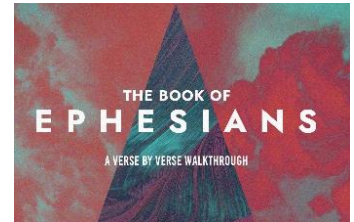


Title: Ephesians, Week 12, The Mystery of Marriage

Speaker: Corey Brown

Passage: Ephesians 5:22-33

Big idea: Ephesians 5:22-33 shows us how marriages flourish in Christ.



Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Here's today's Big Idea.



**<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

Literally, "wives submit to your husbands - as (you already do) to the Lord", which bonds itself to the previous verse 21, that we are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

The idea here is propagated based on what Paul expresses, that a wife should submit herself to the leadership and 'lordship' of her husband, as she would to the Lord. Wives are to submit to their husbands, in the same way that they are already submitting to the Lord. This is a command for Christian wives, not a questionable suggestion.

What is submission here though - but this is not a forced or *coerced submission* *hypotasso* *subject*, but a willing coming under.

The word means what it says from the previous passage of 5:21, that we are to willingly come under the authority of others over us because this is what being filled with the spirit means. But notice that this command to submit flows from a position of doing so like you submit to Jesus.

**<sup>23</sup> 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.**

- head - leader - Kephale

The headship of husbands to wives is the same as the headship of Jesus to the church. The same word. Kephale - is used for both instances. This does not mean that the husband is more valuable deserving of more dignity, or respect than his wife.

Jesus is the head of the church - and as Jesus is equal to God, he willingly submits himself to the will of his father.

**\*\*Gethsemane\*\***

But in this head means prominent or foremost but has the connotation of leadership only not value. The basis for the design of marriage is not on humanity, but on Jesus and the church.

The husband is the head of his wife AS Jesus is the head of the church.

Marriage role is not determined by humanity, but by God, and his good design, based ultimately on his design for Jesus and the church, his bride. God created Marriage with the final wedding supper of the lamb in mind notice that the verse does not say Christ is the head of the church in the same way that a husband is the head of the wife.

It's the other way around.

**The husband is the head of his wife, BECAUSE its a mirror of the relationship between Christ and the church.**

vs 23b now - a qualifier here.

This does not mean that husbands are their wives saviour, only Jesus is the saviour, but that the husband is responsible to his wife.

**24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.**

So, the imagery here is set and its actually much more than imagery.

So, in the same way that the church submits to the headship of Jesus (Eph 1:22), so also, wives you should submit yourselves to your husbands in everything.

A qualifier here

1. Paul is speaking to Christian men and women. The husband should not only be worthy of his wife's submission, but he should ever only be asking for her submission to Christian principles.
2. Paul assumes that Christian love and unity is being portrayed at least in-part in each marriage
3. Paul isn't telling wives to submit to their husbands if he is asking her to sin, leading her to reject Christ and the gospel, etc.

In the way the church submits to Christ in everything, wives should submit to their Christ like husbands in everything.

So that is what this says to wives. Remember this and I'll summarize for us what Paul has said here.

Now Paul is going to take this even further.

Ladies, if you've had a hard time with this section because it is combative to our western "sensibilities" just wait for what the husbands are told to you.

**25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,**

vs 25-27 is all one sentence - so we'll break it down a little more.

vs 25 love your wives

- Agepao her - self sacrifice for her, live your life in a way that exalts her, makes much of her.

It would make sense if Paul commanded these husbands to be patient with their wives in this patriarchal situation.

In this highly domineering Patriarchal culture of Greco-Roman society, wives were seen more as property than people.

Paul here is doing something astonishing. He is elevating the value of wives to such a degree that they are worth the same love as the death of Christ confirms on his church.

Jesus agapao the Church - **Self Sacrificing love**, willingly gave himself for the church, giving his very life.

**<sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

This is not about husbands sanctifying their wives, but that Jesus does it for the church and that husbands are to model this.

Leading their wives in sacrificial love in such a way that they grow in Jesus, they grow in the gospel, their holiness increases, they grow and flourish in the faith, to be presented to Christ just the way the church will be presented to Christ that Jesus might sanctify her – literally, to make her holy. (set apart, consecrated for holy purpose).

Paul is saying to husbands - be self effacing - self-sacrificing for your wife, that you give your life to serve her, to present her as holy, to present her before Jesus as mature and sanctified.

The husband is responsible not for his wife's salvation, but for a saved wife's spiritual condition, allotting her the opportunity for growth.

In vs 26, *washing of water* - baptism - meaning not necessarily the act of baptism - but instead the mentality of baptism, as a Christian, a follower of Jesus - a kingdom citizen.

So that in the same way as the Church is adorned in splendor by her husband Jesus, a husband should help to adorn his wife in splendor as she grows in Christian maturity. To be a Christian husband, you must elevate your wife and her interests, her benefit over your own to the point of your whole life.

In vs 27, *that she would be made holy* - as she submits to the Lord and to herself sacrificing husbands leading.

**<sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**  
*In the same way* - as Christ loves the church, a husband should love his wife like Christ loves his body, the church.

*In the same way* - Jesus loved the church, giving his very life for her a husband should be self sacrificing - care for, nourish, cherish your wife as if she was your own body.

He who loves his wife, shows that he has true care for himself; he who cares for himself will put his wife's care ahead of his own.

**<sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body.**

So because the wife is a member of the husbands own body (spiritual and metaphorically due to Eve being made from out of the rib of Adam), we are to care for and nourish it (provide for it her) because in the same way - Jesus provides everything his body, the church, needs.

Eph 1 - that we've been given every spiritual blessing in Christ.

**<sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."**

Paul quotes the institution of Marriage here. This is where we get the statement to leave and cleave - (hold fast) be inseparably bound to his wife - and the two will become one, in perfect harmony and unity. We are to reflect the glory of Jesus' love for God, and Jesus' love for the church.

The two become one flesh in the same way that Adam and Ever were one flesh. She was made from him - and they were joined in an everlasting earthly covenant.

**<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**

This is the crux of the whole argument.

*This mystery* - marriage is profound. The mystery is verse 27-31. How marriage in human covenant is like Jesus and the church is a profound mystery, a glorious mystery. We are to see this as a significant reality.

vs 33

*Let each one of you* - men - love his wife as Jesus loved the church, love your wife like you care for, nourish, protect, provide for your own body. (No statements of condition here.)

*And let the wife* - respect, submit to her husband. (No statements of condition here.)

So, while these parts are a bit of a wrap up, this is significant for us to understand - there aren't conditions to these commands by Paul to the people.

Why these commands? It's based entirely on the OT creation account of Men and Women, and also the creation of Marriage, which also resulted in the fall of humanity.

### **The Mystery of Marriage**

We start with Marriage as it was designed, perfectly before the Fall.

How were men and women created?

[Genesis 1:27 ESV](#) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

God started with Adam - **meaning first... not more valuable**, as we will see in a moment. But God made Adam and Eve with one condition attached to their value - **in his image**. In God's image/likeness - he (God) created, them - male and female, distinct, but complementary. Equal in created value, but different in essence.

And their roles are also different: Men cannot bear children - only females can do this. Women cannot provide seed for the offspring. This is true of everything in nature - protons and electrons - magnets - go together when they are opposite.

Kathy Keller says this "Meaning of Marriage"

Marriage, in the Biblical view, addresses the chasm between the sexes. Marriage is a full embrace of the other sex. We accept and yet struggle with the gendered 'otherness' of our spouse, and in the process, we grow and flourish in ways otherwise impossible. Because, male and female are 'like-opposite' each other - both radically different and yet incomplete without each other.

Kathy Keller - The Meaning of Marriage

Marriage, in the Biblical view, addresses the chasm between the sexes. Marriage is a full embrace of the other sex. We accept and yet struggle with the gendered 'otherness' of our spouse, and in the process, we grow and flourish in ways otherwise impossible. Because, male and female are 'like-opposite' each other - both radically different and yet incomplete without each other.

But why this distinction? Genesis 2 tells us why Eve was created.

[Genesis 2:20 ESV](#) The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

There was no **helper fit for him**. Literally, the Hebrew word is **ezer** - which means strong helper, or strong supporter.

**Fit for Him** - loneliness - and incomplete - the only thing that God said was not good in all the days of creation was the loneliness of Adam. Fit or Suitable: nothing found suitable - meaning - nothing found. Literally, "Like Opposite Him"

And this harmonious relationship was God's design for humanity - in the exact same way that it is for Jesus and His bride the Church.

But something went horribly wrong - sin enters the world, and while it is not the most significant reality of sin, human relationships are fractured/broken and cursed.

In Genesis 3, we are told of the fall of humanity into sin.

Sin mars and breaks all the unity of every human relationship. Interestingly though, the only human relationship present to break was that of the relationship between a husband (Adam) and a wife (Eve).

Why don't marriages work exactly how we want them to? Why does this concept of wilful submission and servant leadership cause such difficulty?

Look at the wording of Gen 3:16. It's because of Gen 3.

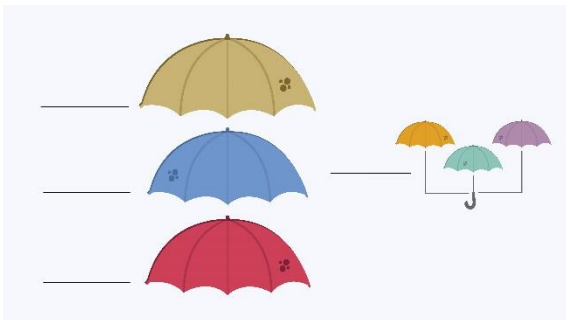
**Genesis 3:16 ESV** To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

There is a very specific curse to Eve by God due to the nature of her sin. The issues here are that there will no longer be harmony in their relationship, but instead, strife. There won't be agreement, but instead, conflict.

He will not lovingly lead and humbly exalt her, but will instead, rule over her and she will desire to rule her husband. This is obvious to understand that this is not how it ought to be. She will overstep in her fallen condition, and he will shirk his responsibilities in his fallen condition.

But when we live in this reality of submission and headship in our marriages, we start to see the beauty of God's original design displayed.

Eph 5:22-32/33 is the focussed purposeful section of the NT around the issues of Christian Marriage. It is extensive in its command as a bedrock, but not fully in terms of the implications of what it looks like.



Wives Submit... as to Christ - Ephesians 5:22-24

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

To wives in the excellent book, *The Meaning of Marriage*, author Kathy Keller writes: Wives, your call is to submit, come under - as the strong helper - *ezer*, to complement & fulfill what was lacking in your husband.

You should never be forced to submit because this role is not servile oppression.

You are to submit to your husband in all things that don't involve being led to sin, led to deny Christ, or that lead to your abuse.

But when this is done well - wives - you will play the role of Jesus in your Marriage.

Kathy Keller “If it is not an assault on the dignity and dignity of the Second Person of the Godhead to submit himself, and assume the role of a servant, then how could it possibly injure me to be asked to play out the ‘Jesus role’ (of submission) in my marriage?”

Wives, when you willingly submit yourself to your husbands, there will be greater harmony in your marriage, greater spiritual fruitfulness, and greater delight.

### Now to husbands... Husbands love like Christ.

**<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.**

3 times husbands are commanded to love their wives self-sacrificially - agapao - as does Jesus the church.

Men leading your wife as head does not mean that you are more important, or more valuable, but that you are more responsible for her. You are designed to love, cherish, protect, and lead her to all the flourishing she could possibly imagine - in the same way that Jesus loves, cherishes, protects, and leads the church is her greatest flourishing.

Both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage - Jesus in his sacrificial authority (husbands), Jesus in his sacrificial submission (wives).

Kathy Keller - The Meaning of Marriage

To husbands, in the same book, Kathy writes this about how husbands play the role of Jesus.

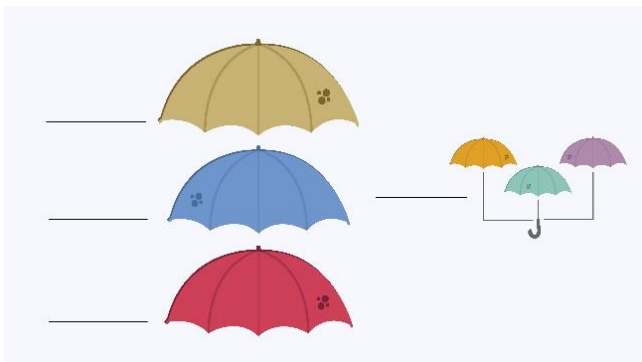
We know what kind of behaviour the husband has been called on to imitate. To what role must he submit? To that of saviour, a servant-leader, who uses his authority and power to express a love that doesn’t even stop at dying for *his* beloved.

When you self-sacrifice using your authority to serve, and to exalt others - primarily your wife - you are doing the role of Jesus in your marriage.

When you play your role, the world sees the beauty of the Gospel as your marriage mirrors Christ and the Church. Your wife feels valued, protected, cherished, and is able to flourish under your headship and care. You’ll have greater harmony and delight in your marriage.

Both people - both husband and wife - play the Jesus role in their marriage.

So, in this both men and women are functioning as the Jesus character in marriage but in different ways. Both women and men get to “play the Jesus role” in marriage - Jesus in his sacrificial authority (husbands), Jesus in his sacrificial submission (wives).



So, what of this umbrella graphic here?

*Left side blanks:*

**Christ:** Head of the church

**Husbands:** love their wives

**Wives:** willingly submit

*Right side blank:*

**Children**

Wives are to submit to their husbands because the church submits to Christ and the church is the bride of Jesus, established to present to the world the meaning of Marriage, which is the closest human representation of the relationship between Jesus (husband) and the Church (his bride).

## Making Clear the Fuzzy Things | Truth Statements about Marriage

**Marriage is a Mirror of Christ and the Church - Eph 5:32**

**Marriage is a Mirror of Christ and the Church.**

Marriage was designed to Mirror Christ and his redemptive work for eternity. The Plan of salvation was in the mind of God, and at work long before creation even happened - before the 1st Marriage took place.

Ephesians 5:32 (ESV) This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

**Marriage is between two fully equal, different people, one man, and one woman. - Gen 1:27**

**Marriage is between two fully equal, different people, one man, and one woman.**

Marriage is between two fully equal people - one biological man, and one biological woman.

They are equal in value, dignity, and worth because both are created in God's likeness/image.

Genesis 1:27 (ESV) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

So how does Marriage reflect Christ and the church? How does marriage reflect God's own nature and character?

The Holy Trinity of God lives in a permanent, plural, equal, complementary, ordered, loving union...since God is three equal persons, God designed us for marriages in which husbands and wives are equally dignified. Since God is diverse and complementary God has created marriage to be diverse and wonderfully complementary.

Richard Coekin - Ephesians For You

**Marriage is the bedrock of human society - God's first Institution for humanity Gen 2:24**

**Marriage is the bedrock of human society - God's first institution for humanity.**

Every people group across the planet has an understanding of marriage from the perspective of common grace.

**Marriage was broken in the fall of Adam and Eve Gen 3:16.**

**Marriage was broken in the fall of Adam and Eve.**

It was harmonious and joyous before the fall, working the Way that Paul established it to be recreated in Ephesians 5, prior to the fall, but now with the full understanding of Jesus and the Church as its model.

**Marriage can only be restored to its good and right purpose under the Lordship of Jesus - Eph 5:22-33**

**Marriage can only be restored to its good and right purpose under the Lordship of Jesus.**

Ephesians 5:22-33 based on the image of Christ and the Church, men and women together in marriage show the vast glory of Jesus and his bride.