

The Ideal Marriage - How Husbands & Wives Should Treat One Another

Ephesians 5:22-33

1 The ideal marriage. How husbands and wives should treat one another.

Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 22 through 33, has done more for women's status in society than any other document. It shows how a husband ought to treat his wife and what her response to him should be.

Nine verses in this passage deal with husbands: only three deal with wives. So, God has three times as much to say to husbands as He does wives!

It is important before we read and explain this powerful Bible passage to put it into context. 2

First let us look at the context of ancient society.

In Jewish culture a man could divorce a woman for almost any reason. Deuteronomy, chapter 24, verse 1 said, If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house . . . In Jesus' day, "indecent" could mean almost

anything! Women could not initiate divorce, only men could. 3

In Roman culture, it was even worse. Women kept track of dates by the names of their husbands. Twenty in her lifetime was not unusual. They were considered possessions. 4

Greek culture of that day was even worse. For men, prostitutes were for pleasure; concubines were for companionship and wives were for running the household and caring for the children. There was no divorce. Men just threw their wives out! 5

The context of our modern society is not much better morally is it? We have no fault divorce, cohabitation, liberal media, a 49.7% divorce rate, and gays can have a legal marriage relationship. 6 Moslems are trying to make Sharia Law binding in some American communities. That would make women virtual slaves to their husbands! 7

If the world ever needed direction about how to succeed in marriage, it is today! ⁸

So, Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 22 through 33. Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. ¹

9

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ² ₁₀

¹ Ephesians 5: 22-24.

² Ephesians 5:25-28.

After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.³ ¹¹

So, let us look first to . . .

I. How are Husbands Supposed to Treat Their Wives? - v25-33

How are husbands supposed to treat their wives? ¹²

The Bible answer is, the same way Lord Jesus treats His church! So, how does the Lord treat His church? ¹³

Verse 25 says, **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**
The Lord loved the church! ¹⁴

³ Ephesians 5:29-33.

His love was **assertive**. The word **gave**⁴ means “to hand yourself over”. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord surrendered His will to God’s divine plan. He went to the cross the next day! ¹⁵ Luke, chapter 9, verse 51, emphasized this resolve, **As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem**. ¹⁶

Verse 26 says, . . . **to make her holy**, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word . . . “Washing with water through the word” is new birth language. ¹⁷ John, chapter 3, verse 5, . . . **no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit**. Because of the cross you can have abundant and eternal life with God! ¹⁸

Verse 27 says, . . . and **to present her to himself as a radiant church**, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **He presented her**

⁴ παραδίδωμι.

radiant; ⁵ glorified. She was held in honor like a bride at her wedding! ¹⁹

Verses 29 and 30 read, . . . **but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church — for we are members of his body.** He **feeds and cares** for the church by providing His Holy Spirit. ²⁰

So, how is a husband to treat his wife? **Assertively!** ²¹

A woman's basic need from her husband is to be loved biblically. A wife's self esteem is provided primarily by the way her husband treats her. ²²

Biblical love ⁶ is **giving assertively.** Giving to her because she has that need. Love means providing, showing affection, spending time with her and talking to her. Men do not naturally do this; so they have to be commanded! ²³

Remember verse 25, **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for**

⁵ ἔνδοξος.

⁶ ἀγαπάω.

her. Love her sacrificially! To the degree Lord Jesus gave Himself for the church. Would you be willing to suffer and die for her? ²⁴

Remember verse 26, . . . **to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word. Love her purely!** The washing of water, Christian baptism, symbolizes complete forgiveness. ²⁵

Remember verses 28 and 29, **In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church. Love her **caringly!****

²⁶

The word **ought** ⁷ means “to owe, to be in debt”. She has a right to this kind of love! ²⁷

Treat her like you treat **your own body**. ²⁸ You nourish it, provide for it and protect it. As you love your body

⁷ ὀφείλω.

you love yourself. Psychology tells us an unloving person is that way because he has poor self worth. ²⁹

Care ⁸ means “to cherish”. Literally, it means to “get warm by hugging”. Men. We need more cherishing today, more romance! ³⁰

Remember verse 31, **For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. Love her unconditionally!** The love of a parent for a child is this way. The love in marriage should be too. ³¹

A married couple is considered by God to be one unit; one flesh (one body). You must leave your parents physically and emotionally; then be united to your wife! ³²

The word **united** ⁹ means “to cleave or glue yourself”. So, divorce is like tearing apart a physical body limb from limb. Some of you may have experienced that emotional pain!

⁸ θάλπω.

⁹ προσκολλάω.

This sentence is quoted four times in the Bible.¹⁰ God must want to get your attention!³³

The second part of this passage is . . .

II. How are Wives Supposed to Respond to Their Husbands? - v22-24

How are wives supposed to respond to their husbands?³⁴ The Bible answer is, the same way the church responds to Jesus! So, how does the church respond to Jesus?³⁵

Verse 23 says, **For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.** To the church, **Jesus is Lord** as well as Savior!³⁶ As Lord, we as church members govern our lives by what the Bible says.³⁷

So, how is the wife to treat her husband? **Responsibly!**³⁸

¹⁰ Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7 and here.

A husband's basic need from his wife is respect. He needs to feel like her prince, knight in shining armor; one whom she can trust with her life! He gains considerable self esteem by the way his wife relates to him. ³⁹ Women do not naturally submit this way, so they have to be commanded! ⁴⁰

Men have been given authority, but also responsibility. Delegated authority is something anyone who has ever served in the military understands. Whenever a person is given authority, that person becomes totally responsible for everything that happens within the scope of that authority. There's good news and bad news here. If a unit does well on its mission the commander gets the praise and the recognition. If the unit does poorly, the commander might get relieved of command. ⁴¹

In the Book of Genesis Adam was told to take charge of the world ¹¹ and Eve was created to be “a fit helper” for him. ¹² ₄₂

Now, in verse 22 we come in contact with the “S” word! **Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.** The word **submit** ¹³ means “to rank yourself under, to obey”. The implication is to fit in with your husband’s plans. ₄₃ This submission becomes, hopefully, a natural response to **a biblically loving husband.** ₄₄

Granted; this submission may have to come as an act of biblical faith! First Peter, chapter 3, verses 1 through 6, **Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come**

¹¹ Genesis 1:28 - Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

¹² Genesis 2:18 - The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

¹³ ὑποτάσσω.

from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. ¹⁴ ₄₅

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. ¹⁵

There were two instances where Abraham (the mighty man of God - right?) became so afraid of the local political authorities, because Sarah was so beautiful, that he told her to say she was his sister. ¹⁶ When she obeyed, the local mafia leader types, captured her to add her to their harems. God had to miraculously intervene to rescue her.

Ladies: that kind of obedience is what opens up the majestic hand of God to intervene on your behalf! ₄₆

¹⁴ | Peter 3:1-3.

¹⁵ | Peter 3:4-6.

¹⁶ Genesis 20:3-13.

If modern day husbands and wives would just fit themselves into this pattern, they would have longer and happier marriages.

Let us do this marriage thing God's way! Let us do it right!

Then you can expect His blessing!

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