

# THE BELIEVING WIFE AND HUSBAND ARE TO WALK IN A SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION AND LOVE EPHESIANS 05:22–33

## ***Introduction***

When dealing with wives and husbands, we must always remember that God’s instructions are not grievous. In fact, they are easy and light. God instructs and guides us down the easiest and lightest path possible. As Christ said:

*Mat 11:28-30* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

If we walk down the path God has laid for us — if we do just what He says — we experience the most loving and peaceful, the richest and fullest life imaginable. This is *doubly true* for husband and wife, for they have the companionship of each other as well of the Lord.

- I. The wife is to walk in a spirit of submission (vv. 22-24).
- II. The husband is to love his wife (vv. 25-33).

## ***I. Ephesians 05:22–24 Walking in a Spirit of Submission***

The wife is to walk in a spirit of submission. There are three reasons why the wife is to be submissive to her husband.

1. To submit is God’s will. In fact, it is a commandment of God. There is to be no equivocation, no argument, not even a question about it: “Wives, submit to your husbands.”

God is God, and as God, He has the right to demand anything of us. But note the words “as to the Lord.” When we do anything, we are to do it *as to the Lord*. Why? Because we love Him. The Lord has loved and given Himself for us, given Himself that He might save us. He loved us; therefore, we love Him. This is always the first reason we obey Him. We love Him; therefore, when He says to do something, we do it *as to Him* — to please Him.

Now, let us ask ourselves: What kind of spirit is the Christian wife to have as she obeys God?

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|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| => A spirit of slavery or love?    | => A spirit of drudgery or love? |
| => A spirit of resentment or love? | => A spirit of reaction or love? |
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The answer is obvious: she acts out of love. She loves the Lord; therefore, to please Him she submits herself to her husband. The point is this: God instructs wives to walk in a spirit of submission with their husbands. Therefore, Christian wives do not obey the Lord out of resentment and reaction because of the commandment. They obey the Lord out of love because they love both the Lord and their husbands. Therefore, they focus and set their lives upon pleasing the Lord and their husbands. If the Lord says do it, then they do it because they love the Lord and want to please Him above all else.

2. To submit is God's order for the family (v. 2). There is to be a *partnership* and order within the family. This is basic for the family and society to exist. In fact, no organization, no matter what it is, can survive and exist without a spirit of partnership and order. Note three important facts.
    - a. The husband is the head of the wife. The word "head" in Scripture refers to authority not being. Neither man nor woman is superior to the other in being. Men and women are equal in God's eyes.
- => There is an essential partnership between men and women. Neither is independent of the other. Both are from the other, and the relationship that exists between them has come from God.

*1 Cor 11:11-12 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.*

- => There is neither male nor female in God's eyes. He sees both men and women as one, each as significant as the other.

*Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

When God talks about man being the head of the woman, He is not talking about ability, worth, competence, value, brilliance or advantage. God is talking about function and order within an organization. Every organization has to have a head for it to be operated in an efficient and orderly manner. There are no greater organizations than God's universe, His church and His Christian family. Within God's order of things there is a partnership, but every partnership must have a head, and God has ordained that man is the head of the partnership.

- b. The great pattern for the wife to follow is Christ and the church. Christ is the head of the church. This simply means that Christ has authority over the church. So long as the church lives by this rule, the church experiences love, joy and peace — orderliness — and it is able to carry out its function and mission on earth to the fullest. So it is with the husband; he is the head of the family, the ultimate authority in the family. The wife is to be submissive to that authority just as the church is to be submissive to Christ.

So long as she and the rest of the family live by this rule, the family experiences love, joy and peace — orderliness — and it fulfils its function and purpose on earth. This, of course, assumes that the husband is fulfilling his part in the family. As in any organization, each member must do his part for the organization to be orderly and accomplish its purpose.

c. The husband is the saviour of the body just as Christ is the Saviour of the church. Christ is the great Protector and Comforter of the church. So the husband is to be the *protector and comforter* of the wife. By nature, that is, by the constitution and build of the body, the husband is stronger than the wife. Therefore, in God's order of things, he is to be the main protector and comforter of the wife. These two functions are two of the great benefits which the wife receives from a loving husband who is faithful to the Lord.

3. To submit is a spiritual mystery (v. 23). The wife's submission is comparable to Christ and the church. Again, Christ is the pattern for the wife:

=> as she submits to Christ, so she is to submit to her husband.

=> as she depends upon Christ for help and protection, so she is to depend upon her husband for help and protection.

=> as she depends upon Christ for companionship and comfort, so she is to depend upon her husband for companionship and comfort.

In summary, the submission that wives are to show to their husbands is an example of the submission that all believers are to show to one another (Eph. 5:21). It does not mean that women are inferior to men. It simply means that there is to be an arrangement, an order in the household. Every *body* must have such order, and every *body* must have a head. Two heads in any body or organization would be a monstrosity and make for disorder. Therefore, in God's order of things for the family, the husband is the head over the family. He arranges things in a spirit of *tenderness and love* and the wife is to submit herself in a sweet spirit of *understanding and reasonableness* (see Prov. 31:10-31).

**1 Cor 7:10** *To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.*

**Col 3:18** *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

**1 Tim 2:11-13** *A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.*

**1 Tim 3:11** *In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*Titus 2:4* Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children.

*1 Pet 3:1* Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives.

*Prov 31:27* She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

*Gen 3:16* To the woman he said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

## II. *Ephesians 05:25–33 Husband’s Love for his Wife*

The husband is to love his wife. Note five significant points.

1. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is the very love of God Himself (agape love). *Agape* love is a selfless and unselfish love, a giving and sacrificial love. It is the love of the mind and will as well as of the heart. It is not only a love of affection and feelings; it is a love of the *will and commitment*. It is a love that wills and commits itself to love a person. It is the love that works for the highest good of the person loved...
  - that loves even if the person *does not deserve to be loved*
  - that loves even if the person is *utterly unworthy of being loved*

**Thought 1.** Just imagine! What would happen in most marriages if the husband so loved his wife, loved her...

- with a selfless and unselfish love
- with a giving and sacrificial love
- with a love of the will as well as of the heart
- with a love of commitment as well as of affection

One thing that would happen in most marriages would be this: the wife would willingly accept his authority as the head of the family.

Note that the standard of the husband’s love is the love of Christ for the church. The love of Christ for the church can be described in one simple statement: Christ *gave Himself* for the church. Christ loved the church so much that He gave Himself — *sacrificed Himself totally* — gave all He was and had for it. This is the love the husband is to have for his wife. Chrysostom, a great minister in the early church, said:

*If it be needful that you shouldst give your life for her, or be cut to pieces a thousand times, or endure anything whatever, refuse it not ...He brought the Church to His*

*feet by His great care, not by threats nor fear nor any such thing; so do you conduct thyself towards your wife. (Quoted by Barclay. The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, p. 206.)*

The sacrificial love of the husband involves three things. Note that the very things said about Christ and the church are to be true of the husband and wife.

- a. The husband's love involves being *set apart and cleansed*. The word *holy* means to sanctify, to be set apart. When a young man asks a young lady to be his wife, he sets himself apart for her and for her alone. His word, his act, his promise of marriage also causes her to set herself apart. When he speaks the word and makes the promise of marriage, he and she both are thereafter set apart and cleansed for each other.

A dirty bride or groom — a dirty, defiled marriage — is unthinkable. The one thing above all else that will keep the marriage sanctified and cleansed is the husband's sacrificial love. If the husband will love his wife to the point that he gives himself sacrificially, his love will not only protect him, but it will go a long way in protecting the sanctity and purity of his wife.

- b. The husband's love involves having no stain or wrinkle or any other blemish. Stains would mean the mistakes that tarnish one's life and marriage, mistakes so serious that they are very difficult to wash off one's body and out of one's mind. They would include such things as...
- mistreatment and abuse
  - loose and immoral behaviour
  - withdrawal and avoidance

Wrinkles would mean things that cause friction and rattle the nerves and that need ironed out. They would include such things as...

- temper and reaction
- broken promises and serious neglect
- severe selfishness and rejection

- c. The husband's love involves being holy and blameless. The word *holy* (*hagia*) means to be separate and untouched by evil. The husband's love — if it is a real love — will stir him to be holy and unblemished and go a long way in stirring his wife to be holy and blameless.

**Thought 1.** This point is striking — a real eye-opener. It shows just how dependent the marriage is upon the love of the husband — how much effect the husband's love has upon the marriage. Few wives could reject such love; few wives would refuse to walk hand in hand with their husbands if they truly loved them with the love that is unselfish and sacrificial.

**Eph 5:25** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

**1 Pet 3:7** *Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

2. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is the very same love he has for his own body. This is a startling statement. Note again what it says: the husband is to love his wife just as much as he loves *his own body*.

a. This means that he is to feed and care for his wife as he does his own body.

=> The word *feed* (ektrephei) means to clothe, nurture and look after until she is mature in the marriage and then to continue nourishing her as long as she lives.

=> The word *care* (thalpei) means to hold ever so dear within the heart; to treat with warmth, tenderness, care, affection and appreciation.

**Thought 1.** What a difference would exist in marriage if the husband just *fed and cared for* his wife as he does his own body. Think through the meaning of the two words for just a moment and imagine the difference that could exist.

b. This means that he is to become one body with his wife. Two people could never become any closer. This is complete absorption and assimilation of each into the other — a complete union and oneness...

- of body and spirit
- of mind and thoughts
- of objective and purpose
- of behaviour and activity

The husband becomes one with his wife, and the wife becomes one with her husband. The two become one flesh. (This is dealt with more fully in the following point.)

3. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is to be the love that will stir him to leave his parents and be joined to his wife (see *United, Joined*, Eph. 5:31).

4. The love which the husband is to have for his wife is a spiritual mystery — a *spiritual love* — a love just like Christ's love for the church (see *Spiritual Union*, Eph. 5:32).

5. The conclusion is simple and straightforward: the husband is to *love his wife as himself*, and the wife is to *reverence (respect and esteem) her husband* (v. 33). ■

## EPHESIANS 05: 31 UNITED, JOINED (PROSKOLLAO)

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” Ephesians 5:31*

To join fast together; to glue together; to cement together; to be joined in the closest union possible; to be bound together; to be so totally united that two become one. Therefore, to join means a spiritual union. It is a union higher and stronger than the union of parent and child. It is a union that means more than living together, more than having sex and bearing offspring. Animals do this. It is a union that can be wrought by God alone (v. 11). It is a spiritual union that places man above the physical plane of animals. It is a spiritual fullness, a spiritual sharing of life together: a dedication, a consecration, a completeness, a satisfaction that makes a person the exclusive possession of God and of the spouse. As said, such a cleaving or spiritual union is wrought by God alone. Both husband and wife must be willing and submissive for God to bring about such a union in their lives. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21; Eph. 5:22-33).

There are three unions within a true marriage, that is, a marriage that *really unites* and is *really joined together* by God (Mt. 19:6).

1. There is the physical union: the sharing of each other’s body (1 Cor. 7:2-5). But note: physical sharing cannot reach its ultimate fullness unless it is experienced while conscious of God’s warm and tender mercies (Eph. 5:25-33).
2. There is the mental union: the sharing of each other’s life and dreams and hopes, and the working together to realize those dreams and hopes. It is important to note that this union still deals only with the physical and material world.
3. There is the spiritual union: the sharing, melting and moulding of each other’s spirit (see Eph. 5:25-33). This can be wrought only by God. Therefore, there has to be a sharing together with God for there to be a *nourishing* and *nurturing* of the spirit.

Now here is the point: the greatest thing in the world is to know God personally and to be perfectly assured that we shall live now and eternally — to have life abundant with all the love, significance, meaning and purpose humanly possible. But a man and a woman cannot experience abundant life of and by themselves. They can only nurture the mind and mesh themselves together mentally and physically. To be meshed together spiritually, the couple must share God and His saving grace together. When a couple shares God together day by day, God works supernaturally within their spirits, *melting* their beings and *moulding* them into what He calls *one flesh*. They actually become as *one person*. This is what is meant by “God has joined together.” The Greek word for *united* (sunzeugen)

actually means to be joined. It is God's yoking, joining and binding the couple together into such a spiritual union that causes them to become one person.

A couple who is spiritually united does two very practical things.

1. The couple "submits to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21). They submit, yield, surrender, sacrifice and give themselves up to the other as they live day by day in the fear (trust) of God. Day by day they deliberately set out to nourish and cherish the other, even as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church (Eph. 5:29). They work to become part of each other — so deliberately that they seek to become part of each other's body, each other's flesh and each other's bones (Eph. 5:30). They seek to be joined "as one flesh," no matter the surrender and sacrifice required. The meshing together is done by God. God takes such deliberate purpose and behaviour, such a melting of one's being, and moulds it into the flesh of the other — so much so the two actually become as one, not only physically and mentally, but spiritually as well.
2. The couple shares the presence of God and His saving grace together. As a result God gives them a spiritual assurance and strength which they share together throughout life. They share the knowledge and confidence...
  - that God will care for and look after them now and forever
  - that God will carry them through the devastating trials of life that confront every human being every so often
  - that God will bless them with all that is necessary as they walk through life together.
  - that God will give them an abundant entrance into the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ — forever and ever.

Again, the point is this: God takes such deliberate sharing of spiritual things and melts and moulds the man and woman into *one flesh* spiritually — so much so that they actually become one. A man and a woman being spiritually united by God as one person means that they cleave to one another and hold one another ever near and dear. Being united to one another in God's Spirit is true marriage — the glorious gift of God.

**Thought 1.** No more beautiful picture of marriage could be painted, yet two serious problems exist in far too many marriages.

- 1) The problem of one or both of the spouses being unwilling to be bound together by the Spirit of God.
- 2) The problem of one or both of the spouses being unwilling to break away from dependency upon the parents. □



## EPHESIANS 05: 32 SPIRITUAL UNION, MARRIAGE

*This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church.  
Ephesians 5:32*

Marriage is a spiritual union that can be wrought by God and by God alone (see Mt. 19:10-11). It is much more than two people merely agreeing to live together and to be loyal to one another. It is much more than natural affection or infatuation. It is much more than a mere piece of paper, more than a legal contract, more than bearing offspring. After all, animals do the same. Marriage, when it is brought together and honestly committed to God, is a totally unique union that is unlike any other relationship in life. When consummated by God and placed into the hands of God day by day, it is a *spiritual union* lifted ever so high and full of splendour and warmth and tenderness. It is the real experience of love and warmth and tenderness — the full preciousness and richness of sharing all with one another. In reality, a true marriage is indescribable. For a true marriage is a *spiritual experience* that is beyond anything known in the physical world. It is a spiritual union mutually experienced only by the couples who truly know the love of Christ for His church.

*A true marriage is love* (v. 25). It is sacrificial love (v. 25); a love for another person that is just as great as one's love for oneself (v. 28, 33). It is a love that cherishes (v. 29).

*A true marriage is a union* (v. 30). It is a union so completely and spiritually wrought that two persons become as one body and as one flesh (vv. 30-31).

*A true marriage is a mystery* (v. 32). It is a spiritual fact that has to be revealed by God if it is to be experienced by couples (v. 32). It is a spiritual mystery that can be illustrated only by the great love Christ has for His church (vv. 23-33).

Christ and His love are the symbolic example for the husband. The church and its love for Christ are the symbolic example for the wife. This picture says several practical things.

1. The Christian home is to be lived in the very presence and atmosphere of the Lord.
2. The Christian home is to be governed by the Lord. Its decisions are to be made in light of the Lord and His will.
3. The Christian home is not to have two partners, but three — husband, wife and Christ. □