

Christ and His Bride
Ephesians 5:18-33

I'll begin today with our wedding story. Kimberly and I have been married for nine years. We met **at Nibble Nook in 2001**, but only said hello. I really got to know her **in 2002 when we were placed on the same team**. She was an assistant director at the youth camp, and I was the pastor (I jokingly say that she is still the director, and I'm still the pastor). I became great friends with her, and then developed an attraction later in the summer. In May, I preached in Maryland, and she met me for lunch and visited D.C. together. We had great compatibility but I thought it was too hard to date long distance. However, when I had a reunion and saw her in November, I kicked myself and said, "I'm an idiot." By God's providence, she and another teammate were the last two people to leave. So we went to dinner and then to a Steven Seagal movie (and sat on the **front row!**). I stared at her for most of the movie because it was terrible and I loved her hair (and other features). **We began dating, and then I sold my guitar, and bought an engagement ring.** I flew up to D.C., and met up with her class that was taking a field trip. **My plan was to propose at Arlington Cemetery in April.** I finally got her parents alone, and in the kitchen took a deep breath and ask the question. (I don't think I've ever been this nervous in my life. I remember that **my lip was shaking**). I asked her 6'2 retired-army father whom I had only met one time before, "Has Kimberly gold you about the depth of this relationship." "NO, he said." I thought "Great." Despite that discouraging come-back, I pressed on. "I would like to ask your permission to marry your daughter, sir." To which he replied, "Kimberly has always made good decisions." I thought, "What does that mean? Is that a yes?" Then to my relief, her mother responded back with "Yes!" She then asked to see the ring. So I brought it in the kitchen, **and my hand was shaking so badly that her dad had to hold it steady!** Later that next day, after her class field-trip was over, we went to the cemetery. Beside Robert E Lee's old house, I began my deal. "Baby, these guys died for a worthy cause didn't they?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well, I want you to know that I am willing to lay down my life for you." She said, "Aww." I said, "What's our verse?" She said, "Psalm 34:3, "Oh Come and magnify the Lord with me, let us exalt his name together." I said, "Will you exalt the Lord with me in marriage?" She put her head on my shoulder and snot went

everywhere! She said, "Yes!" After sitting there for a while. We went down the hill, floating like a leaf on a river of romance. Her died fired up the grill. We had salmon, shrimp and asparagus. It was glorious. He asked me to say the blessing. Bridal magazines and balloons filled the room. Later, we were married.

I have made a lot of bad decisions in my life, but I praise God I got this one right.

I know that story is cheesy to some, but I was motivated by this text in Ephesians 5, and I still am.

Husbands are called to love their bride like Christ loved the church. I read a book recently called *Good Christians, Good husbands?* In which the book describes historically influential men who had awful marriages.

I want to be a better husband. This text has challenged me to do so. I pray it challenges you as well.

Single People Need This Text Too

Why is this important if you aren't married? **First, this text gives us a glorious description of the love of Christ.** In Spurgeon's sermon "Christ's Love to His Spouse," the prince of preachers said:

This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under Heaven, if not in Heaven itself. How often have I said to you that if I had heard that Christ pitied us, I could understand it. If I had heard that Christ had mercy upon us, I could comprehend it. But when it is written that he actually loves us, that is quite another and a much more extraordinary thing! Love between mortal and mortal is quite natural and comprehensible, but love between the Infinite God and us poor sinful finite creatures, though conceivable in one sense, is utterly inconceivable in another. Who can grasp such an idea? Who can fully understand it? Especially when it comes in this form—"HE" (read it in large capitals) "loved me, and gave Himself for me"—this is the miracle of miracles!

Everyone needs to know of this love.

Second, this text elevates our concept of the church. If you aren't a church person, well, you are in effect saying, "I love you Christ, but not

your bride.” Based on this text, I don’t think Jesus will be pleased with that position. **Those who love Christ, loves what he loves.**

Third, if you are single, for your sake, you need to understand what the Bible says about marriage. I think most of you are already interested in this. Tim Keller describes in *The Meaning of Marriage* that his nine week series on marriage was the **most listened-to set of sermons the church has ever produced**, despite the fact that Redeemer is predominately made up of singles (3,000 of them, Keller, 11)! Where else will you get an understanding of marriage in this culture?

Finally, **you need to understand God’s plan for marriage for your brothers’ and sisters’ sake.** Remember, you are **not an island** as a Christian. You were saved for community. You need to **help your brothers and sisters be faithful in both singleness and marriage.**

We All Need This Text

Culturally. We live in a day in which the foundation for marriage is **crumbling**. People are **confused** about gender, marriage and family. Some are outright **hostile** to the historic Christian view on marriage.

Kostenberger and Jones put it well: “For the first time in its history, Western civilization is confronted with the need to *define* the meaning of the terms ‘marriage’ and ‘family.’ What until now has been considered a ‘normal’ family, made up a father, mother, and a number of children, has in recent years begun to be viewed as one among several options....” (Kostenberger, *God, Marriage and Family*, 25).

This should remind us that this is not simply a cultural war; **this is a spiritual war**. The enemy would love to confuse people and tear down these foundations.

Corporately. We have lost our way not just in the culture, but also in the **church**. It is utter folly to think that we can have **healthy churches apart from healthy marriages** and families. Further, our homes are giving testimony to the outside world about the glory of Christ. We desperately need to re-discover and submit to God’s plan for marriage.

This message is not a **grenade thrown at the culture**; I want to serve as a tender shepherd, speaking to people that I love, in hopes that we all – inside the church – may have a marriage and a home that honors Jesus.

I've divided this message into three parts (1) **Foundations**, (2) **Illustration**, (3) **Instructions**. First, I would like to look at the whole, and draw out seven foundational, biblical principles that Paul is either alluding to or building on in Ephesians. Then, we will briefly consider this illustration of marriage. Next, we will look at the specific instructions for husbands and wives..

#1: FOUNDATIONS (22-33)

1. **God designed marriage**. Paul alludes to the Genesis account here in **Ephesians 5** (cf., **Gen 1-2**). It's God's idea. *God's plan involves a lifelong monogamous, heterosexual, relationship*. God's plan involves particular roles within marriage, as well.
 - **Jesus affirmed this in his teaching in Matt 19:3-6 giving reference to both foundational texts (see Gen. 1:27; 2:24).**
 - **Paul** applies the **creation** account to marriage in his day elsewhere in the NT, as did **Jesus** (cf., Matt 19:5-6; Mark 10:9; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor 6:16; see also Mal. 2:10-16, esp. v. 10).
 - It's not only rooted in creation, it's also rooted in redemption. God also had **redemption in view**, as Ephesians 5 shows us. Paul speaks of the creation account, and **Christ's** relationship with **his church** (redemption), saying that God had this in view. Like the inclusion of the Gentiles into Gods' salvific plan (also a "mystery"), what was concealed is now revealed. Marriage reveals the gospel.
 - *Therefore, if you don't understand God's work in creation and redemption, you won't understand God's plan for marriage.*
 - **Our view of marriage does not derive from human desires; or from cultural patterns, but it comes from God's word. Jesus did not view it as a social convention or a "piece of paper." Rather, he viewed it as a sacred bond between man and women, entered into before God. Our view of marriage is old.**

- Further, we understand God's plan for marriage to be something that God gave not merely to Christians, but to humanity, as their Creator. It is good for society and for families. Because God designed it, it is ultimately for his glory.
2. **The fall damaged marriage.** After the fall, sin led to distortions of God's institution. **Paul provides instruction in Ephesians 5 because we don't do these things naturally!** Ladies don't naturally want to take their roles, and men don't want to assume their roles.
- Look at **Genesis 3:16**: This text speaks of the ongoing struggle that will take place as a result of sin. The woman will have wrong desires, and the husbands will be tempted to dominate their wives. When you see **harsh husbands**, and **manipulating or controlling wives**, opposing loving leadership, you see the Fall in action.
 - Further, **man will suffer in his labor (3:17-18)** and **ladies will bear pain in childbirth (3:16)**
 - Nevertheless, in **Gen 3:15, hope is provided**. The Messiah will crush the serpent, giving new life and restored relationships.
3. **We (nevertheless) affirm the goodness of marriage.** Despite the fall, we have a positive view of marriage. **Paul assumes that many of the Ephesians are married, and doesn't have a negative view of it, instead he tells them how to live in it in such a way to honor God.**

"It's **not good for man to be alone**." This is true. **If you don't believe me, look at a single guy's apartment! (Nate had no curtains; I had a Rocky poster, and a fork)**. What a blessing to have companionship and fulfillment!

- Though single himself, **Paul honors marriage in 1 Corinthians 7**, and in **1 Timothy 4**. To Timothy, he says that those who are **forbidding marriage and certain foods that God created** are devoting themselves to "the teaching of demons." That was strong language, which emphasizes the **goodness of marriage**, and the gift of food. I don't know about you, **but I'm glad it's okay to get**

married and eat a steak! Marriage is not to be forbidden. It is a gift. While pastors **do not have to be married**, they are permitted to do so, and their marriages are to be exemplary (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6).

- **The Bible has a positive view of marriage. In fact, there is a marriage in the beginning and the end of the Bible! (Gen, Rev).**

Why the negativity about marriage today? I think people greatly underestimate the goodness of a healthy marriage, largely because they've never seen one! Sadly, in a report by the University of Virginia, **"Less than a third of high school senior girls and only slightly more than a third of boys seem to believe ... that marriage is more beneficial to individuals than the alternatives"** (Keller, 26).

- Some think marriage ***boring***. Chris Rock asks, **"Do you want to be single and lonely, or married and bored?"** (Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, 22). Because of this view, many aim for **something in the middle – cohabitation with a sexual partner**.
- Some think marriage is too ***risky***. So they decide to live together for a while to see. The surprising reality to many is that **after they test drive** the car and finally get married, the **divorce rate is actually higher** (Keller, 23).
- Some think it's too ***distracting***. It can just get in the way of one's career, they believe.
- Some think it's too ***financially draining***. However, this too seems to be a faulty assumption. Another study called "The Surprising Economic Benefits of Marriage" revealed that **individuals who were continually married had a 75% more wealth at retirement than those who never married or divorced and didn't remarry**. (Keller).
- Some think it's too ***unnecessary***. We've heard someone say, "I don't need a piece of paper to say I love you." The problem

is that they don't see marriage as a covenant. Sometimes, that's just code for "I don't love you enough to get married and be solely devoted to you."

We affirm the goodness of marriage.

4. **We affirm the covenantal nature of marriage.** Paul quotes from Genesis saying the man shall "**hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh**" (31). **These words point to marriage as a sacred covenant.** "As long as we both shall live" – regardless of the storms. That's a covenant commitment.

But the covenant nature of marriage is deepened in Ephesians. For Paul says in **verse 32, "This mystery refers to Christ and the church." Marriage is patterned after Christ's covenant commitment to his church.**

Christ is the bridegroom, who will come for his bride (Matt 9:15, 25:1). He loves his bride. He is committed to his bride. He poured out his blood, establishing a new covenant with his bride. There is an unbreakable union with Christ and his church.

Paul's ministry was to prepare the bride to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2: "I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ."

Your wedding day is the most important day next to the day you become a Christian. The most important question is: **Who is my God? The second most important question is: Who is my spouse?**

There are three prevailing views of marriage. Let me tell you how we shouldn't see it, and how we should see it.

- ***It's not sacramental.*** The Catholic view is that marriage is one of the sacraments for divine grace being dispensed. We agree with them on a lot on marriage, but we don't affirm sacramentalism.

- ***It's not consumer-centered.*** This is a cultural view. It doesn't take Scripture authoritatively. Marriage in this view about the **consumer** – it's not about "us," it's about 'me.' There is no obligation to stay when it gets hard, because it's all about you. **This view minimizes marriage. It also opens the door for marital infidelity, and for a variety of marital arrangements forbidden in Scripture.** (Seek Kostenberger, 81-91). This lack of serious commitment, reminds me of NCAA signing day. Players pick a team, and then de-commit, commit, and de-commit. **Some even had tattoos of their original team, and then decided to de-commit, so now they're left with a tattoo of their ex-wife.** Sounds similar huh?
- ***It's a holy covenant.*** Stott says it well: "**Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God, preceded by the leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned with the gift of children**" (Stott, 163). Keller adds, "**In a covenant, the good of the relationship takes precedence over the immediate needs of the individual.**" (Keller, 81).

There is a vertical and horizontal dimension. Proverbs speaks of the forbidden one who commits adultery, "who forsakes the companion of her youth [horizontal] and forgets the covenant of her God [vertical]" (**Prov. 2:17; cf., Mal. 2:14, Ezek 16:8**).

What does this covenant mean? (Kostenberger/Jones, 89-90)

- ***Covenant means permanence.*** Divorce is not permitted except in certain biblically prescribed circumstances.
- ***Covenant means sacredness.*** It's not merely a civil union. It's a relationship before and under God.
- ***Covenant means intimacy.*** It involves leaving and cleaving (Gen 2:23-25).
- ***Covenant means mutuality.*** Both spouses seek the good of the other.
- ***Covenant means exclusiveness (Gen 2:22-25, 1 Cor 7:2-5).*** Jesus addressed sexual immorality, including lustful thoughts with seriousness (Matt. 19:9; 5:28).

5. **We affirm the goodness of singleness.** Both married and single people pursue the ultimate aim of life: to glorify God. Paul is a single man! Many of our great heroes have been (like John Stott), not to mention Jesus himself. Singleness can have great advantages in serving Christ.

6. **Christ is ultimate, not marriage.** Though marriages should be valued, protected, and nurtured, and cared for, it are not an end in themselves. Jesus mentioned the apparent fleeting nature of marriage, “For in the resurrection they will neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like the angels in heaven” (Mark 22:30; cf., 1 Cor 7:29, 31). We will be recognizable in heaven, and I think have relationships, but it seems that the institution of marriage is fleeting. **“The shadow of covenant-keeping between husband and wife gives way to the reality of covenant-keeping between Christ and his glorified Church.”** (Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*). Paul tells us in Ephesians, the great salvation plan is for Christ to unite all things in him.

Further, as Jesus said in the call to discipleship, while affirming and honoring marriage, one’s primary loyalty must be to Christ (Luke 14:26). This doesn’t mean we should reject our family responsibilities (not at all!), but that we must seek first Christ and his kingdom.

7. **We must rely on the Spirit for faithful and fulfilling marriages.**

As we mentioned in the previous message, **I believe 5:18-21 should be read with 5:22-33.** That is clear by the simple fact that there is no verb in 22, it’s clearly connected to 21, and 21 is built on the verb in 18 to be filled with the Spirit.

In 5:18, Paul tells the Christians to be filled with the Spirit. Every Christian is called to live their lives under the influence of the Spirit.

The Christian life is a Spirit-filled life.

Marriage must be lived in light of this reality. **Healthy marriages happen when each spouse dwells in Christ’s word, seeks not to grieve the Spirit, and asks the Father daily for the Spirit’s power. When the**

fruits of the Spirit are manifested, rather than the fruit of the flesh, marriages flourish.

While **the fall**, led to a **complete reversal of this God ordained pattern**, these disastrous results were overturned through the coming of Jesus and his atoning death. As a result of his life, death, resurrection, and sending of the Spirit, we have power to fulfill our roles – **not just faithfully, but joyfully.**

Further, **Ephesians 6:10-20** comes after this section on marriage and family. I think it's important to remember that we are in a war. **It's war. I'm not a fan of the sentimentalism that often accompanies marriage.** Marriage is glorious, but it is hard. **It requires a lot of repentance, forgiveness, and time.**

How can a husband do these verses?:

- **“Husbands, love your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.” (1 Pet 3:7)**
- **“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Col. 3:17).**
 - **This is one way Genesis 3 expresses itself. By harshness, instead of gentleness. By cruelty, instead of compassion.**
 - **We live these exhortations out by the Spirit.**

#2: ILLUSTRATION (22-33)

What the Colossians parallel doesn't include is this extraordinary illustration or picture of the Christ and the church.

Paul shows us that marriage displays the gospel. In the OT, the illustration of God's love for his people was also described as a marriage. Here it is Christ and the church specifically. In verse 32 he says this picture is “profound.**” It is awesome. In creation, God had Christ and the church in mind.**

A. This illustration gives us the ultimate picture of marriage.

This text shows us the beautiful picture of the husband and wife fulfilling their roles.

Wives give a picture of the church to the world.

- Verse 23: Christ is the head of the church, so husbands are the head of their wives.
- Verse 24: The church submits to Christ, wives submit to husbands.

Husbands give a picture of Christ to the world.

Christ is the head. Paul has already described his headship in Ephesians (cf., 1:22).

But look what kind of head he is – a sacrificial leader.

Notice the five verbs that describe Christ's love for his bride:

- he "loved" her (25)
- "he gave himself up for her" (25)
- "that he might sanctify her" (26)
- "having cleansed her" (26)
- that "he might present" her (27)
- "nourishes and cherishes" the church (29)

Stott says, "This statement [25-27] is so complete and comprehensive that some scholars think it may be a quotation from an early Christian confession, liturgy or hymn. It seems to trace Christ's care for his church from a past to a future eternity." (227). What a picture of Christ's love, then his sacrifice on the cross, for the purpose of making her clean, for the future presentation of her.

Christ doesn't crush his bride;
Christ dies for his bride. He also purifies his bride.

"having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word" (26). Some take this as ongoing, but I go with O'brien who says, "It is positional sanctification that is in view here, not progressive sanctification" (422).

Christ's cleansing happens by two agents: water and word.

Water. Some think this refers to baptism, but I don't think so. When Paul speaks of washing he emphasizes the spiritual cleansing that takes place (1 Cor. 6:11).

Paul may have been influenced by the marriage imagery in Ezekiel 16:8-14, and the prenuptial bath in the Jewish customs. So there may be a secondary reference here to the bridal bath. (O'Brien, 422)
Christ's death made his bride clean.

Word. I take this as the word of the gospel. This is how he uses word in Ephesians, the word of the gospel (Eph 6:17). O'Brien adds that this is consistent elsewhere in Paul's writings.

Therefore, Christ cleanses his bride spiritually, and he does this through the word of the gospel. The words of Jesus, thus echo here in **John 15:3**, and **17:17**.

The word of the gospel is the means by which we receive spiritual cleansing.

Every couple is giving a picture of the gospel. The only question is what kind of picture are they giving?

B. This illustration gives us the ultimate purpose of marriage:

This text shows us the ultimate purpose of marriage, namely the glory of Christ.

Everything in this passage points us to Christ!

- "as to the Lord" (22). That is, as an act of worship.
- "as Christ loved the church" (25). That is, reflect Christ in your love.
- "as Christ does the church" (29). Love like Christ.

Everything comes back to Christ. "Marriage exists ultimately to display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church." (Piper)

Marriage exists more for Christ than for you. This is so crucial to understand.

There are scores of books on how to have a healthy marriage. They dissect communication problems, financial problems, personality issues, the spouses' past (all important), but the ultimate issue in marriage is: Are you surrendered to the Lordship of Christ? Will you submit your life to him in all areas of life?

If the starting point for marriage, is me, then I'm starting at the wrong place. Marriage exists for Christ's glory.

Let your marriage be an offering of worship – as you love each other, forgive each other, serve one another. Let there be an aroma of Christ before a watching world.

C. This illustration provides amazing hope for marriage.

Christ died for the church, which displayed her sinfulness and his saving grace.

The biggest problem in marriage is sin. The ultimate solution is the grace of Jesus.

Because marriage is not merely a social convention, but is rooted in the Lordship of Christ, who is gracious, you have great hope in marriage!

Marriage is the union of two sinners. While sinners are forgiven and justified before God positionally, they still have remaining sin practically. That will create conflict! Look at **Romans 3**. Will anyone write a wedding song around that?! I don't think so.

That's why we need this Savior described in Ephesians 5.

Where do you look when marriage is difficult? Alcohol, deer hunting, more work, pornography? That's the wrong place! Look to Christ.

Marriage is intended to point us to Christ. We need the gospel every day in our hearts, for our marriage. This is what you must believe: Christ is enough. Christ is enough.

#3: INSTRUCTIONS

While husbands and wives are equally valuable, they have different roles. Ephesians points out those roles. (Benjie's preaching experience). A few notes before I point them out:

Remember the nature of God

These roles are designed by God, and God is not only **authoritative**; he is infinitely **good**. You should not ever take God's instructions to be oppressive or bad for you.

God is also **wise**. Everything here is by design and intent. God knows what he is doing.

These roles show us how to have a healthy and harmonious marriage that glorifies Christ. They are good for us and they are best. This is not about being "old fashioned" or being "Little house on the Prairie" or "The Walton's." This about submitting to God's design, and realizing he is wise and good.

God designs the roles, and gives us power to live them out. The proper roles include headship and helper. It goes back to Genesis 2, and as mentioned the fall affected this beautiful harmony. But headship is not a result of the fall. It was present before the fall. And there was no sin in the garden with this structure.

These roles are not cultural! They are rooted in creation. "This is not chauvinism, but creationism" (Stott)

In light of God's supreme authority, infinite wisdom, and matchless goodness, let's consider these roles.

Because marriage is ultimately about Christ's glory, I want to highlight this reality by making two points:

1. **Wives, Revere Christ through proper submission to and respect for your husband (22-24, 33; cf., Col. 3:19)**

So the role of wife is clear: **submission** (22, 24), and **respect** (33). This is not the only place “submission” is noted. This is consistent with the NT (Col. 3:18 Pet. 3:1, 1 Tim. 2:11-13; Titus 2:4-5; cf., 1 Cor. 11:3).

It doesn't say wives submit to every man. The husband is the head of the wife (23), not all women.

We must reject all improper caricatures of this teaching. Scripture is not talking about something akin to slavery, subservience, nor a military style, top down chain of command, where you have to obey without question. *It's not the picture of a man lying on the couch saying "Bring me the chips."*

What does “submission” mean?

Kostenberger says, “While some may view submitting to one's husband's authority as something negative, a more accurate way of looking at marital roles is to understand that wives are called to *follow their husband's loving leadership.*” (73). Did you catch that. Submission is about following your husbands' loving leadership.

This is also voluntary submission (see O'brien, 411-12). This is a happy relationship. *They freely and responsibly follow the loving leadership of a faithful husband, not a tyrant.*

When you submit, you are simply saying, “I am letting you lead.” You will flourish when he is leading, not when he is passive!

One might wonder, why does it say “submit” and husbands are called to “love.” Why not love. I think Stott is right when saying, “*The wife's submission is but another aspect of love.... What does it mean to 'submit'? It is to give oneself up to somebody. What does it mean to 'love'? It is to give oneself up for somebody.*” (235). Yes, the two are very similar (but not interchangeable).

To submit is to put the will of the other ahead of yours. To love is to put the needs of the other ahead of your own.

Titus, actually says both: “Train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands.” (2:4-5)

The motive: “as to the Lord”

It’s because she wants to glorify Christ (see 5:21, and 6:8-9).

Out of love for Christ, out of reverence for Christ, the wife sees this as part of her discipleship to Christ, to follow the leadership of her husband.

In other words, the motive isn’t to fulfill some societal role, or some cultural expectations. The motive is to glorify Christ.

What does “submit in everything” mean? This means in every area of life. It doesn’t mean that she follows him in matters that are sinful.

2 Problems with Submission

- **Culture.** In our Western culture, this is the age of liberation, so to talk about submission sounds like oppression, abuse, or dominance. In discussing it, it is easily to be misunderstood.
 - The Bible actually paints a wonderful picture of females! Jesus Christ with a courtesy and honor that was totally out of step with his culture. Ladies were very important in the ministry of Jesus and in the early church.
 - In the ancient world, there was a disdain for women. (See Stott 224).
 - We must keep Christ in view. Even though submission is talked about, there is nothing demeaning about this. This is caring leadership, not control.
- **Men.** Sinful men have perverted this command. Couch potato men take this as a license to bark orders at their wives. There are also insecure men who won’t let their wives go to the grocery

store by themselves. Do not use this verse to order your wife around.

- Now, even though it is not popular, and even though it is abused by sinful men, we do not have the right to throw it out. What we must do is understand it.

Now, let me provide a few more clarifications...

- First, this passage does not say "Husbands, be head of your wife." It simply states the indicative, a fact, not an imperative. The husband simply is the head. How is this headship lived out? Not like most people think of headship! It's like Jesus. So, if your idea of headship involves lording over your wife, demeaning her, being a tyrant, or anything like that, then you have the wrong picture. It's about servant leadership.
- Second, remember that these roles do not in any way imply one is more valuable to God than the other. It has nothing to do with value, but everything to do with *roles* (See 4:24, Gal. 3:28).
- Third, submission, doesn't mean he always gets his way. Husbands should die, and surrender a lot. C.J. reminded me of Open Range. "How's this gonna work out if you don't do what I say, Sue?" Wayne Grudem, who has done more technical work on headship than anyone says, "A well functioning head has ears." "As the head, I always get the last word... Yes mam."
- Fourth, the husband is not Christ. Husbands will fail. Wives are to follow them as they follow Christ.
- Fifth, wives to conform to Christ, not their husbands. Jesus, not the husbands are "sanctifying" women. Of course, husbands have some role in leadership, but ultimately, ladies are being conformed into the image of Christ.
- Finally, remember there's a difference in a "traditional marriage" and a biblical marriage (Kostenberger, 74). In a traditional marriage, a certain type of division exists. Women are often responsible for cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, etc., while

men are working and earning an income. While Scripture does speak of men working outside the home as his primary responsibility, and the home as the center of women's activity (though not limited to the home [Gen. 3:16-17, Prov 31:10-31]), **"the Bible is not a law book that exacts the division of labor"** (Ibid).

- There is freedom in Christ, and freedom to work out the best way to live out the biblical guidelines. As long as Christ-like headship, and loving submission are practiced, it would be okay for the wife is making more money than the husband, or for the wife to bring home the bacon while the husband is in school (by the way, being in school, is work), or while he is injured. Further, the husband may be a better cook. A biblical marriage doesn't always mean a traditional marriage.
- What is more, sometimes those with a "traditional marriage" are not living out a "biblical marriage." I've seen cases where the husband is out at work, and she stays home, but she is clearly in head!

The issue is headship and helper. Is that happening?

The couple should simply yield to headship and submission, and strive to prayerfully emulate the biblical pattern in a way that doesn't disobey Scripture.

Respect (33)

- The better word for this is "fear" (cf., v. 21). This doesn't mean terror, but awe. Why did Paul use this term?
- I'm not sure, but one reason surely is that the husband will give an account to God for leading of the family. Stand in awe of that assignment. (This is similar to pastors)
- On a practical level, he needs your respect. Women need to be loved, men need to be respected. Don't disrespect him by talking about him.

- The wife should see the responsibility that he has and respect him, love him, pray for him.
- Respect his needs as well. Guys have needs like ladies do. I'll talk more about this later.

2. **Husbands, Reflect Christ by Loving Your Bride (25-33)**

We don't have to spend as much time on this because we have already mentioned the whole section. Let me just outline this love in three parts.

The overall duty is very clear: **love**. I know it's crazy, but women like to be love. Ever been to a greeting card store, and observe women crying? How about their movie preferences?

How should we love, men? Like Christ. We aren't Christ. We won't love perfectly. But we are to love faithfully, as Jesus loved his bride.

A. **Sacrificial Love (25)**

Christ gave himself up for us. Christ's self-less love is our model.

It is a Golgotha love, when he gave up his back to be scourged, his hands and feet to be nailed, and exposed his side to the spear.

It's foot-washing love. Christ's headship is our model. He came to serve, though he was the head. There is authority coupled with unparalleled humility and love.

This is love: Giving yourself away for the good of another.

Paul has already mentioned this in the previous verses. "Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us." (5:2)

- Dying to self may involve: Sacrificing schedule, time, and some times even good ambitions to be with them, pray for and with them, and to serve them.

- **Dying to self involves: Crucify your flesh, and resolve by the Spirit to be faithful to her, and not yield to the temptation of lust.**

Marriage for a man is a call to die; but then again, so is following Jesus.

- **It is a love that acts. It is a love that serves.**
- **It takes initiative. Don't be a passive husband. Actively serve your wife. It is a 1 Corinthians 13 love.**

It's not just the service of love, but the attitude of love as well. "Let this mind be in you" Paul told the Philippians. Not, "Because I have to."

There are huge ups and downs in marriage; and you must be committed through thick and thin. Jesus did not quit walking to the cross, when the road got tough. He's your model Gentlemen, of perseverance and resolve.

B. Sanctifying Love (26-27)

Christ sanctifies the church through the word of the gospel. Does this have application for husbands?

Again, the husband can't atone for sins, or sanctify anyone, but there is a sense in which Christ's sanctifying work is a pattern for husbands.

Practically, I think this means love her in a way to help her grow in likeness to Christ.

Here's the question, "Is our wife more like Christ because she's married to us? Or, is she like Christ in spite of us?" (Hughes, 192)

**Be concerned for her spiritual well being.
Be in the word personally. Talk about the word with her.**

Do you know how your wife is doing in the following areas?

- o theological knowledge?
- o practice of spiritual disciplines?
- o spiritual gifts that can be used to serve others?
- o involvement in local church?
- o relationships with kids, parents, and others?
- o fears, hopes, dreams, temptations, disappointments?

C. **Satisfying Love** (28-30)

This may sound selfish but it isn't. **Paul is a realist**, that's all.

He has spoken of **redemption**, as the pattern of love. Now he speaks **of creation** design as instruction for love.

This may sound self serving or that it's demeaning to the wife. But that's not so. This makes perfect sense in light of the fact that the two have become one flesh.

"as your own body." Just as you long to satisfy your needs, satisfying your wives needs.

- This statement also **applies** the second great commandment. "Love your neighbor as yourself" to marriage.
- And it is a picture of Christ's care for his body.
- **In marriage, just as you long for intimacy, joy, security, health, peace, companionship, community, provide it for your bride first.**
- **You don't sleep in the road do you? Well, don't let your wife. You don't go without food for weeks do you? No.**
- **Husbands should provide and protect.**
- **Husbands should and honor her and be sensitive with her.**
- **I have a friend who is an administrator at a Christian college. He said that he only interviews couples. He gets insight into the husband's gentleness and affection. If he is harsh, or embarrassed or constantly corrections then he knows that's the tip of the ice berg.**

- Husbands should nourish their wives (29). Physically, nourish her. Love her. Spend time with her. Spiritually, nourish her, by talking, praying, worshiping together.
- Husbands should cherish their wives (30). Admire her and compliment her, men.

Ill never forget one particular example of this type of love.

Wayne Grudem, a world renown theologian, was on faculty at Trinity University for 20 years. He served with scholars like DA Carson and Doug Moo. They were the Seal team Six of Professors.

But His wife suffered from Fibromyalgia, a disease which gives pain to many muscle groups, and for which there is no known cure. She had a hard time walking up stairs, and doing household work. They had prayed and tried everything, but there was no relief. Her pain was aggravated by cold weather and humidity. Chicago was not the most ideal place to live.

They had some friends that invited them to Mesa, AZ for vacation and they learned that the warm dry climate there was wonderfully helpful. After a few trips, they rode bikes together for first time in a 12 years. He said, "I would like to move here, but there are no seminaries." Then they flipped through the Yellow Pages and found Phoenix seminary. He called and asked if they might have an opening. (Elliott told me that the Dean laughed, thinking it was a joke). Well, after much prayer and thought, Grudem said that he began to ponder the implications of Ephesians 5:28. "Love your wife as your own body." He said, "If I were suffering like Margret, would I not want to move for the sake of my health?" The obvious answer was yes.

She however, didn't want to move because of her condition, and because of his very influential position that Grudem held. Phoenix seminary was not Trinity. So here they were: He wanted to move for her sake; she wanted to stay for his sake.

Finally, when Phoenix told him that they would give him a reduced teaching load with more time to write, she thought that was a benefit worth moving for, and Dr Grudem, as the head with ears, listened to his wife and they moved.

Husbands, love your wife as your own body - even if it means sacrificing your career dreams. Nourish her. Cherish her.

A Profound Glorious Mystery (31-32)

After quoting Gen 2:24, Paul says that this mystery refers to Christ and the church.

Paul interprets the original union with husband and wife as a model of the union of Christ and the church.

From the very beginning, marriage was to be a picture of Christ and his bride.

Have you said yes to this groom? Do you belong to Jesus? Are you a member of his body? Do you share in this union with him? Have you responded to the word of the gospel and been cleansed?

''the two will become one flesh.'

**But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him''
(1 Cor 6:16c, 17)**

- If not, then why would you not? Come to this Savior. Turn from other lovers, and embrace the lover of your soul. The one who died for sinners like you, to make you his own.**
- If so, then do not be tempted to chase other lovers. Love the Savior supremely, and pattern your life after him according to his word.**