



Ephesians 5:22-33

WRESTLING WITH PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS TO WIVES AND HUSBANDS.

Wives, _____ to your husbands as you are to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the *head* of the wife just as Christ is the *head* of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. ²⁴ Just as the church is obligated to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.

²⁵ **Husbands,** love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind-- yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”* ³² This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. ³³ Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

Focus?

“Most discussions about Paul’s views of marriage focus on his use of the verb “submit to” and the meaning of the noun “head.” However, in Ephesians, Paul himself spends twice as much time focusing on the husband’s requirement to love his wife. Paul takes special care to define this love as that exhibited by Christ, to offset the wider culture’s description of marital harmony and love. Paul’s understanding of love goes beyond the culture’s encouragement of familial concord.”

Lynn H. Cohick, “Loving and Submitting to One Another in Marriage: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” *Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives*, 3rd ed. (eds.) Ronald W. Pierce; Cynthia Long Westfall (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2021), 185-204, 201.

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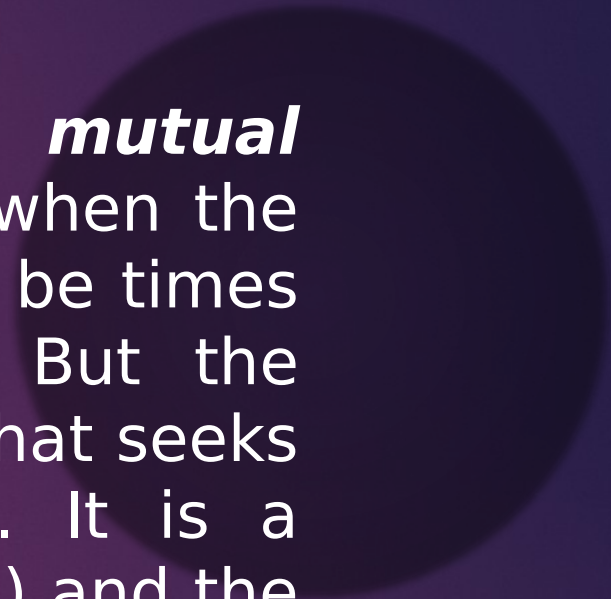
- ▶ Where is the verb?
- ▶ What is the relationship between 5:22-33 and 5:15-21?

CONTEXT: Ephesians 5:15-21

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ So do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

¹⁸ Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit,

- ▶ ¹⁹ **speaking** psalms and hymns and Spirit songs among yourselves,
- ▶ **singing** and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,
- ▶ ²⁰ **giving thanks** to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- ▶ ²¹ **Being subject/dutiful/obligated** to one another out of reverence for Christ.

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- ▶ Paul's theology of marriage is one of ***mutual*** submission/obligation. There may be times when the husband submits to the wife, and there may be times when the wife submits to the husband. But the marriage is based on a reverence for Christ that seeks wisdom (5:15) and not foolishness (5:17). It is a marriage shaped by the will of the Lord (5:17) and the work of the Spirit (5:18) in the context of gratitude to God (5:20).

Mutual Submission/Obligation?

- ▶ Complementarian response
- ▶ Mutual is a contemporary addition due to modern feminism.
- ▶ “The male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject” (Aristotle, *Politica* 1.2.12).
- ▶ “The woman, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority, has been given by God to the man” (Josephus, *Ag. Apion* 2.201).

Early Church Views

- ▶ Origen (185-253CE), “Being subject, he says, to one another in the fear of Christ. This completely destroys all desire to rule and be first.”
- ▶ Jerome (347-419CE), “husbands are to be subject to their wives according to the duty which is commanded.”
- ▶ Richard Hays (1948-), “Paul offers a paradigm-shattering vision of marriage as a relationship in which the partners are bonded together in submission to one another.”

κεφαλή

- ▶ What does Paul mean by “head” in this context?
- ▶ Three Options
 - ▶ A physical ‘head’
 - ▶ ‘Source’
 - ▶ ‘Most prominent’ or ‘Most honoured’
- ▶ Notice what is not an option!
 - ▶ No lexicon/dictionary ancient or modern offers “leadership” as a definition of κεφαλή.

Eph 5:25-30

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind-- yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body.

“In a strongly countercultural move, Paul commands that the husband love his wife, and he further explains this love by pointing to Christ’s self-giving love. The verb used for “to love,” *agapeō*, is never used elsewhere in Greco-Roman household codes, probably because the nature of this love upends the patriarchal construct of marriage. With this command to love his wife, Paul insists that husbands relinquish, even reject, the power and authority granted to them by the wider culture. It mandates that husbands accept the social shame that would come with a reversal of masculinity as understood in the ancient world. Instead of having his wife “die” for his honor, now the husband “dies” or lives self-sacrificially on behalf of his wife. This challenge to husbands is that laid before every believer, who is to love the other as Christ loved the church (Eph 5:2).”

Lynn H. Cohick, “Loving and Submitting to One Another in Marriage: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” *Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural, and Practical Perspectives*, 3rd ed. (eds.) Ronald W. Pierce; Cynthia Long Westfall (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2021), 185-204, 202.

Genesis, Jesus and Paul

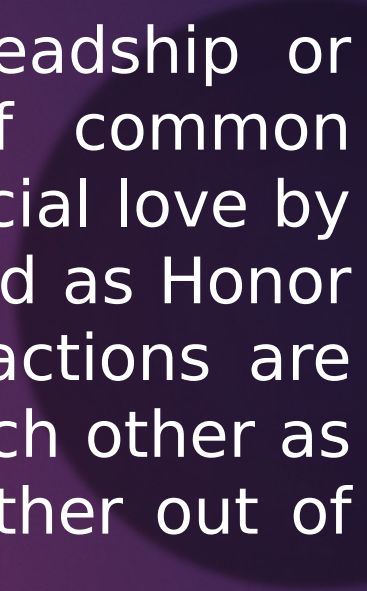

- ▶ Gen 2:23-24, “Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.”²⁴ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”
- ▶ Mk 10:6-8, ““But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’⁷ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh.⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”
- ▶ Eph 5:31, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Foundational Understanding of Marriage

- ▶ There are four major components of marriage outlined in Gen 2:24, and affirmed by Jesus and Paul:
 1. complementarity of a man and a woman,
 2. a change of status recognized by the community (i.e., leaving father and mother),
 3. a covenant commitment (i.e., being joined to each other in an exclusive lifelong relationship held accountable to God), and
 4. the establishment of a new family unit consummated through sexual union (i.e., becoming one flesh).

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“Overall, this description of marriage speaks not at all of roles for women and men, even less about headship or leadership. Instead, it presents a reversal of common patriarchal assumptions by focusing on self-sacrificial love by the husband to the wife, and submission expressed as Honor and respect by the wife to her husband. Both actions are characteristics incumbent on believers, to love each other as Christ loved the church and to submit to each other out of reverence for Christ.”

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Marriage and the Church

- ▶ Eph 4:1-3, “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Marriage and Mission

- ▶ Ephesians 5:22-33 in the Context of Ephesians 1
- ▶ Eph 1:9-10, “he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to reconcile all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.”