

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

The first three chapters of Ephesians are primarily theological, and the last three are more practical. This is certainly true of our passage today when it comes to marriage. Many people view the Bible's teaching on marriage as regressive – a throwback to “primitive” values, but it's the Word of God for our lives. As Christ followers, we must put a stake in the ground and decide to live according to God's Word – even when it's hard because we trust that God is good.

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your sermon notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?

Read Ephesians 5:22-24

2. What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband? Is begrudging submission true submission? Why can submission be difficult? What does it require?

Submit is not a bad word. Submission is not a reflection of inferiority or lesser worth. Christ constantly submitted Himself to the will of the Father ([Luke 22:42](#); [John 5:30](#)), without giving up an iota of His worth.

To counter the world's misinformation concerning a wife's submission to her husband, we should carefully note the following in Ephesians 5:22-23: 1) A wife is to submit to one man (her husband), not to every man. The rule to submit does *not* extend to a woman's place in society at large. 2) A wife is to willingly submit to her husband in personal obedience to the Lord Jesus. She submits to her husband because she loves Jesus. 3) The example of a wife's submission is that of the church to Christ. 4) There is nothing said of the wife's abilities, talents, or worth; the fact that she submits to her own husband does not imply that she is inferior or less worthy in any way. Also notice that there are no qualifiers to the command to submit, except “in everything.” So, the husband does not have to pass an aptitude test or an intelligence test before his wife submits. It may be a fact that she is better qualified than he to lead in many ways, but she chooses to follow the Lord's instruction by submitting to her husband's leadership. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/wives-submit.html>)

3. Does a wife's call to submit to her husband change if he's not a Christian? How can a wife's submission affect her husband? (See 1 Peter 3:1-2)

1 Peter 3:1-2, “In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will

be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-do-i-submit-to-my-unbelieving-husband>

4. What does it mean that wives are to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord”? How is this calling connected to Ephesians 5:18, 21?

The Greek word translated “submit,” *hupotasso*, is the continuing form of the verb. This means that submitting to God, the government, a pastor, or a husband is not a one-time act. It is a continual attitude, which becomes a pattern of behavior.

First, of course, we are responsible to submit to God, which is the only way we can truly obey Him ([James 1:21; 4:7](#)). And each Christian should live in humble, ready submission to others ([Ephesians 5:21](#)). In regards to submission within the family unit, [1 Corinthians 11:2–3](#), says that the husband is to submit to Christ (as Christ did to God the Father) and the wife is to submit to her husband. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/wives-submit.html>)

Read Ephesians 5:25-30

5. What difference is there in viewing headship as responsibility versus authority? What can husbands learn about headship from Matthew 20:25-28?

The submission of the wife to the husband in [Ephesians 5](#) does not allow the husband to be selfish or domineering. His command is to love (verse 25), and he is responsible before God to fulfill that command. The husband must exercise his authority wisely, graciously, and in the fear of the God to whom he must give an account. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/wives-submit.html>)

6. What does it look like for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church? What does it require? Why can this be difficult? What insight do Colossians 3:19 and 1 Peter 3:7 provide for husbands?

When a wife is loved by her husband as the church is loved by Christ, submission is not difficult. [Ephesians 5:24](#) says, “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” In a marriage, submission is a position of giving honor and respect to the husband (see [Ephesians 5:33](#)) and [completing](#) what he is lacking in. It is God’s wise plan for how the family should function. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/wives-submit.html>)

Colossians 3:19, “Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.”

1 Peter 3:7, “In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.”

The standard by which husbands are to love their wives is stated outright, and it’s a high standard, indeed: “Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” ([Ephesians 5:25](#)). The love of

Christ took Him to the cross; the love of a husband for his wife will involve a similar giving of himself, even if the end result is not as bloody. Such is the nature of true love that it is willing to sacrifice for the loved one. Such is the nature of marriage that God intends husbands to sacrifice for their wives. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/husbands-love-wives.html>)

7. What does it mean that a husband is to “nourish and cherish” his wife? What does this look like spiritually, emotionally, and physically? How is this calling connected to Ephesians 5:18?

Christ’s goal for the church (His “bride”) is “to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:26–27). Husbands cannot sanctify their wives exactly like Christ sanctifies the church, but they can set the spiritual goal of their wives being all that Christ wants them to be. Then husbands can, in love, work toward helping their wives achieve that goal of Christlikeness. Husbands who love their wives remember that they are “fellow heir[s] of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7, NASB).

The Bible also gives husbands a practical way to gauge the authenticity of their love for their wives: are they caring for their wives’ needs in a way comparable to how they care for themselves? “Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church” (Ephesians 5:28–29). The “one-flesh” principle comes into play here. Selfishness has no place in a marriage. And, ironically, as a husband meets the needs of his wife, he will find that he himself reaps the benefits. Note, too, that the standard for husbands’ love of their wives comes back to Christ’s love of the church. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/husbands-love-wives.html>)

Read Ephesians 5:31-33

8. What do these final verses teach us about marriage? Where should our priorities lie in marriage? What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on applying in your life this week?

The remainder of the passage in Ephesians 5 deals with the principle of leave and cleave (verse 31) and emphasizes once again the connection between the marriage relationship and the relationship of Christ and His church (verse 32).

Too often, husbands look earlier in Ephesians 5 and latch on to verse 22: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.” Husbands sometimes take it upon themselves to make sure their wives submit to their authority. However, *verse 22 was not written to husbands*. It is specifically addressing wives. Husbands are never told to enforce their wives’ submission. Rather, husbands are told to love their wives (verse 25). Verses 25 through 32 are for husbands, and that is what they should focus on.

What is a husband’s responsibility? To love his wife. Without selfishness, without reservation, and without condition. Love her as Christ loved the church unto death (see John 13:1). Love her, seek her

best good, sacrifice for her benefit, give yourself to her wholeheartedly, and, when that's all done, love her some more. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/husbands-love-wives.html>)