



Family - Marriage



Marriage is certainly an important life matter! What does the Bible say about marriage? Read Ephesians 5:22-33.

Instructions to Wives

Paul writes, “Wives, submit¹ yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord” (5:22).²

1. Based on verses 22-24, why are wives to submit to their husbands?³ Assuming this instruction is universal (that is, applying to all times and cultures), why might this be difficult to accept and/or do?⁴

📖 “...and the wife must respect her husband” (5:33b).⁵

Instructions to Husbands

Paul writes, “Husbands, love your wives...” (5:25a).

2. How are husbands to love their wives? What kind of love must the husband have for his wife? What does this say about the husband’s “headship” or “leadership?”

📖 “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (5:25).⁶ ‘



¹ In the original Greek, there is no verb in verse 22, but the verb ‘submit’ (*hypotassō*) is carried over from verse 21. ‘Submit’ means ‘to order oneself under’ and usually applies to submitting to the authority of another person or structure, though some say it can also apply to voluntarily yielding to the interests of another person.

² Similar verses: ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord’ (*Colossians 3:18, NIV*); ‘Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your own husbands...’ (*1 Peter 3:1, NIV*). Also see Titus 2:3-5.

³ Wives are to submit because the husband is the ‘head’ (*kephalē*) of the wife. In this context, the meaning of ‘head’ is the one who has authority and is the leader. As traditionally understood, since the headship of the husband is according to God’s original design in creation (*Genesis 2:7, 18, 22-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 11-12*), it applies to all times and all cultures. Wives are to submit to their husbands ‘as to the Lord’ (5:22). The wife’s submission to her husband is one aspect of her submission to Christ. The headship of the husband is under the headship of Christ.

⁴ It might be difficult to accept because of misunderstanding the instruction’s intent and implications, or because of abuses or misapplications. Certainly, many husbands are bad leaders, or even bad men (though keep in mind 1 Peter 3:1-2), and the wife should never follow the husband into disobedience. However, the main reason this instruction is not accepted is the propensity (inclination) of human beings, both male and female, to resist authority, including the authority of God. We generally do not like to submit to others! In addition, people tend to equate difference in role with difference in value or importance. But that is not true! In Christ, the old divisions and inequalities have come to an end. As the Bible says, ‘There is neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (*Galatians 3:28*). However, God has ordained authority structures for good purposes.

⁵ The wife must recognize the husband’s God-given position as ‘head.’

⁶ The husband’s love is to be self-giving (personal and sacrificial). Love is not merely a feeling. It is a choice that involves the husband’s active and unceasing care for his wife’s well-being. Elsewhere Paul says, ‘do not be harsh’ with your wives (*Colossians 3:19*). The husband’s leadership should not be negative, oppressive, or reactionary. The husband’s ‘headship’ or ‘leadership’ may be called ‘servant-leadership.’ ‘For even the Son of Man (Jesus Christ) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (*Mark 10:45*).

After talking about Christ's goal for his church (5:26-27), Paul says, "In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies" (5:28).

3. What should be the goal of the husband's love for his wife? How does Paul illustrate what the husband needs to do? (5:28-30)⁷ How is this instruction practically applied?

4. While the roles of husband and wife are different, they are alike in a fundamental way. What is common to both the husband's and wife's roles?⁸



5. How can husbands and wives love like God wants them to love, even in bad times?⁹

Christ & His Church

- ❑ In this passage, why is the relationship between husband and wife intertwined with the relationship between Christ and the church? Because the relationship between Christ and the church is the model and ground for the relationship between husband and wife. Christ is *the* heavenly Bridegroom and the church is the Bride of Christ (*Revelation 19:6-9*).
- ❑ After quoting Genesis 2:24 in verse 31, Paul adds, "This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church" (5:32). The relationship between Christ and the church is the model for Christian marriage. It is also the ground upon which marriage needs to be founded. In fact, it is the ground upon which each of our lives needs to be founded!¹⁰

Reflection/Application

- If you are married, what is the foundation of your marriage? God instituted marriage, so if you want a truly fulfilling marriage, listen to Him! Of course, fulfilling marriages involve fulfilled people, and true fulfillment is found only in Christ. Do you need to receive Him?
- See *What about Marriage?* and *The Marriage Relationship* on the ICF website for more information and application for both singles hoping to marry and couples already married.
- Whether or not you are married, pray for the marriage relationships in our group and church.

⁷ The husband should be fully committed to the spiritual growth and well-being of his wife. As Christ feeds and cares for the church, husbands should provide and care for their wives in both a physical and spiritual sense.

⁸ Both husband and wife are called to have a self-giving, unconditional love (a Christ-like love); characterized by kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness. Both husband and wife should be dedicated to living for Christ for the purpose of God's glory.

⁹ Love comes from God (*1 John 4:7*). We cannot love the way God commands us to love apart from Christ (*John 15:5*). Love is a fruit of the Spirit (*Galatians 5:22*). Thus we must be united with Christ and empowered by the Spirit. We need to put off the old self, put on the new self, and be filled with the Spirit (*4:22-24; 5:1-2, 18*).

¹⁰ Apart from Christ, we are separated from the life of God because of our sin. But Christ died for our sins, and was raised from the dead, thereby defeating sin and death. Through faith in Christ, we are forgiven of our sins, and we are united with him. We become part of the church – the body of Christ, and the Bride of Christ.