

# WHO AM I?

Ephesians



## WIVES & HUSBANDS

### INTRODUCTION

Ephesians 5:22-33

*For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*

Ephesians 5:31

This verse is not simply an example of beautiful, poetic language. There is a fundamental reality behind this: Husband and wife are not just two people rooming together. Their lives actually do blend into one another. They actually become one. It is, therefore, true that what hurts the wife damages the husband. It cannot help but do so. If he is bitter toward her, it will erode his own life and heart like cancer. That is why, if you have had a squabble with your spouse, you may find yourself unable to do your work properly that day.

In Dr. Henry Brandt's helpful book *The Struggle for Peace*, he tells of a woman who came to him because of a great fear she had of going into supermarkets. She came to him for help in this problem, and he relied, as he always does, on the wisdom of Scripture. Remembering the verse "Perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18b), he began to look for a violation of love in her life, for fear comes when there is something inhibiting the flow of love. He said to her, With whom are you angry? Finally, she was able to realize that she was angry at her husband for an incident that had occurred a number of years before in a supermarket when they had had an unpleasant flare-up. As a result, she was emotionally disturbed whenever she went into a supermarket. When she dealt with her lack of love, her fear left. What happened, because of her injury toward him, reflected right back on her. This is also true of the husband toward the wife. If we would understand this and realize that injuring our mate is the same as taking a hammer and pounding ourselves on the head or neglecting some part of our own body, we would stop trying to hurt one another. Injury to our mate is bound to come back upon us in some way.

The final point the apostle makes here is given in verse 33: However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself; and the wife must respect her husband. Notice that the basis for accomplishing this is that both partners in the marriage relationship fulfill their responsibility to Christ, regardless of what the other does. That is the key. It is not Wait until he starts loving me, and then I'll submit to him, or Wait until she starts submitting to me, and then I'll love her, but it is essential to your responsibility before Christ, regardless of what the other does. To do so breaks through the vicious circle of marriage conflict and serves to restore peace and permit the other to fulfill his or her responsibility.

I have seen such unilateral obedience work wonders in marriage relationships. Husbands and wives have been brought together, harmony restored in bitterly divided homes, grace and peace made to reign where there has been battle and conflict, violence, and ugliness before. Therefore, husbands, love your wife as yourself and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

**God grants to me the willingness and the grace to be obedient to the Lord Jesus, who is with me in every circumstance and every relationship of my life regardless of what the other person does.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.raystedman.org/daily-devotions/ephesians/husbands-and-wives>

## OPEN IT

For the married:

1. **If you are currently in a marriage or have been widowed, please describe the circumstances of how you and your spouse first met and what qualities you noticed in them.**

For the unmarried:

2. **If you are not currently married, please share either a positive aspect you appreciate about your parents' marriage or a challenge they faced.**

For all:

3. **In your opinion, what is the most crucial characteristic needed to sustain a happy and healthy marriage?**

## READ IT

**Ephesians 5:22-33**

## EXPLORE IT

2. **What does the passage command wives to do?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. **What example does it give to wives for this?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. **What does the passage command husbands to do?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. **What example does it give to husbands for this?**

## APPLY IT

*We come to a very sensitive passage of scripture in the latter part of Ephesians 5. Most of our uneasiness comes more from our experiences than from the text. Nevertheless, it's important to clarify what this passage does not imply due to its misuse and misinterpretation. Specifically, Ephesians 5 should not be misconstrued to mean that all women must submit to all men, that men are solely responsible for decision-making, that women cannot pursue careers outside the home, or that men are the ultimate authorities or disciplinarians within the household. These are only a few instances of false assumptions that have been made from Paul's teachings, which should serve as examples of what we should avoid when contemplating our own marriages.<sup>2</sup>*

6. **What about these verses may be offensive in the broader culture outside the church? Is this any different for Christians?**

---

<sup>2</sup> Study notes written by Pastor Tim Badal. March 13, 2023.

*Within Ephesians 5:22-33, there are approximately 200 Greek words, and over half of them pertain to Jesus and the church rather than earthly marriages. The reason behind this is that Paul is aware of the bookends of the Bible and understands that Christian marriage is a metaphor that extends beyond our earthly experiences. Over time, the challenges and triumphs of your marriage should prompt you to recognize Jesus' unconditional love and forgiveness for his people (refer to 5:25-27). While it's unlikely that you and your partner will always handle your marriage perfectly, the goal is to acknowledge that you both need Jesus' help to have a successful union since he is the only one who can accomplish it flawlessly.<sup>3</sup>*

**7. How does Paul's teaching about the relationship between Christ and the church shape the way that husbands and wives are to relate to one another?**

**8. In what way(s) does a marriage relationship undergo a transformation when Christ is at the center?**

*In Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul directs Christian wives to "submit" to their husbands, much like the church of God submits to Jesus Christ, who is regarded as the "head" of the church. However, this instruction to submit should not be mistaken for blind obedience or subservience. Instead, it means that each wife should respect her husband's God-given duty of being the spiritual leader, or the "head," of their marriage and home. By adhering to this, Christian wives are demonstrating their devotion to their Savior and placing their trust in His ultimate and flawless leadership over their hearts and lives.<sup>4</sup>*

**9. What causes discomfort or resistance among certain individuals in our present-day society when the term "submit" is employed concerning wives within their marital relationships? What does this submission look like on an everyday basis?**

---

<sup>3</sup> Study notes written by Pastor Tim Badal. March 13, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

**10. Why is it important to note that Paul says “to their own husbands” and not women submit to men?**

*Paul is talking about voluntary submission, not being coerced or forced to submit. Now it's important to see how else that same Greek word is used in the Bible. Paul used this Greek word in Romans 13:5 to show us our relationship to the governmental authorities that God has placed over us for our good. We are to willingly submit to the government. This Greek word was used to describe Jesus' humble submission to Mary and Joseph as a child. This word was used by Paul as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:16 about submitting to established and mature Gospel workers. So, this word submission is not a negative term, but a very positive one that is lived out in numerous Christian relationships, with children to their parents, our relationship to the government, and between wives and their husbands.<sup>5</sup>*

**11. In what ways can a wife's voluntary submission be a positive experience instead of a negative one?**

*The apostle's instruction is not 'Wives, submit; husbands, boss'; it is 'Wives, submit; husbands, love'. Of course, there have been examples in every age and culture of cruel and tyrannical husbands, and there have been painful occasions when in order to maintain the integrity of her conscience, a wife has been obliged to resist her husband's authority. But Paul is describing the Christian ideal, not hideous deviations from it. This has always been obvious to commentators. Back in the sixteenth century, Calvin preached: 'Husbands . . . should not be cruel towards their wives, or think all things that they please to be permissible and lawful, for their authority should rather be a companionship than a kingship.'<sup>6</sup>*

**12. Are there any times when this command shouldn't be followed? What advice would you give to a wife who is married to a distant, dysfunctional, or demeaning husband?**

---

<sup>5</sup> Sermon by <https://riversidebaptistchurch.ca/part-1-magnifying-jesus-in-our-marriages-ephesians-522-24/>

<sup>6</sup> Stott, John. *The Message of Ephesians (The Bible Speaks Today Series)* (pp. 230-231). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

*Paul commands husbands to reflect Christ by loving their brides. We have already touched on this. We are called to love our wives as Jesus loved the church. Sacrificial love (5:25). Christlike love is a Golgotha love. Christ's back was scourged. His hands and feet were nailed to the wood. A spear was thrust into His side. A crown of thorns was placed on His head—all because He loved the church. Christ's sacrificial love is a foot-washing love. His headship is our model. He came to serve, though He was the head. We see in Christ, authority coupled with unparalleled humility and love. Men, marriage is a call to die. Dying to self may involve sacrificing your schedule and even good ambitions. It means giving yourself away for the good of your bride. It involves crucifying your flesh and resolving to be faithful to your bride, not yielding to the temptations of lust, anger, and pride.<sup>7</sup>*

**13. With this in mind, what role does the husband play when it comes to his wife? How can husbands sacrifice daily for their wives?**

*While a husband cannot atone for sins or cleanse anyone, there is a sense in which Christ's sanctifying work is a pattern for husbands. Practically, I think this means you should love your bride in a way to help her grow in likeness to Christ. Here is the question: "Is our wife more like Christ because she's married to us? Or, is she like Christ in spite of us?" (Hughes, Ephesians, 192). Men, be concerned for her spiritual well-being. Be in the Word personally. Talk about the Word with her. Know how your wife is doing in theological knowledge, in the practice of spiritual disciplines, in her service in the local church, and in her relationships. Care for her soul. Do you know her fears, hopes, dreams, temptations, and disappointments? Shepherd her faithfully.<sup>8</sup>*

**14. How can shepherding his wife in her walk with God be of greater advantage to a husband than desiring for her to serve him?**

---

<sup>7</sup> Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

*After speaking of redemption as the pattern of love, Paul now refers to creation. He says husbands should love their wives “as their own bodies” (v. 28). The husband should provide, nourish, and care for his bride, just as he cares for himself (v. 29). Paul puts Genesis 2:24 underneath this directive, reminding the husband that the two have become “one flesh” (v. 30). This directive for satisfying love may sound self-serving for the husbands or demeaning to the wives, but that is not the case. This directive makes perfect sense in light of the fact that the two have become one flesh. Just as you long to satisfy your own needs, husbands, satisfy your wife’s needs. Just as you long for intimacy, joy, security, health, peace, companionship, and community, provide them for your bride also. Husband, how are you doing at nourishing your wife (v. 29)? Are you physically nourishing her? Are you cherishing your wife (v. 30)? Are you admiring her and complimenting her?<sup>9</sup>*

**15. (Men) List the ways you care for yourself. Now list the ways you care for your wife. Is the effort and energy similar in those two areas?**

**(All) What should a husband do when he seeks to live out these commands towards a wife who seems unfazed and unmoved by these gestures?**

*Our society believes that equality in worth should entail equality in all aspects, but this belief goes against what is taught in the Bible. God created men and women out of love to support each other and honor Him. According to God's design, men are meant to be the head or leaders in the household while women are meant to be their helpers. This was the case even before the fall, and God declared it to be "very good." As followers of Christ, it is essential for us to base our understanding of gender and sexuality on the teachings of the Bible not the culture around us.<sup>10</sup>*

**16. Can the directions given by Paul to husbands and wives be interchanged? What is the reasoning behind your answer?**

---

<sup>9</sup> Merida, Tony. *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary)*. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

<sup>10</sup> Study notes written by Pastor Tim Badal. March 13, 2023.

17. While men and women have equal value, they also have different roles. How did God design men and women differently? How do these differences complement each other?

*Christ died for the church, which displayed her sinfulness and His saving grace. The biggest problem in marriage is sin. The ultimate solution is the grace of Jesus. Because marriage is not merely a social convention but is rooted in the lordship of Christ, who is gracious, you have great hope in marriage! Where do you turn when marriage is difficult? Alcohol, deer hunting, work, pornography? No! Those are the wrong places! Look to Christ. Marriage is intended to point us to our Redeemer.<sup>11</sup>*

18. What attitudes or activities do you turn to when your marriage runs cold or callous?

**When it comes to relating to your spouse, what steps can you take to grow in your Christlikeness?**

---

<sup>11</sup> Merida, Tony. Exalting Jesus in Ephesians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) . B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.  
This study was compiled and questions were written by Tim Badal (Sugar Grove Campus)—[www.villagebible.church/smallgroup](http://www.villagebible.church/smallgroup)