

Paul's Exhortation to Wives Part 2

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, once again we come to you, lifting our voices and our hearts to sing the praises how great is our God.

Father, I pray that just wouldn't be empty words, but a true and enduring knowledge that the saints here that meet at Squamish Baptist Church will echo in every aspect of their lives.

Thank you, God. In your most holy and precious name, amen. As you may, or if you're new, joining us, we are in Ephesians chapter 5 today.

So please turn with me into, in your text, to Ephesians chapter 5. We are dealing with the roles of wives and husbands, and we are still in the section on wives.

Today I want to take a specific look at verses 22 through 24 and examine what Paul's exhortation to wives is.

[1 : 06] If you remember last week, we unpacked the literary context of the passage. And what I mean by that is where it fits into the rest of the message that Paul has given to us in the letter to the Ephesians.

And one of the points that I made is that without the rest of the teaching, which speaks about, and we've got these key words here on stage that remind us that these are the values of one who follows Christ.

This is the model that he has. We will learn, and I'm going to touch on it very briefly, but we are to be imitators of Christ. Colossians 3.12 echoes the exact same words.

When we put off self and put on Christ, these are the characteristics of someone who is in the Spirit. So what we have is not just a marriage manual. It is a manual of life, of how the church is to function, is these incredible primary teachings that he has for us.

[2 : 19] We learn that our marriages are, to a large degree, a reflection of the intimate relationship between Jesus Christ and the church.

That marriage is not a social contract, nor is it something that simply evolved through time for the sake of cultural simplicity.

But it began in Genesis when God created a man and a woman. He brought them together with the ultimate purpose to bring glory to him.

Paul has been teaching us what it is to be an imitator of Christ. Paul has been teaching us what our lives are to be as a child of God.

And now he turns to the most intimate of all relationships, which is marriage. And when we understand the literary context of Ephesians and where this passage fits, it clears up so many misconceptions that people have in regards to some of the issues in regards to marriage.

[3 : 46] As I stated last week, this is the Bible's longest passage dealing with the Christian understanding of marriage.

But it is not the sole passage that deals with marriage. It's also very important to us. And this is a point that I really want us to understand.

This isn't like a step-by-step direction manual on how to do marriage. And I have heard sermons where it's kind of got translated into that.

And then they extrapolate all the ways that it is supposed to look like in our culture. And they state that that is biblical. Now, I believe that some of those things that they speak about are correct biblical applications.

But they are not always the unique words of Paul or what God is expressing us to his word. The point that I want to make is that when we read a truth in Scripture, it needs to work in today's culture as much as it has to work 400 years ago in China or 1,000 years ago in Germany.

[5 : 07] That what he's talking about and the principles behind following God work anywhere at any time.

And the application is how we live our lives out in light of everything else that we have or able to do. So I like to think of it as a teaching to point us in the right direction.

And as we grow and understand and grow in the wisdom of God, taking the rest of the Bible into consideration, growing in the faith, then we can start to make wise decisions and wise application. So let's take a look. Read along with me. We're going to read in verse 22 here. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

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.

[6 : 15] The reality is, if there is an area that Satan has had an absolute heyday in influencing, believers is dismantling Christian marriages.

Satan has spared no effort or time to undermine what a Christian marriage is and how a Christian marriage is to function.

And one of the primary ways he does that is attacking the roles, the functions that wives and husbands have within marriage. Today's passage alone includes two incredibly hot button issues, right?

Submission and male headship. Two subjects that a lot of people recoil from. And Satan uses several tools to get us to buy into his way of thinking.

One of the ways that we learned last year is he uses this culturally. He tends to change the culture that we live in and then we start to accept its values.

[7 : 26] Like water that drips against a rock. At first the rock thinks, I can withstand this water. It's just drip, drip, drip. There's not a lot of force. But over time, that water will have its way and break that rock.

It's the same way with us in this culture. If we are not anchoring ourselves to God's Word, the culture, no matter how much we might think we're thinking biblically, we'll begin to skew our thoughts.

We need to go back to have our compass righted in God's Word. The other thing that Satan does is he just simply outright lies to us.

He lies, lies, lies. And one of the ways that he does is that he will parade horrible examples of marriages in front of us and he will say, you don't want that.

That is a horrible marriage. And if you trust God and you follow this submission thing and this headship, you're going to get into this abusive marriage as well.

[8 : 39] And what he does is he uses marriages that aren't functioning biblically. Sometimes they are good, God-fearing people who are sadly more full of zest to tell you what they believe rather than being full of God's wisdom and how they should act.

And Satan simply whispers in your ears, you don't want that. And ultimately he tells us that God's commands are burdensome, that they are painful, that the fruit of God's wisdom, although it might seem good, you'll be denying yourself, your true happiness.

And what he wants to plant in your head that God's promises will lead to bitterness, sour, and will ultimately be rotten to you.

And what he does is he uses all these tricks to produce a real fear in God's real people. And I'm not talking about he puts fear in unbelievers or casual Christians.

That's not always true. Sometimes he puts real fear into real Christians who don't always understand or always haven't had great models in their life.

[10 : 15] And instead they look to see with their eyes rather than understanding what God's word says. I've been face-to-face in counseling situations with what I would classify as tragic marriages of husbands who've abused this text.

And they've taken their wives and their families down horrible paths of sin. And that becomes a testimony to women around them, which leads them to distrust all men, whether it be in the family, but in the church as well as any type of male leadership.

I know men and women who have with all sincerity desire to follow God, but get their functions so mixed up they become horrible examples.

I've got this one funny story. I get a call one time, I'm just beginning my pastoral career, and this husband calls me and he's very, very upset. And he's more concerned and he's got to make this decision.

And it's the decision that they're, him and his wife have been married for, I don't know, a couple of years anyway. They don't have any children. They're just kind of making their way. And they've now saved up enough money to buy a new car.

[11 : 37] And he's stressed because in his mind, his thinking of biblical leadership means he has to make all the decisions.

And ultimately, the decision to buy this car has to rely on him. And he's asking me, you know, for help and how does he do this?

And I asked him, well, did you not talk to your wife about this? And he goes, well, ultimately, no, because I'm the one who's got to make this decision. I got to decide which car to buy.

It was one of the more easier counseling appointments. I just simply had to say, no, that's not how it works. That's not what God is calling you to. The fact of the matter is he happened to be married to a very intelligent, accomplished wife who in her career had accomplished much more than him.

And I simply told him, listen, if I were up to you, up to me, and I was married to your wife, I'd pretty much let her make all those decisions. Because she's quite good at them. And he just needed to be told that he's allowed to do that.

[12 : 44] How did that happen? I know we laugh and we think that's funny. But that was a true concern because that's what had been falsely modeled to him.

Probably the more tragic examples that I think of is I can think of three friends who were engaged to be married. They dated their girlfriends for several years and when they got engaged the issue of submission came up.

And even though their relationships were functioning quite well as they started to go through their premarital counseling, questions started to arise in their wives to be head, right?

Wives to be heads. They started to ask questions, will I constantly be overruled? Will I be ordered around? Will I lose my identity and freedom?

And will I just be turned into some sort of slave to meet my husband's needs? And for a couple of them that I know, they went into biblical counseling and eventually had to end the relationships.

[13 : 57] And what was so ironic, their dating relationships were great, but for some reason, if these women who were smart, educated women would enter into this marriage, it would seem cruel, oppressive, and personally diminishing.

And what is amazing is that none of these girls come from a non-Christian background, from what I understand. There's Christian families.

There was no latent feminist issues or agendas. They were just the things that as they were improperly taught and understood, these real fears took root.

All three of the women that I know that I'm thinking of still aren't married because of this fear that Satan has given them. So when I tell you that I understand the fears, I do.

I really do. But those fears come from lies. This morning, the passage that I read to you was Psalm 19, David is telling us that God's commands are perfect, are sure, are right, and they are pure.

[15 : 22] That is the quality of God's commands to us. That is what the Bible is to us. And Psalm 19 is unique in that it tells us that the fruit of God's commands is that there's a revival of the soul.

It restores our souls. These words have the ability to save us. It also tells us that it can make wise the simple that you don't have to be a brilliant person to understand and ultimately it says to rejoice the heart and enlighten the eyes.

That anyone can receive the joy that only God brings through his word. And they're true. And why do we believe this?

It's because Ephesians has been telling us and explaining to us that God loves us. That we are his child. We have this whole ministry of Jesus Christ that we read in the four gospels that tells us that God loves us.

He's not out to harm us so when he creates marriage it is for our good our blessing and the roles and functions within the marriage are meant to bless us as well.

[16 : 48] They are never to harm us or lead us to shame. So what I want for you is I want you to see that God's teaching is good.

It will not only revive your soul it will bring you joy and brings you wisdom. And wise living is a life that brings joy to the Lord.

And what's interesting is when we look at the literary context we understand that following chapter 5 in marriage is chapter 6 on spiritual warfare. God knew all the time that there is going to be a battle to undermine marriages and today there is full on war against marriage and it's happening in our churches today.

So I need to ask something of you. When I get in here if you have any questions, concerns or if I'm unclear about something, I want you to ask me.

I want you to bring up the part of the sermon just send me an email, you can write me a letter, give me a phone call, it doesn't matter. But I want you to see the wonderful clarity that God brings in his word to us.

[18:14] So without further, let's take a look at what this word submission looks like and what is this exhortation, this command that Paul gives to wives in this passage.

So take a look, looking down in your Bibles, verse 22, it simply says, wives submit to your husbands. Later on in verse 24, it says, now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

And what's interesting is we see this command in several other places. Colossians 3.18 simply states, wives submit to your husbands as is fitting to the Lord.

1 Peter 3.1 says, likewise, wives be subject to your own husbands. And 1 Peter 3.5 says, for this is how the holy women who hope in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands.

So when we look at the word in the Greek, the word submit means to place in order.

[19:35] It's to put things in order. It's to kind of like line up under. Probably it was used more in the military context.

And even back then, 2,000 years ago, just as they do today in today's military, there's a ranking system. Whether it be private, sergeant, lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, general, there's all these ranks that people are in.

And the word submit is to come into order. And the way Paul's using it, come into order as I have you.

And there is a sense of ordering under authority. And we're going to get to that part of what male headship means later, but there's this ranking. So at the heart of submission is this idea or a notion of order.

And what the word is never associated, it does not mean in the rankings that someone is less equal or less capable, less intelligent, less gifted, less important.

[20:53] And there's nothing ever that denotes any sign of inequality. And that's where a lot of the abuse comes when pastors are trying to figure out why God did it this way.

They start kind of dissecting biologically men and women. And there's a few passages that point to a few things, but they go way over the limit on this. But in this text, it just simply says what it says.

These is the function of the wife is different than the husband. They're different responsibilities. So the question is what does it mean to place yourself under?

Now, if you guys have your Greek Bibles open in verse 22, you'd have your hands up and you'd say BK. The word submit isn't even actually in this verse.

And you'd be absolutely right. The word submit actually occurs in verse 21 where it says submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[22:10] So what verses 22 is doing is taking the understanding of verse 21 and it's demonstrating how the wife is to submit in her mutual submission to her husband.

And this is part of God's grand design. And it should be noted that this section actually begins in verse 18. Be filled with the Spirit. addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ.

our goal in glorifying God is to fall under the order that he has designed us for.

And this is where it begins. One of the points that really came to me just thinking about it more this morning is that submission doesn't lead to obedience.

[23 : 28] Obedience in following Christ leads to submission. And we're going to touch on that a little bit more. But it's important to note that submission is the end result of living for Christ.

Submission doesn't lead to this. And I'll explain why. So one, there's two things that we see in this section that help us with our understanding of submission. The first, as we see in verse 18, it is an action that takes place in the spirit.

That the wives' submission begins in the spirit. The fact of the matter is you and I cannot please God in the flesh. If there's anything that I want to be the centerpiece of the gospel that I preach, which is the biblical gospel, is that there is no work that we can do to justify ourselves before God. And any time we try to please God in the flesh, we sadly turn it into a work which leads to a sort of dreariness and a burden.

And when we try, we often lead to a cold form, a legalistic, bitter sort of obedience.

[24 : 54] Does that sound like worship to you? Now, I grew up in a denomination that practiced as part of the worship service that women were to wear head coverings.

That was part of the culture where women would wear head coverings of a sign that they were in obedience or in submission to their husbands.

And that head covering is supposed to act as an inward, it's an outward expression of an inward reality. But as we all know, outward expressions can be spoiled, can't they?

that what God ultimately cares for is what is going on in the heart of the saint, the worshiper. So it is an action that takes place in the spirit.

The second is that this act of worship, this act of submission, is a willing, ongoing act.

[26 : 03] It is a willing, ongoing act. For both the husband and wife, the wife and the husband, worship is never forced. Obedience can be forced.

Submissive, worshipful spirits cannot. You see, worship is something that we give voluntarily. The reason we worship Jesus Christ is because we understand his great love for us and that we want to freely give him every part of our lives because we know that he is good.

This submission is also one of an ongoing nature. Colossians 3.18 uses a middle voice emphasis which talks to the voluntary character of submission.

submission. So this submission is both an action that takes place in the spirit to start. It is given willingly and it tells us something.

Notice how Paul, note who Paul is speaking to. Notice how it states in the text, wives, submit to your husbands.

[27 : 27] Notice it doesn't say husbands, your wives are to be submissive to you. Notice the text doesn't read as some sort of handbook or instructions on marriage.

And it would light, you'd find the section, all right, husbands is what you're supposed to do. Oh, wives, here we go. Yes, you are supposed to submit to me. That's not how Paul even addresses the saints.

He's speaking directly to them. He's just talked about what it is to be an imitator of Christ, what it is to walk in wisdom, to walk in light, walk in the spirit ultimately.

And he's ultimately saying, listen, if you want this marriage or you want this expression of what it is to be in Christ, to be lived out in marriage, this is how you do it.

Oh, by the way, this is the same way my son, loves you. And we're going to talk about the model of submission next week.

[28 : 34] But he's telling us this is the plan. What's interesting is that when I give advice to men who are struggling in the home, I always start with, are you a man even worth submitting to?

Are you leading your wife in love? Or are you making life hard, difficult for her? Are you giving her a sort of life that your wife struggles every day with your wisdom?

Right choices, right decisions? Are you seeking her out, her wisdom? See, I believe if you're in your marriage and you're at a point where you have to remind your wife that she needs to submit, you've already lost the battle.

The call isn't to call her to submit. The play is to start loving your wife, which we're going to talk to when we get to the roles of the husband.

But it's to model the life of Jesus Christ, which we are all called to imitate. You see, wives, this is your role before the Lord. This is your function.

[29 : 58] This isn't a task your husband needs to remind you of. Submission is the end result of a life being given over to Christ.

It is spirit-filled. It is willing. It is ultimately the fruit of obedience. And of what we read here in Ephesians, it comes with the knowledge of God the Father, God the Son, and God, the Holy Spirit. It comes with the knowledge of who we are, who we were in the flesh, and who we are now in the Spirit. It comes with the understanding that one knows they are a child of God.

God. And there's responsibilities of being that child. And it is a life given over to desiring to be like Christ.

So for wives, to be like Christ is to be submissive in marriage. That's what it means to be submissive.

[31 : 10] Now, the first objection, and throughout this series, I'm going to look at some common objections that occur. And the first objection is mutual submission means no headship.

So when we read verse 21, we're mutually submitted to one another, and I hope I've already disarmed this falsehood from the last several passages, but I want to revisit them here.

One of the more common objections I hear about submission is that since we are to mutually submit to one another, that means we are each in authority, the husband and wives.

When I say we, I'm kind of playing the part of the husband. So we have this time where on sometimes I will be submissive to my wife, and at other times my wife will be submissive to me.

And it's kind of this, they believe that there's this headship can go back and forth. And I get it why they believe that, because we live in this culture which prizes individuality, it prizes freedom.

[32 : 18] As I stated last week, the culture has a huge influence on how we think about church and marriage. When people hear the word submission, certain words come into our heads.

One, subordination, subjection, subjugation, exploitation, oppression. And then all of a sudden you add in this word headship.

Then we have these negative words of authority, and all of a sudden we have tyranny. Nobody wants to be under tyranny. What's interesting, I was reading a blog by a woman, I've read her blog before, she is biblical, but she kind of added that word subjugation in there, that she believed that she needs to be subjected to her husband and she was using it in a way that the Bible does not use.

It's easy to get into that. But the reality is we all struggle with authority. But this is not what the text is saying at all.

The Bible, we're reading, calls us to different functions. And I addressed this a few Sundays ago. The reality is we are to seek and serve and love one another.

[33 : 42] My role is to be about my wife. My wife's role is to be about me. And that we are both seeking each other's welfare within our marriage.

love by its very nature is dying to self. It's putting others' interests above ourselves.

But it's not abdicating the roles that God calls us to. So as I said, this is what the whole book of Ephesians is all about.

Ephesians 5.1, therefore be imitators of God as beloved children and walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

But within our marriages, he's also designed different functions. Mutual submission does not do away with the structure.

[34 : 53] What Paul's teaching here is that mutual submission is carried out in a wife submitting to her husband and a husband loving his wife.

What's interesting is that every other authority on earth or organization recognizes authority.

Whether or not you happen to be a ship has one captain, a company has one CEO and a family can only have one head.

The problem is is that when it comes to the family, they believe that the husband as the head is the one who makes all the decisions rather than seeing it as the place where ultimate responsibility lies.

as we all know there is not a single ship, a single company, or a godly family that accomplishes its purposes with a selfish, deluded, hard-headed person at the head.

It always starts with someone who is humble, Christ-like, godly, gentle, patient. Yes, there are different giftings.

[36 : 17] Yes, there are different talents. Yes, there are different skill sets. But a marriage, to be a marriage that blesses the Lord, you have to work together, right?

What's kind of interesting is now that I've been married, I cannot even see myself ever wanting to make a decision without my wife's consultation, even if it's in an area that she's not familiar with.

There's not a decision that I don't talk to her about. There's nothing that I want to do that would displease her. And yet, before marriage, we seem to think that all these problems are going to happen.

But I also understand that my wife's ultimate goal is to love the Lord and serve Him forever. That is without question. And when people are struggling with this before marriage, I think they have to make the right life decision that maybe the person they're about to marry, maybe God really isn't at the top of the list.

Maybe He's just a throw in to all the other things about life that they want. Kids, security, someone who will be with them so they're not lonely.

[37 : 37] Those are all good things, but they're not ultimately what God is calling marriage to. So when Paul is talking about this idea of mutual submission, he simply means that wives and husbands are working together to be like Christ.

And they do that by the wife submitting to her husband and husband loving their wives. Now, I don't want to go much further with this just because of the time element, but I want to talk next week, we're going to talk about the attitudes of submission.

I want to look at what submission looks like as it plays its part, but I also want to deal with some of the myths of submission. And I'll be honest with you, it's been kind of a heavy week as I was just thinking through some of the myths and some of the bad examples that I'm seeing.

Like I said, I can relate. My heart goes out to those people who struggle for some of the things that they've got before them.

But I want to address one issue before we close today. And the question is often asked, if my husband is not a believer, how am I supposed to submit?

[39 : 06] Well, there's generally three ways that a wife finds herself with an unbelieving husband. One is they were unbelievers before they got married, and their eyes have opened spiritually before their husbands.

The second one is they disobeyed married an unbeliever, believing that security kids and those other things that I spoke about were going to happen.

Or, and the third reason is they believe they married a saint, and as they started living out their life, the husband, for one reason or another, stops following God and falls away from the faith.

How is a wife supposed to honor God in that marriage? Is she supposed to submit? Well, Paul actually deals with this in 1 Peter, and the answer is yes, she is to submit.

But we're going to talk about there's boundaries to submission, but 1 Peter 3, 1, 2, and I want to read it here for you, says, Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

[40 : 36] So now what's really amazing is now there is a chief marriage, chief missionary in that marriage. And through the wives' conduct of being respectful and pure conduct can lead to changing that husband's heart.

The question that I often ask is, what was Jesus Christ like with unbelievers? Right? He was accepting. He was loving. He was kind. He was compassionate.

He wasn't going around blessing their evil activities, but he was talking to their hearts of their issues of what they were dealing with. You see, your desire before the Lord is still to be your husband's best asset so that he might ultimately see Jesus in you.

Now, even what Paul's talking about, notice that he talks about your actions, not your words.

They may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives. Too often, the wife's desire is to nag her husband into the kingdom or to convict him into the kingdom or to want to remind him of his sinfulness and need for Jesus.

[42 : 09] And whether it's not you want to force prayer on him or you write sticky notes all over the house telling him to be thankful in all things, all those things might sound really great, wonderful, and biblical, but they often work against you, if not all the time.

Nobody, even Jesus, didn't constantly remind them of their sin. Often, he reminded them of who the shepherd is.

You see, the reality of your role is not to convince him of his need for a savior or the need to repent of his sins. That is the role of the Holy Spirit because that is the one who did it to you.

It was the Holy Spirit that regenerated your heart. It was the Holy Spirit that changed your attitudes. It was the Holy Spirit revealed that you had a need for a savior. And the Holy Spirit can do the exact same thing to your husband.

your role is to clear the garbage that exists in the world so that there's no mistranslation of what's going on.

[43 : 34] Your role is to submit to love and to pray for him. What a testimony it is to him, to those who know you when your love is unconditional.

And the other reality is you can try to make him more more moral but often making someone more moral actually makes him further takes him further away from the gospel then brings it closer.

because if he believes it's actions he's going to believe he has the actions and there nothing more needs to be done. My encouragement for you is to let him see Christ in you.

There's this testimony I came across several years ago it was a man a husband had eventually been saved and as he started participating in church he actually confessed that he thought the church hated him was against him because that's where his wife spent all her time.

She just decided to lead another life. Now I get that if the husband is abusive or he doesn't want to have anything to do with him I have seen marriages like that where tragically one is saved and then the other one just does not want anything to do with the other person because they've become a Jesus follower I get that but often the husband still loves his wife she's still the same person he married but her motives have changed and there's a supernatural power in her that now exists that allows her to love her husband even more than before isn't that incredible and listen I say this as someone who lived in a home where the mother was a believer and the husband wasn't so if I was to define submission to you today what this passage reveals we see submission as a calling of a wife to willingly honor and affirm her husband's leadership so to help him help one another using her gifts and abilities that God has blessed her with to bring blessing to the

[46 : 26] Lord let us pray dear Lord Heavenly Father this is just for me it just has felt like such a rendering topic even though I believe there is this beautiful simplicity to it I am also more than aware of the horrors that surround it by sin and by not truly understanding what the text says Father I pray that you would render forgiveness to those who have desired to follow you and in their zest have not demonstrated wisdom Father I pray that you would bring rebuke upon those who use this as a weapon in order to control their wives and not magnify the love that they are supposed to magnify Father I just pray for this church I don't know all the backstories that are here

I just pray that as they as wives work through these passages that they would see this command that you have laid out and I pray that they see that it is good and it's interesting the psalmist David uses the word your word is sure it means it's something that we can be confident in it is stable it is rigid not a cold rigidity but it is somewhat something that we can place our absolute trust upon God because it will hold us Father forgive us for our foolishness Father even forgive me for saying things before that I truly did not comprehend or understand I pray that first and foremost the testimony out of this church would be a group of believers of saints that magnify who you are and they do so purposely through their marriages that by their love to you would show a wonderful example of how you love the church what a thing to ask for oh Lord and the only person who can deliver on this is you so we ask these things in your most holy precious and wonderful name amen