

# MARRIAGE & SUBMISSION TO GOD'S ORDER

## Ephesians 5.22-23: A proper understanding of theology is essential in marriage

**Theme:** Marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the Church, therefore a proper understanding of that relationship is essential for a proper understanding of marriage.

We are going to do our best to walk through this passage on marriage and study it out so that we can understand exactly what God desires for our marriages. However, before we do so we need to make a couple observations...

**The Context: (Eph 5.18, 21)** Paul is speaking about the *mutual* submission among believers—submitting one to another as fruit of the the filling of the Spirit (His control/guidance in our lives through Scripture).

- (Php 2.3-4) That means Paul is speaking about *each* of us esteeming the other *better* than himself.
- Therefore, we do disservice to the text (we twist the Scripture) if we misinterpret this passage on Marriage in Ephesians 5, and teach a dictatorial relationship between husband and wife.
- The marriage relationship is one of different *roles*, but there is to be *mutual* submission.

**The Theme: (Eph 5.32)** Paul is speaking *primarily* about (he is teaching us about) the relationship between Christ and the Church.

- Marriage, being a covenant relationship between a man and a woman, pictures the covenant relationship between God and His people.
  1. God the Father likens His relationship with Israel to a marriage: On Mt. Sinai God and Israel "exchanged vows" and entered into a covenant relationship likened to marriage (e.g., Ezek 16).
  2. The relationship between Christ and the Church is also likened to marriage (Eph 5).
- (v33) Paul's *secondary* theme, which illustrates the primary theme (and gives practical application to the primary theme) is marriage between a man and a woman.
- Therefore, we do disservice to the text (we twist Scripture) if we approach this passage with the idea of "making my marriage better."
  - ✓ Ephesians 5.22-33 is *not* a self-help marriage seminar. It is a passage about Jesus Christ!
  - ✓ And the "help" that we can get out of it is *also for Jesus Christ*. It is for His pleasure and glory.

**With those two things in mind, we are going to look at two things this morning as a manner of introducing this text and setting the context for the practical instruction that will follow. We are going to see...**

1. A Biblical Theology of Marriage Requires Submission to God's Order
2. Submission to God's Order Demonstrates a Biblical Theology of Marriage

### **I. (v22) A Biblical Theology of Marriage Requires Submission to God's Order**

#### **A. The submission of the wife to her husband: Order is the unifying factor in all of God's creation.**

1. Even though we are equals (Gal 3.28) , the order established by God is clear (1Cor 11.3).
2. (Gen 2.21-25) In the beginning, God gave the woman to the man to meet his (the man's) needs. Therefore, even in the original, perfect creation (no sin), there was an order establish among equals.
  - a) This order (structure of authority and responsibility; different roles) is the unifying factor in everything because it was originally established by God to *accomplish the mission* given man.
  - b) (Gen 1.28) The man's need was the Mission: Adam needed a woman to help him meet his needs in the work God gave him to do (procreate).
3. If we are to be of *one mind*, in *mutual submission* one to another, in order to finish the work God gave us, we need to understand this concept of order and then... *willingly and gladly submit to it!*

**B. (Gen 3.1-6) Sin entered when the creature defied and rebelled against God's established order.**

1. Satan tempted Eve to make a decision *independent* of her head, Adam. When she did, she sinned.
2. Adam sinned when he submitted to his wife's leadership (she gave him the fruit to eat, and he followed her) rather than following God's established order: *leading his wife* as he followed God.

**C. Following God's established order is the only way things "work."**

1. Order is the unifying factor in all of God's creation, and therefore in order for things in creation to "work" according to God's good, perfect, divine design... we have to submit to the order.
  - a) The only way for us to *be* and *do* what God wants, is to follow His design.
  - b) Ephesians 5.22-33: Our relationships (including our marriages) work when we follow God's design—God's established structure of order. We fail in our relationships when we don't.
2. The main point of this passage (Eph 5.22-33) brings this out clearly:
  - a) The true Church (the Body of true, born-again converts to Christ) is characterized by the willing submission to Christ. Why is that...?
  - b) (1Thes 1.5, 9-10) Because the Church is made up of those who have truly *converted from* their idolatry of sin and self *to* the Lord Jesus Christ (repentance and faith).
    - (1) That means that all true Christians are *followers of* Jesus Christ, they *submit to Him* as their Head, and do (willingly and gladly!) all that He asks and desires. It's our joy to do so!
    - (2) Those who do not submit to Christ and simply showing the fruit of a false conversion (they might "believe" intellectually, but there is *no repentance*... no turning *from* sin *to* Christ).
    - (3) Therefore, the true Church *is* in submission to Christ. That's what characterizes the Church!
3. However, just as Satan tempted Adam's bride, Eve, to step out of her authority structure (to defy and rebel against God's order) and make her own decisions, so he tempts Christ's Bride today...
  - a) (2Cor 11.1-4) The preaching of a false gospel is likened unto Eve's sin in Genesis 6.
  - b) The modern gospel (with its survey-based, purpose-driven church-growth focus) is pragmatic and man-centered—it is the "Bride" using its own wisdom and perception to make her own decisions *independent of the Head*.
  - c) And so Christendom today has done exactly what Eve did 6,000 years ago: She has stepped out of God's order—stepped out from under the leadership of the Head—and has taken control.
  - d) Most churches today refuse to follow the Lord.
    - (1) They refuse to submit completely, entirely, and only to His Word. Rather, they choose to make decisions based on what *they* want and what seems best to *them*.
    - (2) They have fallen for the same deception that led Eve to defy God's order in Genesis 3.
4. So, let's not miss the first lesson in Ephesians 5.22-33...

**D. Summary: (v22) A Biblical Theology of Marriage Requires Submission to God's Order**

1. We are not talking about a self-help seminar to fix our marriage problems or make our marriage better so we can be happy and fulfilled. This passage goes *way* beyond that...
2. (v32) The passage is *primarily* about our relationship to Christ as His Bride, the Church!
3. Yes, Paul does speak about the relationship between husband and wife, but its primary point is clear, and it is extremely theological.
  - a) Wives are to submit to their husbands *because* they are a picture of the Church in relation to Christ Jesus, the Lord (which is why *submission* is required of her).
  - b) Husbands are to love their wives *because* they are a picture of Christ in His relationship to the Church (which is why *love* is required of them: that is what Christ gave the Church!).

4. If each of us would be in a right relationship with Christ (if we as the Church would submit to Christ as God designed), then our secondary relationships (marriages, family, workplace) would function as God designed also.
  - a) Think about it this way...
    - (1) Nothing is more unbecoming than a woman who has developed masculine tendencies and who stomps around "leading" men.
    - (2) Nothing is more unbecoming than a man who has developed feminine tendencies and who has to be led and coddled like a little school girl.
  - b) Now apply that to marriage...
    - (1) There is nothing more unbecoming in a marriage than a reversal of the biblically established roles of husband and wife *because* the marriage relationship is principally *theological*: It is designed by God to picture Christ and the Church.
    - (2) Therefore, the couple that reverses roles is very close to blaspheming God because the pictures in their marriage is *preaching Christ* to those around them!
      - (v24-25) We are going to talk about those roles in the coming messages.
  - c) Now apply all of this to the Church...
    - (1) The local church that reverses roles (choosing her own way of doing things rather than submitting to the Head, Christ, and following His Word and His Word only) is also in danger of blasphemy.
    - (2) To not follow God's Word and God's Word only is to commit the same sin Eve committed when she stepped out of God's established order of authority and responsibility.
      - (a) Eve should have deferred to her husband: "Adam, should we eat of this fruit?"
      - (b) Then Adam should have deferred to the Lord: "God, should we eat of this fruit?"
      - (c) Had God's people submitted to God's order, history would have been very different.
    - (3) If God's people today (the Church) would submit to and follow God's order ("What does God's Word say?"), things would look very different than they do today.
5. So, Paul's primary theme in Ephesians 5.22-33 is the Church's relationship to Christ, because if we are submitted to Christ, then our secondary relationships (marriage, etc.) will function as God designed them.
  - And this is what we see in the next verse...

## **II. (v23) Submission to God's Order Demonstrates a Biblical Theology of Marriage**

### **A. Remember:**

1. To turn this passage into a self-help seminar on how to make marriage great is dreadfully wrong!
2. However, if we understand the simple theology behind this passage of Scripture, then the "help" we get in our marriages and relationship is tremendous!
3. Marriage is designed by God for very specific purposes, and when we submit to God's order in marriage, then we fulfill those purposes. To understand this point, let's start off with a question...

### **B. Why do most of us get married?**

1. Most of us get married for some purely selfish reasons: "My needs."
2. I have certain needs that I like to be met, and so I marry a woman that meets those needs (and hopefully I meet hers). Examples: Affection, attention, sex, companionship, friendship.

**C. (Eph 5.31-32) If marriage, though, is a picture of Christ and the Church, is that why Christ chose the Church as His Bride?**

1. Did Christ need a friend? a companion? an intimate partner? No.
2. Why did Christ do what He did, then, on Calvary in order to save us and make us His Bride (v25)?
3. Why does Christ do what He does now in order to clean us up and make us holy and ready for the day we will meet Him personally (v26-27)?
4. Christ's choosing of a Bride, the Church, was *completely selfless*.
  - a) First: He did it to glorify the Father by willingly submitting Himself to the *costly* sacrifice of obedience to the Father's will when He went to the cross and suffered what we deserve.
  - b) Second: He did it for our good, to save us and to sanctify us.
  - c) And what did He (Christ) get out of the deal? The suffering of God's wrath that we deserve, and then... us (He got us—selfish, self-centered, dirty, unfaithful people—as His Bride).
5. So, let's not reduce this passage to a self-help seminar to make us feel better because it's not primarily about us.
  - a) It's about Jesus Christ's sacrificial, self-less love that glorifies God the Father and seeks our greatest good by meeting our greatest need (and in spite of us!!! Christ did it willingly).
  - b) Submission to God's order in marriage will demonstrate *this* biblical theology of marriage.

**D. (Eph 5.31) However, we should not overlook the true, biblical *need* that is met in marriage...**

1. Marriage is not meant primary to meet our selfish, carnal, fleshly, emotional needs (although it is nice when that happens... it's just not the main "need" that marriage is designed to meet).
  - a) This is clearly seen in how Paul links our marriages with that of Adam and Eve.
  - b) Ephesians 5.31 is a quote of Genesis 2.24 (see: Gen 2.23-24)...
2. (Gen 2.18-20) Why was it not good for Adam to be alone? What "need" did the woman help meet?
  - a) Was Adam lonely? Did Adam need a friend, a companion? No!
  - b) Adam was perfect (no sin)... in a perfect place (Garden of Eden)... and in perfect communion with God! What did Adam "need" a woman for, then...?
  - c) (Gen 1.28) God gave man a mission, a work to do in order to glorify God on earth, and in order to do that work and fulfill that mission, Adam *needed* a woman (a wife, a co-laborer in the Mission... which is a co-mission because they had to work together in different roles to do it).
3. Marriage today should not be entered into in order to meet our selfish needs, but rather to fulfill the mission (the co-mission) God has given us to do.
  - a) (1Cor 7.28) If you marry, you *will* have trouble in the flesh—marriage won't fix your problems.
    - (1) (1Cor 7.2, 9) Yes, marriage can meet some of our needs sometimes.
    - (2) But, your flesh will never be satisfied. It always longs for the forbidden fruit. Marriage might help to meet some of those needs some of the time, but it won't "fix" the problem.
    - (3) Also, your spouse *will* fail you. He/She is as much a sinner as you are (selfish, fleshly).
  - b) We should marry a "help-meet": We should marry someone with whom we minister better *with* than *without*. We should marry someone who helps meet the needs we have in ministry...
    - (1) Our Mission (which is a Co-Mission: we do it together) is like Adam's except we are called by God to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth *spiritually* (not physically, like Adam).

- (2) (Mat 28.19-20) You ought to marry someone with whom you can be and make disciples with... better with them than without them.
- (a) You should marry someone who will help meet your need to evangelize the lost.
  - (b) You should marry someone who will help meet your need to edify the saved.
  - (c) You should marry someone who will help meet your need to evangelize the lost and edify the saved both here and abroad in other countries.
  - (d) If you marry for any other reason, you are setting yourself up for failure, and you should correct your expectations immediately.
  - (e) If you already have married for another reason, you need to fix yourself (because you cannot fix your spouse):
    - i) Rearrange your life and lifestyle to be and make disciples, and then lovingly lead your spouse to do the same.
    - ii) And that is what we are going to be talking about in the rest of Ephesians 5...

**Conclusion: Marriage and submission to God's order...**

**Order (even as seen in marriage) is the unifying factor in all of God's creation.**

- God is not the author of confusion... God is a God of order.
- Sin is the creature defying and rebelling against the order God established.
- So, let's not miss the main point in our study this morning...

**Marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the Church: The true Church (the Body of saved, born-again believers) is characterized by her submission to Christ.**

- (Acts 16.30-31) Salvation is believing on the LORD Jesus Christ. You receive Him as your Lord.
- That is why salvation is referred to as a "conversion":
  1. You must recognize what you are (wicked, bad, unholy, rebellious) and what you have done (sin!); and you must turn from that. We call that repentance: confess and forsake your sin! Turn from sin.
  2. You must recognize Jesus Christ for what He is: The Lord, and the only Savior. You turn to Him in complete trust to save you from sin and sin's consequences.
- True salvation (a true conversion) results in a Christian: someone who has died to self and who is following the Lord Jesus Christ in willing, glad, joyful submission!

**That's what marriage is all about: Christ! What He has done to save us... What is doing to sanctify us...**

- That theology ought to teach us how we are to act in our marriages as disciples of Christ...
- That theology is what our marriages ought to "preach" to the world as we make disciples of Christ...
- Because that's what it's all about anyway—that's why we get married: To be and make disciples.