

MAGNIFYING THE MEANING OF MOTHERHOOD

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

Ephesians 5:21-33, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body. ³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

- **John Stott**, “Throughout this passage Paul’s focus is constantly on the responsibilities of people, not their rights. This remains his focus.”¹
- ²¹**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.**
- **John Piper**: “The church submits to Christ by a disposition to follow his leadership. . . . When Christ said, ‘Let the leader become as one who serves,’ he did not mean, let the leader cease to be leader. Even while he was on his knees washing their feet no one doubted who the leader was. Nor should any Christian husband shirk his responsibility under God to provide moral vision and spiritual leadership as the humble servant of his wife and family.”²
- **Galatians 3:28**, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”
- Men and women, Jew and Greek, Slave and free have absolute equality before God.
 - That is, the ground of their being is equal. Man is not *better than* woman. Woman is not *better than* man. They are equal.
 - Jew is not superior to Greek; and Greek is not superior to Jew. They are equal.
 - Slave is not lesser than free; and free is not lesser than slave. They are equal.
- However, equality of standing does not mean their function is identical.
- **J. H. Yoder**, “Equality of worth is not identity of role.”³
 - Women and men have different functions.
- Similarly, it is *not* that the husband *should be* the head, or *learn to be* the head—he *is* the head.
- Ancient Greek thinkers, could not conceive of wives as equals.
 - Age differences contributed to this disparity: husbands were normally older than their wives, often by over a decade in Greek culture (with men frequently marrying around age thirty and women in their teens, often early teens).

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, in *The Bible Speaks Today* series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 19.

² John Piper, “A Matrix of Christian Hedonism,” Oct. 16, 1983, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/83/101683.html>.

³ Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, Yoder, 177, note 23.

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- Although it was assumed that husbands should love their wives, **ancient household codes never list love as a husband's duty.**
 - **Rather, such codes told husbands only to make their wives submit.** ⁴
- What was the common view of women in the first century?
 - **Barclay:** "The [first-century] Jews had a [very] low view of women. In his morning prayer there was a sentence in which a Jewish man gave thanks that God had not made him 'a Gentile, a slave or a woman.' In Jewish law a woman was not a person, but a thing. She had no legal rights whatsoever; she was absolutely her husband's possession to do with as he willed."⁵
 - **Aristotle,** "Woman may be said to be inferior to man."⁶
 - **Linda Sellevaag:** "(Women) received no education, not even teaching in their religious writings, the Torah. One rabbi who lived at that time said, 'Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman. Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness.'"⁷

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

- **If the husband makes Christ's love for the church the pattern for loving his wife, then he will love her sacrificially.**
 - Jacob so loved Rachel that he sacrificially worked fourteen years to win her.
 - If a husband is submitted to Christ and filled with the Spirit, his sacrificial love will willingly pay a price that she might be able to serve Christ in the home and glorify Him.
- ²⁶**to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.**
- **John MacArthur,** "The husband's role in giving leadership is not only God-ordained, but is a reflection of Christ's own loving, authoritative headship of the church."⁸
 - **Piper:** "'Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.' If the husband is the head of the wife as verse 23 says, let it be very plain to all husbands that this means primarily leading out in the kind of love that is willing to die to give her life. As Jesus says in Luke 22:26, 'Let the leader become as one who serves.' The husband who plops himself down in front of the T.V. and orders his wife around like a slave has abandoned Christ in favor of Archie Bunker. Christ bound himself with a towel and washed the apostles' feet. If you want to be a Christian husband, copy Jesus not Jabba du Hutt."⁹
 - "Unilateral decision making is not good leadership. It generally comes from laziness or insecurity or inconsiderate disregard."
 - **Ills.: My decision to leave All Nations Christian Center.**

⁴ Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Eph 5:20-33.

⁵ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 168.

⁶ http://www.bible.org/page.asp?page_id=422#P669_132061, <Accessed May 8, 2010.>

⁷ Linda Sellevaag, "Jesus and Women," *HIS*, May '73, p. 10.

⁸ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville: Word Pub, 1997), Eph 5:21.

⁹ John Piper, "A Matrix of Christian Hedonism", Oct. 16, 1983, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/83/101683.html>.

- Our current search for a church.
- God opened Adam's side, but sinful men pierced Christ's side.
- Paul closed with a final admonition that the husband love his wife and that the wife reverence (respect) her husband, all of which require the power of the Holy Spirit.
- **If Christian husbands and wives have the power of the Spirit to enable them, and the example of Christ to encourage them, why do too many Christian marriages fail?...**The root of most marital problems is sin, and the root of all sin is selfishness. Submission to Christ and to one another is the only way to overcome selfishness, for when we submit, the Holy Spirit can fill us and enable us to love one another in a sacrificial, sanctifying, satisfying way—the way Christ loves the church.¹⁰

He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹**After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—** ³⁰**for we are members of his body.** ³¹**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.** ³²**This is a profound mystery—**

- **Why is the coming together of a man and woman to form one flesh in marriage a mystery?**
 - The marriage union is a mystery because its deepest meaning has been partially concealed, but is now being openly revealed by the apostle, namely, that marriage is an image of Christ and the church.

but I am talking about Christ and the church.

- **Marriage is like a metaphor or an image or a picture or parable that stands for something more than a man and a woman becoming one flesh. It stands for the relationship between Christ and the church. That's the deepest meaning of marriage. It's meant to be a living drama of how Christ and the church relate to each other.**¹¹
- **John Piper, "When a couple speaks their vows, it is not a man or a woman or a pastor or parent who is the main actor—the main doer. God is. God joins a husband and a wife into a one-flesh union. God does that. The world does not know this. Which is one of the reasons why marriage is treated so casually. And Christians often act like they don't know it, which is one of the reasons marriage in the church is not seen as the wonder it is. Marriage is God's doing because it is a one-flesh union that God himself performs."**¹²

¹⁰ Warren Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1996), Ephesians 5:21.

¹¹ John Piper, "Husbands Who Love Like Christ and the Wives Who Submit to Them," June 11, 1989, www.desiringgod.org/Resource-Library/ScriptureIndex/3/683_Husbands_Who_Love_Like_Christ_and_the_Wives_Who_Submit_to_Them/, <Accessed May 8, 2010.>

¹² John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 23.

- *This Momentary Marriage*, “Staying married is not mainly about staying *in love*. It is about keeping covenant. ‘Till death do us part’ or ‘As long as we both shall live’ is a sacred covenant promise—the same kind Jesus made with his bride when he died for her. Therefore, what makes divorce and remarriage so horrific in God’s eyes is not merely that it involves covenant-breaking to the spouse, but that it involves misrepresenting Christ and his covenant. Christ will never leave his wife. Ever. There may be times of painful distance and tragic backsliding on our part. But Christ keeps his covenant forever. Marriage is a display of that! That is the ultimate thing we can say about it. It puts the glory of Christ’s covenant-keeping love on display. The most important implication of this conclusion is that keeping covenant with our spouse is as important as telling the truth about God’s covenant with us in Jesus Christ. Marriage is not mainly about being or staying in love. It’s mainly about telling the truth with our lives. It’s about portraying something true about Jesus Christ and the way he relates to his people. It is about showing in real life the glory of the gospel. Jesus died for sinners. He forged a covenant in the white-hot heat of his suffering in our place. He made an imperfect bride his own with the price of his blood and covered her with the garments of his own righteousness. He said, ‘I am with you . . . to the end of the age. . . . I will never leave you nor forsake you’ (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5). Marriage is meant by God to put that gospel reality on display in the world. That is why we are married. That is why all married people are married, even when they don’t know and embrace this gospel.”¹³

³³ **However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

- *Lloyd-Jones*: “How many of us have realized that we are always to think of the married state in terms of the doctrine of the atonement? Is that our customary way of thinking of marriage?... We must consider marriage in terms of the doctrine of atonement.”¹⁴

The Old Rocking Chair

When I think about my mother, so very long ago,
I recall her sitting in her chair, rocking to-and-fro.
Each day she’d sit there in that chair, left hand up to her head;
She was praying for her family, sleeping peacefully in bed.

She would seek God for her children, that they’d grow and they’d mature;
She prayed God’d never let them go; that He’d help them to endure.
“Oh, please don’t let my children, transgress or break Your law;
Keep them pure and righteous, through Your Word which has no flaw.
And may Your Holy Spirit, guide each them through life;
Give my girl a godly man; and my sons a godly wife.
(May Your) kingdom come upon them all, and let it come in power;
Grant them grace to follow You, since You called them in this hour.
(And) may they be Your witnesses, from this day evermore;

¹³ Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 25-26.

¹⁴ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home and Work*, in *An Exposition of Ephesians*, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 5:148.

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And may Your name be glorified, whether rich, or mid or poor.
Their entire lives I dedicate, to You in joyful song;
Be pleased, oh God, to use them all, throughout their whole life long.”
And sometimes when she rocked she’d pray, “Restore them if they stray...
Oh never let sin capture them, Oh God, my God, I pray!”

These were things she often prayed, when I was just a kid.
I still recall her in that chair, praying as she did.
And back when I was just a boy, not much more than a toddler,
She’d pray for my bride-to-be, that I would surely find her.
For many years my mother prayed, “Oh God, prepare his wife.”
And every other detail that, I’d encounter in my life.
These memories I’ve just recalled, I value more than others;
Cause in His wisdom, God, He gave me, this one for “my mother.”
(Now) I’ve no misapprehensions, about the mom I had,
She had her faults and blunders, too, (and) fought often with my dad.
But e’n through these many things, her God she strove to love;
She sought forgiveness, grace afresh, to honor God above.

Today she’s gone, my mother that, throughout my life did pray;
She’s now in heaven where her reward, is even now being paid.
The rocking chair now sits alone, with none to rock and pray,
But don’t think for one moment that, her work or prayers will fade.
Because the God who reigns supreme, is very much alive;
He rules all things in sovereign power, yet closely He abides.
So even though the chair is old, and seems to sit alone;
The advocate who pleads my cause, is right next to the throne.
And there is one additional, twist to my little story,
My wife pleads now, my cause to God, (and) that He’d receive the glory.
So now there is a different chair, (and) there sits a different mother,
God’s mercy still He gives to me, through one my sons call, “Mother.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Jeffrey Anderson, “The Old Rocking Chair,” May 5, 2010.