listen, man, we need gals who are willing to do that when we cross the Word of God. I mean, we don't have inherent, innate, husband-male authority. Our authority is a spiritual authority that comes in the Spirit of Christ, the name of Christ, according to the Word of God.

And it's exercised as we obediently, faithfully, humbly fulfill his path and his role. And sometimes we need godly mates to say, honey, the Lord has said this. Do you see where we're headed, where you're calling us? Outside of that exception, which is a significant one, especially because most of us husbands at times are vulnerable to setting a course that could be contrary to the Word of God.

But outside of that exception, and granted, gals, this leaves a lot of territory to face by faith. As the church is in submission to her head, the Lord Jesus Christ, so wives are to be to their husbands in everything. Now the interesting thing is, though, this is not the end of the submission issue.

You know, many have taught submission in the churches out of the Word of God, as though these three verses were the only three touching on the matter. I've wondered through the years why messages on this subject characteristically start in Ephesians 5.22 instead of Ephesians 5.21. Maybe it has something to do with men have been teaching most of these messages. I don't know.

But if so, shame on us. I mean, context is critical in understanding, obeying, and teaching the Word of God. And it couldn't be more clear.

Verse 21, we're all to be submitting. Now here's the first example, wives submit to your own husbands. But the context does not change.

It's in a household, the ruling verse is still verse 21, and we go right now into another member of the household, the husbands. This principle of servanthood submission, mutuality of serving, is now applied to husbands. God has a way, brothers, for you and me to submit ourselves one to another within our households.

And these verses explain it. Ephesians 5.25 through 30. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church, for we are members of his body.

Here is the basic command to the husband. Husbands, love your wives. Isn't that interesting? In human logic, you'd think after the command to the woman is, women, wives, be in submission to your husband's leadership, that the next command would be, husbands, lead your wives.

Or if it's submission, wives, wouldn't the natural command be, husbands, command your wives? I mean, that makes human sense. But again, Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. Don't be leaping into automatic understanding.

Sometimes common sense runs rampant and gets us off track, because the sense of the kingdom of God is supernatural. It's uncommon. It's ways that are higher than our ways.

And here we are again. Wives, submit to your husbands. Husbands, here's your application.

Love your wives. Who but God would come up with that? It's fantastic. It gets right to the heart of God, the heart of the kingdom, and should be the heartbeat of the home.

Husbands, love your wives. It's the basic command. Thank God for the love of wives and the love of mothers.

It's so obvious. It's so all-pervasive in society. It's why you probably have never in your life seen the camera zoom in on the winning touchdown, and the guy goes, hi, dad.

Who's dad? You know, 99.9 times it's, hi, mom. I mean, the love of moms and wives is like known around the world. But critical in the household unit is the love of the father, the husband.

And so the command is given. Husbands, love your wives. See, this is the husband's application of verse 21.

We are to love our wives just as Christ loved. Our pattern again is the Lord Jesus Christ, not the world around us or the best that the best Christian man can pull off on his own. This is the end of side A. To listen to the rest of the message, please turn the tape over now.

Our pattern again is the Lord Jesus Christ, not the world around us or the best that the best Christian man can pull off on his own. Our pattern is the Lord Jesus Christ, just as Christ loved and gave himself for her. For who? Her, his church.

The love of Jesus Christ was a self-giving, costly, sacrificial love. And we're to love our wives just as Christ loved the church. Our love at home is to be self-giving, costly, taking time and energy, and maybe from our preferences or personal interests at a given time.

It's to be a sacrificial love. As the head of the home, as the leader, the husband is to set the primary example of self-sacrificing servanthood love. To put it another way, as leaders of the home, brothers, we're to lead by loving our wives sacrificially.

Now that's a different picture, isn't it? It isn't somebody's got to command and somebody's got to obey. No, it's two servants learning how to fulfill their unique role of servanthood because they're different. Men and women are definitely different.

I mean, surely we know that, don't we? And if you're married, you surely know that. Men and women are different, but that's the glory of it. The Lord made us that way and our roles are different.

Though we're all to be servant, our servanthood roles will differ. Wives follow the leaders of the husband, the leadership. Husbands lead by loving our wives.

In our leadership, we're to be thinking of our wives and giving of ourselves for them. See, that's the way the Lord led. He led by going to the cross.

He went there for our benefit, for his church, and we're to give of ourselves that way for our wives. In verses 26 and 27, we see our ministry to our wives should have a sanctifying effect, verse 26, because Jesus ministered in giving himself that he might sanctify his church. Also, our ministry and leadership as husbands is to have an edifying, growing, maturing effect like verse 27.

The Lord ministers to his church that he might present to himself a glorious church, that is one growing up in godliness. Our ministry in our homes toward our wives should have that same effect, a sanctifying effect. Men, we should be laboring in servanthood love toward our wives that their lives would be more and more set apart for God's purposes, God's use, God's glory.

Not that they would be more and more set apart for our purposes, our use, and our glory. And there is a difference, isn't there? And sometimes we get it confused. We think they are there to serve us, but our role and responsibility is the Lord says we are there to serve them.

Oh yes, they have a servanthood role, but they are accountable to the Lord for that one, we are accountable to the Lord for our servanthood role. And also we should be laboring in self-sacrificing love to see that they are brought more and more to their full spiritual maturity, ministering the things of the Lord and the love of the Lord to their lives. Also by the way, notice in verse 26, the Lord washes his church with the water by the word.

As leaders of our homes, Christian men should see to it that our wives and our families are in and under the cleansing ministry of the word of God. You might say, wait a minute, I am not a teacher of the word, I don't have that gift or that's not my calling. Those are two separate things.

Seeing that our families are in and under the word is a separate issue from whether or not we are called to be a teacher of the word. We can all share the word with one another in reading or prayer or witness or encouragement. And we can all see that our families get exposed to the word of God, reading it at home, discussing it at home, receiving it through tapes, the teaching of the church.

If we are the leaders in the homes, then we need to be sure our leading includes the family getting a cleansing regularly by the word of God. That's how Jesus treats his church and he is the pattern as to how we are to treat our wives. Now in verses 28 through 30, we read that we are to treat our wives as part of our very own being.

How so? Because we are, in fact, a single unit before the Lord. So wives, in serving and submitting, follow the leadership of husbands. How do we apply the servanthood principle, which is a reciprocal mutual one? We do it by loving our wives as Christ loved the church.

Sacrificially laying down our lives for their benefit. Now all of this is related now in our passage to the original family pattern, verses 31 through 33. And the quote is from Genesis chapter 2 that we looked at in our first study.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

In verse 31, the Lord directly relates this New Testament Christian home life and these patterns, by the way, that pertain to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord, in the word of God here, relates it all to the original family pattern established back at the beginning with Adam and Eve, the original family. And what it means is this for our implication in this passage.

That is, we are to be a fully unified partnership of two living as one unit before God. Now we learned that also from Genesis chapter 2. But here's the added implication with this being quoted in this passage. This fully unified partnership of two living as one unit before God, serving God, has this added implication.

Ephesians 5.21, submitting to one another in the fear of God. That fully unified spiritual partnership of two serving God as one unit, it's two mutual servants serving each other in the name of the Lord as they serve God as one unit. A fully unified partnership of two reciprocal mutual servants.

You know how far that is from the world's picture of the family? You get all these sayings out in the world. Oh, it's 50-50. Well, it sounds more like it's 100-100.

Oh, it's give and take. Well, it sounds more like it's give. Every time the Lord just does it so differently than the world thinks about it or the church picks up on from the world.

The great picture now in the world is you just kind of negotiate a truce before you enter the battle of marriage. And you set your own terms. What do you want out of it? What don't you want out of it? And you kind of contract together.

That's not the Lord's way. The Lord's way is two die to self, live to Him, and serve each other in His name. Oh, it's a world apart, anything that the world offers.

An implication and a reminder at this point. While we're thinking about how different the ways of God from the ways of man and the ways of a Christian home from the ways of a worldly home. Note this.

This partnership, this kind of spiritual partnership of mutual servanthood sets apart the husband and wife relationship with a distinct difference and unique priority as it is contrasted even with the parent-child relationship which we'll look at in our next study. This study we're looking at husbands and wives. Next time we'll look at parents and children.

All of them have to learn to apply the mutual servanthood role or principle in their role. But, there is a distinctive difference not only between a husband's application and a wife's application. There is in contrast and comparison between the husband-wife relationship and the parent-child relationship a major sharp distinction.

And it's this among others. Christian men and women that are married should not quote live for their kids. Oh, our children are a gift from God.

They are precious, very important, and our hearts go out in the love of Christ in serving them too. Yes, but we're not called as parents to live for our kids. And you know, generally in the world, that's one of the

highest motives and goals.

Reasons to be married, living for the kids. It must not be so among the people of God. You know what happens in the world when people live for the kids? When the kids are gone, the reason to live as husband and wife is gone.

How many homes have the bottom drop right out of them at the very time the kids are gone? Our daughter went out first from our home. She's 25 now, and I'm married and precious granddaughter. And we missed her, but we kept loving each other, serving the Lord, and ministering to two young men.

And then a weekend came where, somewhat to our surprise, and beyond any human arrangement, they both left on the same weekend. One to marriage, one to college. Neither have returned.

Well, I mean, they come home, but they're gone. They're gone. But praise the Lord, we did not have 8, 10 days, hours, weeks, months of heavy withdrawal.

I'm not saying we had a great celebration either, you know. I got your implication. Well, that's another story in itself, but the life the Lord gave us just went on.

And that's the way it should be. Sure, you make adjustments in it, but you're still living for the Lord. Christian men and women, married to one another, husbands and wives, should live for the Lord in a unified, lifelong partnership with their mate.

And that will then remain when the kids have grown up and moved on from the home. The reason for the existence of a Christian marriage, a husband and a wife, is not the children, it's God. Loving Him, obeying Him, serving Him, and part of obeying and serving Him is that He provides children, and He does still want us to multiply in that way.

And they're a heritage from the Lord, a gift from the Lord, but we'll see. There's a big difference in this passage between the husband-wife role and the parent-child role. They're both God-ordained and important, but it doesn't say that the parents and the children, the two become one.

That's only husband and wife. And the husbands and wives are to love and be committed and devoted and partner together for life. It's not that way with parents and children.

There are distinctive differences. May we live for our Lord, not live for our kids. If we live for our Lord, our kids will be greatly blessed.

Our oldest son, 24-year-old, wrote me a card, I can't remember if it was his birthday or some event, Father's Day or something like that, wrote me a card about integrity. And he quoted the verse about how the seed of a man of integrity is greatly blessed. And man, it just melted my heart like putty.

I mean, I want to be a man of integrity. That is important to my life because it's important to the Lord. But I'm not saying I have every step of the way been able to have my feet on that path.

And yet just to see that my feet were there enough, that it touched my son, that he felt he'd been greatly blessed by that. That's part of the blessing of how we can minister to our children. They're a gift from the Lord and we are a gift to them from the Lord.

But there is a great, enormous difference still between the husband-wife and parent-child relationship. Lord help us to live serving Him, not just man. Verse 32, this is a great mystery.

That's quite a statement about marriage, isn't it? Someone's probably tempted to say, now you're getting to it. Now we're getting right down. You tell me it's a great mystery.

Does anyone understand it? Well, this mystery is great. In fact, we should not expect married life to be a snap. As easy as they say as falling off a log.

Maybe as easy as falling off a cliff, but not as easy as falling off a log. It's not easy in a human sense. We in marriage, Christian marriage, enter into a great mystery.

Now you know this word mystery in the New Testament, it defines anything which can only be known as God reveals it. Well, that's exactly what marriage is. It can only be known and understood and lived in as God reveals what it's all about.

That's exactly how it is with Christian marriage. You can't just pick it up from mankind. You can't just pick it up from a kind of a long-lasting couple that has spent 50, 60 years together.

Who knows what are all of the motivating factors that have kept them together. Some might be spiritual, some maybe not at all, maybe none, maybe just fleshly things. There are some ungodly homes that endure in a lasting marriage, but they can't be what the Lord wants them to be without the Lord.

We must learn marriage from the Lord. So it is with Christian marriage. It's a great mystery.

It's designed to be a picture of Christ and His church. It's not designed to be a picture of Ken and Barbie or Prince Charming and Miss America. And often marriages approach like that.

In fact, I took part in a wedding not long ago in Newport Beach and my heart was burdened. It seemed like the central character was not the Lord Jesus Christ, but a great celebration of the friends of the bride and groom that look at this great thing that they are doing to each other and for each other and with each other. I'm not saying the Lord was excluded, but He wants to be in the center of it all.

Colossians 1.18, God has arranged this kingdom so that Christ gets the preeminence in everything, including Christian marriage. What it is, how it functions, and what makes it work. Marriage is a great mystery.

Why? Because it's a husband and wife who are human beings who are to become more and more a picture of Christ. And His bride, John 3.29, John the Baptist spoke of this truth. Remember this? John 3.29, He who has the bride is the bridegroom.

Who is that? Jesus Christ. But the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears Him rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled.

John the Baptist was excited that the bridegroom was there, beginning to call out his bride, his followers, which would be his church. And then the New Testament ends with this sort of note, Revelation 22.17. Remember how the book comes close to a conclusion, Revelation 22.17. And the spirit and the bride say, Come. The bride being the followers of the Lord Jesus, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Lord Jesus, is our cry. We are the bride.

Jesus is the bridegroom. And the Lord wants this illustrated in our marriages. That's what makes it such a great issue, such a great mystery, such an issue that we will not understand unless we ask the Lord to explain it to us.

And then make it operate in and through our lives. Then our passage closed with verse 33, Ephesians 5.33, with the word nevertheless. Nevertheless.

Marriage is a great mystery. It pictures the unseen, but nevertheless. Though marriage is a picture of an invisible spiritual union between Christ and His church, the Lord wants it illustrated in the visible relational qualities of love and respect between husbands and wives.

You can't see that union of Christ and His church, though it's real. But you can see the union of husbands and wives in Christ, and that's where that spiritual union of Christ and His church are to be demonstrated. So it's a great mystery, but it can be seen by the way husbands and wives in Christ treat each other.

Notice this, in light of this issue, that the godly relationship between husbands and wives in love and respect show the spiritual union of Christ and His church. Therefore, certain practices commonly seen among married couples are totally inappropriate for Christian couples. For example, the world, the guy says, well, I got to go home, the old lady is expecting me.

Oh, that's a... wash out our mouths, that is gross. You know, in the world, it's kind of a joke. Oh, yeah, the old lady, you know, they picture somebody there with a rolling pin and a clobber him over the head.

I don't even know if rolling pins exist anymore. But, you know, sometimes gals say to other gals, oh, my old man this, my old man that. You know, that doesn't quite picture the union between Christ and His church.

And it's so easy to pick up these things from the world when we ought to be, ooh, throwing them down, renouncing them, rejecting them, staying away from them. Other practices very popular in the Christian world, husbands and wives in public arguments. Oh, what a major no-no for Christian couples.

What are you saying? We should have our fights at home? Well, not exactly. We shouldn't be fighting and arguing, period. It's just a matter of degree, though, from bad to worse.

It's bad to be fighting at home. It's worse to be fighting in public. We're not to be arguing.

Husbands and wives shouldn't have to learn how to debate. They should have to learn how to love. The world teaches classes on husbands and wives, having a good, clean fight.

You know, I've seen some Christian churches and their bulletins in the last couple of years have been traveling a lot, seeing some amazing things. I did not know that all these things took place in the church world. I suspicion some of them, but I've been shocked.

Churches teaching husbands and wives how to have a good, clean fight. Shame on us. How about how to have a good, clean servanthood relationship, but definitely public arguing and awful, bad picture of Christ and His church, or berating our mate in public, or putting down our mate before others, or listing their failures or mistakes or sins.

You ever had a Christian couple come up to you and the husband start talking right to you in front of her about how she's failing him? Oh, Lord, help us, forgive us, rescue us from such things. Or insulting our

wives, or ridiculing them, being rude toward them, correcting them harshly in public. It's not right.

It does not picture the relationship between Christ and His church. If we want to relate in a proper way to our mates before others, let's do it in loving, respectful servanthood. Well, the necessary resource should be looked at just for a moment.

The necessary resource, we'll just read it, we'll look at it a few more times through our series. The question is this, how are we to ever expect to make progress in living up to this heavenly pattern? Boy, you hear it sometimes, it's like it's so high, and we miss the mark so far sometimes. What's our hope? Well, the very context of the passage is Ephesians 5.18, which says, Do not get drunk with wine in which is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

This command to be filled with the Spirit is for all of God's children. All of us are to live in a fullness of the Spirit. We're to keep on being filled by the Spirit.

And then the characteristics of a Spirit-filled life follow. Those filled with the Spirit will be those speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, and singing with melody in their heart to the Lord, and giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, and submitting to one another in the fear of God. See, one of the evidences of a Spirit-filled life is how husbands and wives live with each other at home.

It's not, I'll tell you my life is Spirit-filled. I used to could only jump four feet in the air when I shouted hoop glory. Now I can do four six.

I can even grab the chandelier and swing. You know? Listen, the Lord can get us excited. His Spirit can fill us to really ecstatic moments.

But the measure of a Spirit-filled life isn't the high jump, the hoop, or the swing. It's right here. How do we live in the home? Is it loving servanthood produced by the work of the Spirit of God in husband and wife? Well, if we're going to walk that way, we need the resource of the filling of the Spirit.

We're to be filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5.21 is a direct result of Ephesians 5.18 taking place in our lives. Filled with the Spirit, all of our heart and life open to, trusting in, seeking after all that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives, including important, major expositions of the Word of God given to us in Ephesians 5.21-33. It must be by the Spirit of God.

So in conclusion, let's ask the Lord for a response and personal application. Perhaps singles among us need to seek the Lord for this submission principle because it will be important in their future marriage. But according to 1 Peter 5.5, if you want to jot it in your conclusion, we are all to submit to one another and the younger to the elders.

You may not be in a marriage relationship yet, but there are important lessons to be learned and opportunities to learn submission even in singleness. For some tonight, perhaps salvation is the issue, coming humbly and repentantly to the Lord for new life. That's when His Spirit can begin to make the home life what it is supposed to be.

Perhaps some others should just come and seek forgiveness from God and from their mates. You know perhaps some should say it's time to stop concentrating on my mate's portion of Ephesians 5 and start prayerfully reading my own. It's the strangest thing I've noticed teaching this passage in many places.

You can almost see it sometimes. Wives, and boy the men just, yeah, yeah, what should she be doing, you know. And later on, husbands and oh, the wives perk up, yeah, what are they supposed to be doing? I want to be sure to make sure they're doing it, you know.

We're listening at cross purposes, you know, we're listening to the wrong conversation. We're not paying attention to the Lord talking to us and we're trying to eavesdrop on what the Lord is saying to our mate. Maybe some tonight should say, Lord, I'm going to start concentrating on that section that starts out, husbands if I'm a man, wives if I'm a gal.

Perhaps some, many, maybe most of us need to humbly seek the Lord for a fresh new filling of His Holy Spirit, even asking for a new deep work of God at home. And maybe some in that need to stop hinging their decision toward the Lord and His Spirit on what their mate does or doesn't do and just instead be fully available to God no matter how our mate does or does not respond and God will use us then in the home. Oh, if just one lets God have their heart in the home, things will happen.

Not that everyone will love what's happening, but God will work. If both give their heart to the Lord this way, you can lay Ken and Barbie aside and watch some miraculous living. Let's pray for these things right now.

Lord, we cry out to you. We humbly come before you. We never would have understood or even dreamed of these things had you not told us.

Lord, we cry out to you. We now can't fulfill them in any measure unless you work in us by your Spirit. We humbly admit we fail in so many ways.

We've come so far short. We thank you for what you have done. But Lord, we just cry out for a fresh new filling of your Spirit tonight.

Fill us to overflowing and may it have a major impact on our life and walk at home that you might be glorified as two mutually loving servants, our partners in Jesus Christ serving you. Work this way, Lord, for your glory, the building of your church, the touching of family members and neighbors in the lost. We pray in Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

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