
The Christian Bride

Ephesians 5:22-24

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **23** 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. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

In today's text, Paul is discussing the way in which Christian wives should submit to their husbands. This comes by the power of the Holy Spirit (vs. 18) and involves our submitting to every relationship where God has ordained human authority.

The history of the Christian church is a story of the elevation of women in every culture where the Gospel has gone. We have seen this clearly in the early church and throughout the centuries around the world. It seems strange, therefore, that Paul would command "submission" of wives, until we look at the broader context of verses 22-24. The context is one of a "mystery" (vs. 32) being played out by husbands and wives; that is, because God loves His people so dearly, He has instituted marriage primarily as a way to illustrate His great love for His church and His church's devotion to her Lord. It is for this reason that both husbands and wives "take up their scripts" and play the parts that God has given us, for in playing out our parts wholeheartedly, we demonstrate this divine drama of Christ and the Church. We see this in Paul's use of the conjunction "as" in verses 23 and 24: the husband loves the wife as Christ loves the Church, and, in verse 24, the wife submits to her husband as the Church submits to Christ.

In submitting to husbands (or any other human authority) we always submit "in the Lord." This means our submission to Christ always qualifies the submission we give to another human being. Paul does say, however, that we submit "in everything" to those to whom we owe submission. What a great challenge! Our submission, as we saw in a previous study, is to be voluntary, wholehearted, and contingent upon our submission to the Lord.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband?

2. Why does the Christian wife submit to her husband?

3. How does the Christian wife achieve this attitude (see vs. 18)? How does one practically appropriate this divine power?

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4. How does the Christian wife submit to an unbelieving husband? A neglectful husband? An abusive husband?

 5. How can the Church help wives in the fulfillment of their sacred duties?

Going Deeper

1. For Wives: Given that Paul says “in everything” in verse 24, in what ways are you not giving wholehearted submission to your husband? Ask God to help you begin to do so.
2. For Husbands: How can you make it easier for your wife to submit to her husband? What encouragements can you give her? Are you making your love for her contingent upon her submission to you? In what ways? Pray and ask God to help you change in these ways.
3. For Single Believers: How does Ephesians 5:22-24 apply to your encouragement to your married friends? How can you help them? How did your mother’s relationship to your father affect you as a child? How does this text influence your thinking about a prospective marriage in the future?