

Marriage // Ephesians 5:22-33

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[0:00] I'll confess that I was a little apprehensive about the teaching this morning.! And only because I have to remember a couple of things very carefully.

! I promised my wife no personal examples.! And I also understand that at any given time, throughout going through these passages on marriage, that the women are either going to want to throw something, or maybe even the men.

So bear with me. Let's go through this together and see just the love and the freedom that we can find through this. We're going to be in Ephesians chapter 5 verses 22 to 23 today.

Sorry, 22 to 33. That would be a bad call. And I want to start with Proverbs 27, 17, and you don't need to turn there.

It just simply says, as iron sharpens iron, so one sharpens another. I think it's an interesting statement for friendships, for family, and most certainly for husband and wife.

[1:06] As iron sharpens iron, so one sharpens another. Have you ever sharpened knives? You know, it's loud. If you've ever seen two pieces of iron, you know, become something, or even being, you know, molded into a sword, the manufacturing that happens, the, you know, the ingenuity.

I mean, it's loud, it's messy, it's difficult. And yet, isn't that the case through relationships as well? And it can be the case in marriage, in sibling relationships, and in friendships.

But we can't forget the fine blade that it becomes. There's a honing process. And it may be loud and messy and sparky, but there's a process that happens where we find a fine blade at the end.

I think it's an appropriate way to start off this passage on marriage. So again, please have some patience with me as we go through this. I want to try and do this honor as best I can.

Okay. Verses 21 to 22. And I want to start with 21 simply because it says, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. We can't go into talking about submission, love, and authority without understanding that there is a mutual submission that happens among the brethren.

[2:24] And I do, okay, I do have to use an example with Mari and I. Here we go. So, I said this earlier in the discipleship class that I do feel I'm a better driver.

Okay? But she's so much better than I am at directions. And she will often know how to get somewhere after just simply hearing the most vague description of how to get somewhere.

And she'll know how to get there. We go there once. She never has to be reminded again. I could go somewhere 10 times. And if I don't have my GPS, I can be lost. I'd be in New Mexico by now if I didn't, you know, have certain safeguards.

So, in all that to be said is that there are some things our wives are better at than us. And wives, there are some things your husbands are better at than you.

That's called teamwork. It's called partnership. And in that way, we submit to one another. It would be a terrible idea for so many reasons if I sat in the driver's seat and said to Maria, Woman, I'm driving.

[3:33] Right? Oh, yeah. Imagine how. I mean, I see some of you laughing. You know exactly how that would go, how well it would go over. But instead, you can just kind of say, okay, you know, I'm going to get us there safely, doing the speed limit, you know.

But she's going to get us there. Okay? And that's where a teamwork and a partnership can work.

So, let's just have that hat on for now. Okay? Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. First, wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. Submit. Submission, it's a military term. It means someone has authority over you.

You're a part of a team. And that means that the role of the individual changes when you're a part of a team. You start to work towards a greater good. You start to work in a partnership towards a common goal.

It looks a bit different. But let me make something very, very, very clear. Submission does not mean inferiority. I think one of the things that we can get, well, one of many things we can get very wrong about this small little verse is that we can start to go down the road of thinking somehow it means lesser.

[4:50] Or somehow the role is diminished in some way. And I'm hoping by the end of this sermon you're going to see that is the farthest thing from God's heart towards women.

Okay? In Genesis 2, verse 18, it says, Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.

I will make him a helper fit for him. There's two words we've got to look at here. Azer and Azer.

Now, Azer, in the original language, is the word used for helper or helpmate.

It is not a subservient role. It is actually, it means a shield, a protector, like a shield bearer.

So try and wrap your mind around that. When God himself said, I'm going to make a helpmate suitable, it wasn't, I'm going to make someone submissive that's going to walk 10 feet behind you and do everything you say.

[5:50] No, it's someone who's going to walk beside you that will be a shield partner for you. There is something incredibly beautiful about this when we read it in the context of Scripture.

Azer. Because in Psalm 33, 20, it says, Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. That word help here is Azer.

The same from Genesis. Azer. God is calling himself our help and our shield. As he has called women to be a help and a shield.

Do you not see how awesome that is? We're God himself and says he is our help and shield. Here, I will make a help and shield for Adam, for man, because it's not good that he be alone.

So, in no way should we look at this verse as in something that is to diminish. But it is a different mission. I like to use that word rather than role. Because I believe that men and women have different missions in marriage under God.

[6:54] And we're going to get to the men's mission in a few minutes. But we've got some more stuff to unpack. Shield and a protector. And if you want to see this in action, this idea of being on a team, in unity, and yet there being an order to it, we don't have to look very far or much further than the Trinity.

Because you can see how Jesus submitted to God the Father. God the Son, God the Father, they are equally God. But Jesus repeatedly said, I am here to do the will of my Father.

God the Son submitted to God the Father. Was it because the Son was inferior? No. Not one bit. Not one bit.

So how far does this submission go? As far as your husband. The Bible never commands a woman to submit to all men in society.

That is theologically problematic. And some churches and some denominations die on that hill. It's just not here. There are two places that I believe there's male leadership from a biblical standpoint.

[8:12] That's in the church and that is in the home. Okay? But men do not have exclusive authority in any other area of life from a biblical point of view.

Now, if you want to test this theory, the next time you're pulled over for speeding and the police officers a woman, I dare you to say, you need to submit to my general authority as a man.

Okay? I'll come bail you out. I'll pay, I'll pay, I'll put up your bail money. Okay? All right? We have to understand that we work together in this. Verse 22, wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

I think there's two wrong interpretations. And we got to get through with what's wrong in order to see what's right sometimes. It doesn't mean that a wife should submit to her husband as to God himself.

That's not what this is saying. In no place do the scriptures say that you should submit to another human being as though they were God. Not at all. We submit to our employers.

[9:19] Right? They are our masters. If we were to look at it from a scriptural point of view. Okay? But if they were to tell us to lie, steal, or cheat, we wouldn't obey that. At least I hope we wouldn't.

There is a limited submission that we have to consider here. There are limits to it. There's limits to submitting to our employer, the government, or our spouse.

Because another wrong interpretation says, as to the Lord, means that you can submit to your husband if he does what the Lord wants and you agree with him. It's not saying that either.

Because it's kind of like, well, if my husband does what he wants or what I want him to do, I'll submit to him. Right? In other words, if my husband is as honorable as God, I will submit to him. You hear how silly that is, right? I'll tell you right now. 34 years of marriage. I have not made it to that threshold of being as honorable as God. I never will make it to that threshold. Okay? And some have been married longer than I've been alive.

[10:25] So I'm sure you could say the same. Okay? And that's a compliment. All right? Anyway. No. It's true there's limits to a wife's submission, but approaching it in the way where the wife says, I'll submit to my husband when I agree with him is wrong.

It's about motive. As to the Lord defines the motive behind the submission. Submit to your husbands because it's a part of your expression towards the Lord.

It's a part of your mission. Okay? Your mission is to be a shield maiden, a guardian, a helper, a protector, someone who stands in the gap just as God does for us.

Think of that awesome responsibility even for just half a moment and you'll not see this as a subservient thing. This is about you and the Lord. This isn't about how can I submit to my husband. This is Lord. How can I submit to you and be a shield for this man that you've shown me? Okay? Just consider it. It's powerful. This is what God requires of you in marriage.

[11:37] This is his expectation of you is to be a shield and a help made for your husband. But I haven't gotten to his job yet. And I will. It's heavy. God knows that this command for women is a tough one.

He knows that. So in his graciousness, he's giving us the reason why. Verses 23 to 24. 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.

Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. I'm going to unpack this. Just give me a minute. Okay? First reason for submission is that it's a part of your Christian walk.

Second reason for submission, the husband is the head of the wife. Okay? And the head has the idea of leadership and authority, but it also means to have responsibility and accountability. It isn't a tyrannical leadership. It's a leadership of love. It's very different from what the world would put forward. And unfortunately, a lot of marriages and a lot of Christian men will resort to what the world would put forward.

[12:51] And that's where we go into sideways places, where we stop reading after wives submit to your husbands. And we stop thinking about, well, what is my role as a husband?

What do I have to do? God created Adam first and then gave him Eve.

And this happened before the fall. I've had some people argue, it's like, well, the roles and the division in marriage is a result of the fall. None of this happened. God set this up before the fall. When things were right and good, he set this up. That there would be a shield and a protector. And that there would be a head. Someone to lead with responsibility and accountability.

An important, important difference. The third reason she should submit because of the relationship of the husband and wife being a model of the union between Jesus and his church.

[13:48] Now, it's pretty hard to imagine. I'm sure wives are sitting there and you're going to probably say yes and amen to this. It's hard to imagine your husband as the savior, the way that Jesus is the savior, right?

But savior can also mean protector and preserver. The husband is to protect and preserve his wife. There's an activity and an active role that a husband must have towards his wife.

And we are just getting started with this. And if I stop teaching there, the wives might think, man, this is a pretty heavy burden. This is a lot for us to do, a lot to bear.

So just like I said before, hang in there. Husbands and wives are called to die to self. To have a sacrificial, decided love.

To see their marriage as a model of Jesus' relationship and the church. They're called to honor the order of creation. To be motivated by the love and the command of Jesus.

[14:50] Submission is a way a wife can worship the Lord this way. But there are limits. Verse 24. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

I've thought about this line in everything quite a bit. Over many years. In everything. But there's a responsibility for the husband to be in leadership.

Not through position and title. Through activity and honor and preservation. There is a responsibility for the man to have.

And it's an important one. If a husband asks his wife to sin, she should not submit to that. Honey, just sign these tax forms.

I'm cheating our way to heaven, but just trust me. Don't sign them. Don't. Your husband should preserve and protect you, not lead you into sin. The Bible teaches us that if any human authority tells us to sin, we are to obey God rather than man.

[15 : 59] Acts 5.29. But Peter and the apostles answered, we must obey God rather than men. So submission has some conditions. If a husband is medically incapacitated for some reason, or insane, and I would include substance abuse in this, the woman shouldn't go madly down that trail with him.

Okay? There are limitations to this. If a husband is physically abusive, in the safety of the wife and the children are at stake, the woman should get safe and get her children safe.

And that man needs to face some accountability. Now, I'm not talking divorce her. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about she shouldn't have to what's called stay and pray. I've never, ever seen that work.

Not once. She needs to be safe. Her kids need to be safe. And that man needs help. In love, he needs help. He needs to repent. And he needs to be shown how to repent.

So in that way, if he were to say, in a drunken stupor, you're to submit to me because I'm your husband, I would hope she'd say, become my husband.

[17 : 12] And then let's talk. When the husband breaks the marriage bond through adultery, she doesn't have to submit and accept that. So you see the burden starts shifting from the woman's shoulders to all of a sudden the men start to have to bear some burden as well.

Because it's about becoming the man that you're meant to be in God. And one of the things that I truly love about our Lord is that he doesn't just see us for who we are right now.

He sees our potential. Who we could be made if we keep following and walking with him. And I think sometimes when he looks at his precious daughters, when they've married someone, I wonder sometimes if he's not thinking, I can't wait for you to see what he'll become.

And I need you to be his shield. I need you to be his helper because he needs it. Right? Most of what goes on in marriage does not fall under any of those four examples.

Praise God. But I think it's a part of the enemy's strategy to make submission difficult for the wives. To make it really, really difficult. So don't take it personally, guys.

[18 : 28] If your wife's having a hard time. Because it's between her and the Lord. Don't take it personally. Don't come to her and say, well, you know, you're not fulfilling your role.

I always look at this. Because like, you know, in our early marriage, I did the same thing. I kept on looking. It's like, you know, well, why aren't you being X, Y, and Z? Right? And I was so busy looking at what Maria was or wasn't.

I wasn't looking at who I was or was not. Focus on your own job, men. Focus on your own job, women. We both have missions together.

So focus on what mission you have in front of you. Follow the Lord and be that mission day by day.

Your wife's submission is a struggle between herself and God, ultimately.

We have to ask ourselves, are we getting in the way of her doing that? I mean, do we think we're really like that much of a prince to be submitted to? You know, think about it for a moment.

[19 : 29] If you think you are, well, oh, I hope that bubble's burst for you someday real soon. And for her sake too. Don't be a trial for your wife. Be a blessing for her.

Make it easy. Love her. Verses 25 to 27. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.

No husband, no husband is entitled to say that he is the head of the wife, unless he loves the wife like Christ loves the church. And this is where our calling men weighs on our shoulders, as it should.

You have to have a leadership of love. You are not called to have a leadership of tyranny. It's not to lord over your wife. It's to build her up, to present her as a radiant church.

To present her. That means we have to be very aware of her spiritual walk. What she's reading in the Bible. Is she reading the Bible?

[20:52] To be praying towards it. To be praying for her. Be leading her in these areas. That's a part of our job. And we're only just getting started. You know, you've heard it probably a thousand times before.

The Greeks have, well, there are a lot of words, but they have four main words for love. And I'm sure you've heard the word agape before. It's not a love of feelings.

It's a love of decision. And some people will say that agape love is God's love. I actually really disagree with that because in other parts of the Bible, it says that we agape our sin.

We agape the world. It's the same word used. I don't think that's God's love. I don't think God's love can be found in the language that we have.

Or any language on this earth. I think it's so far and above that that we can barely comprehend it even now. But agape, as it's used here, is a love of decision.

[21:50] It's not a love based in feelings. It can be defined as sacrificial, giving, and absorbing kind of love. And it has more to do with self-denial for the sake of someone else.

It's a love that never changes. It's a self-giving love, and it gives without wanting repayment. So great of a love is agape love that it can be given to the unlovable.

And that kind of blows out of the water the idea, well, she won't make me a sandwich. You know, it makes my coffee pretty poorly, right? I'm not going to be a loving husband.

Wrong. You know, I've done a lot of premarital before. I've married my share of couples. And I always look at it from the standpoint of what the marriage is supposed to look like 20 years down the line.

Because, you know, when people kind of, they get engaged, they've got Christmas in their eyes. It's all like, oh, he's perfect. I love him, you know. We're all like, oh, yeah, she's great. And you know what? That's all good. There's nothing wrong with that, okay?

[22:59] But what happens when she's diagnosed bipolar and she can't get out of bed, and you have to raise the kids by herself? What happens then? You don't leave.

You decide to show up. You decide to love. That is agape love, okay?

And so many people, when they're first starting our marriage, they don't look down the road and think, well, what happens? What happens if something happens? Do you leave? No. You be a shield for him.

But he's not the man I wanted to be. He's lazy. He's this and that. It's like, be a shield for him. When other women are running him down, you be a shield for him. Men, when she's unable to get out of bed because her life is hard, she's dealing with trauma, whatever it may be, you be a servant to her. Oh, but I shouldn't have to. I'm the head of the house. Jesus had all authority on heaven and on earth, in heaven and on earth. And he chose to take a towel and get down and wash the disciples' feet.

[24:09] Don't tell me, husband, that you have headship and you should be served. Our example is Jesus Christ. Be that kind of love for your wife.

When she can't get out of bed, when life is difficult, when her hormonal changes just change everything from one month to the next, show up. Be there for her and love her like Christ loves the church.

Because you see, you can't say that sentence in the same mouth and not try and understand that Jesus literally went to the cross and died for you and me.

We just took communion to remember that. I hope that's what you were remembering. So when it comes to marriage, wives submit to your husbands. Yeah, that's a tough gig sometimes.

But husband, love your wife like Christ loves the church. I would dare say it should be a more encompassing, hard road. Because it means a thousand little deaths to yourself.

[25:07] When she's feeling unlovable, it means you choose to love. Right? When she's incapable of something, you become capable.

Or you support her through it. When she has a dream, you don't tell her it's stupid. You support it. But it's dying a thousand little deaths to yourself so that she can be fully who she is meant to be in God.

You put yourself last. That is our call as husbands. If we are to love our wives like Christ loved the church.

Because I'll say again, he's the guy that took the towel and got down to wash the disciples' feet. So we should do the same. Feelings are great.

Gentle care and love are awesome things. But when something happens and they're missing for a time, you don't stop loving your wife. No. You choose and decide to love her more.

[26:15] Maybe differently, but more. Love her like Christ loves the church. Because this is the pattern, men, that we are given. The world says, I am your head.

So take your orders from me. And here are the things that I want you to do for me or else. This is what the world tells us. But the Jesus way says, I am your head. So let me care for you and serve you.

I'm accountable to God for you. I must love you. This is what our husband's heart should say. And when Jesus gave himself at the cross, he also provided cleansing of every stain that sin makes.

A husband cannot spiritually do this for his wife. We know that. Only Jesus can do that. But we can be a priest in our home and say, hey, honey, what are you reading in the word these days?

Can I read with you? How can I pray for you? What are you going through? We can understand these things. We can be that guy. And so we should. And some of you are.

[27:14] And I just got to say, well done, guys. But if you're not, consider that it's a part of your mission towards your wife. The Lord says to his church, you have a wonderful future.

And isn't that what the husband should say to his wife? You have a wonderful future, my dear.

Verses 28 and 29. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies, he who loves his wife loves himself.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church. We are one with our wives, just as Jesus is with his church. And it's easy to misunderstand these verses.

It really is. Some will believe that we should love our wife in the same way we love our own body. In the sense we'll have a shower, we'll dress, we'll do things to cut our hair or grow it long and keep it. Whatever. I don't care what you're into. Right? And some people say, well, I'm going to love myself that way. I should love my wife that way. Right? Send her to the salon once a month and we're good. No, that's not what it means.

[28:21] It's in something so much deeper than this. So much deeper. Because in many marriages that would actually be an improvement. But that's not what Paul is talking about.

A man loves his wife as his own body. And a man must love his wife as a part of himself. As a part of himself. I tend to think that women understand the idea of oneness a lot more easily than men. There seems to be an ability to come together in community and gentle, loving care that women just have like a natural reflex with. And some men, we have to work on that.

It doesn't come naturally for us. It's very important for the men to understand this oneness. It isn't taking care of your wife like keeping her clothed and fed. Because you do that with kids.

You keep a dog fed. Right? Your wife is a part of who you are. She's one with you. So look after her. It benefits you to do so.

[29:29] Okay? And that oneness means that she's a part of your life. If you're having a bad day, tell her.

You know? Don't just do the silent treatment. Just say, honey, I'm really going through it right now. Can you pray for me? Because you might be surprised. She might start doing that for you too. That oneness is together in the Lord.

The world doesn't rely on thinking and understanding in marriage. The world relies a lot on feelings. It really does. But agape love is a decision. And you know what?

I'm going to go on a rant for just a half a second here. Maybe more than half a second. This is why I hate Hallmark movies. Okay? I mean, forget the predictable plot of, you know, small town girl goes away.

Her ex-boyfriend becomes a single dad. He runs a bakery. And then she comes back on vacation. And her idiot boyfriend who's working in the city comes back. And all of a sudden there's this weird thing.

[30:31] And she's sort of falling in love with her old boyfriend again. And, you know, don't get me started. I can't stare at these movies. And they're all the same. You know? I mean, the snow's fake. Everything. The clothes are all brand new.

It's like, no. Okay. I'm sorry. I've got to stop. The reason why I dislike this is because it sets up this false narrative of romance. Right? It sets up a very false narrative of romance.

One of the most beautiful stories that I've actually seen that I don't think was meant to be a romance. Right? It was called The Ultimate Gift. Has anybody seen that movie?

A Little Girl is Dying. Okay? I'm not going to ruin it for you because it's a great Christian movie.

Okay? And I'm not really saying all Christian movies are great. They're not. Okay?

But this one was good. And the heart of it was just simply that love transcends. And when you're going through the worst time of your life, love is a choice.

[31:29] Okay? It's a wonderful choice. So I will take that kind of show, which is honest about love, then the hallmark. Okay, I've got to stop. I'm just going to go on another one. Anyways. When you love your wife, you benefit yourself.

When you neglect your wife, you're neglecting yourself. And it will come back to bite you. If something is wrong, do something about it.

Don't neglect it. And you know, I've had my share of conversations with husbands going through marital counseling in the past. And the worst one was this guy said, oh no, my wife and I work good. And he didn't realize, and the reason why I was with him was because the prior week, his wife met with Maria and I, and she was fixing to go. And yet he was convinced, we're all good.

I looked at him across the table. I said, no, you're not. Oh no, we're fine. I know her. No, you don't. And then he looked at me. I said, your house is on fire.

[32:38] Your wife is about to leave you. No, she's not. And I told him, she just literally said this, those words to Maria and I. Fix it. Go home and fix this.

Okay. So, let us not take each other for granted. Let's remember that we both have a mission to do in our marriages. And it's not easy. And they're different missions.

And I will say this, you know. If you're young and you're looking to get married, thinking about getting married, then girls, I gotta just challenge you to say this.

Is this a guy I can submit to? Because it's frankly better to stay single than to marry a guy you can't. Okay.

Martin Lloyd-Jones. Have you ever heard of him? He's like one of the prince of preachers. He's a fabulous, fabulous teacher. He had in his church, there was a woman who was about 40 years old.

[33:44] Or ish. Something like that. And he goes up to her and he says, one day he's just like, why haven't you married yet? I don't understand. Why have I not performed your wedding service? Why am I not doing your premarital and things like that? She said, I haven't found a man to master me yet.

And she stayed single. And you know, the thing is, he walked away from that thinking, wow, I did not expect that. But there was a beauty in that. Okay. Ask yourself, can I submit to this man? Because that is your mission with God. Is to be his shield, his protector. Okay. But can you submit to this man? If you can't, don't do it.

Okay. And guys, if you're thinking about marrying someone, maybe here, maybe not, just take this into account. Would you end your life today for her?

Would you die on a cross for her right now? Do you love her that much? You have to ask yourself that. Because that's marriage. Is dying a thousand little deaths. To put her welfare over your own.

[34:50] To put her needs and wants ahead of yourself. Can you do that with this girl? If not, don't be a burden to her. Those may be harsh words, but look, they're coming from 34 battle-hardened years of marriage.

Where both Mari and I have been to the wall of saying, yeah, we're done. Okay. It comes from raising kids who have been married and the marriages haven't always been easy. So when I'm saying that, I'm actually trying to say it out of love.

Don't get into a bad situation. Okay. Think about it. And if you are thinking about getting married, come and talk to me. I'm not going to be as grumpy about it as you may think. Weddings are literally one of my favorite things to do.

They really are. They're beautiful. Beautiful moments. But the premarital is serious. You know? You got to really know what you're getting into. Anyway, that's another rabbit trail. We need the power of Holy Spirit for this.

We really do. We need the power of the Holy Spirit as a wife to submit to our husband. Because he may not be Captain Fantastic. Okay? But God's working on him. Trust in that.

[35 : 54] And guys, you have to be willing to lay down your life for your wife. Even if she makes your coffee wrong and doesn't make you a sandwich. Or whatever you put over it. Is fixated on Hallmark movies. I don't know. I don't know what her thing is.

But all that to be said. Okay? You got to love her. You got to decide to love her and show up. Even when it's hard. Because it takes both husband and wife. No one can go on strike.

Right? No one can say, well, I'm doing more than you. You got to talk about it. And you got to get through it. And get help if you need it. There is absolutely no shame in saying we got to talk to somebody.

There's lots of somebodies in this room right here. With a lot of marriage experience that we can talk to. And I think we're going to have to take advantage of that. You don't have to come to me. You can just call a couple that you know.

And just say, you know what? We need prayer. Start with that. We have to work and submit to one another as unto the Lord. Submitting to your husbands and loving your wives as Christ has loved the church.

[36 : 56] Let's pray. Let's pray. Thank you.