

Instructions To Husbands And Wives

- Paul first addresses husbands and wives to illustrate the meaning of verse 21 - "be subject to one another."
- This will be followed by instructions to parents and children, and then instructions to masters and slaves.

EPH 5:22 Wives, *be subject* [submissive] to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

- Lit. "the wives" - The Greek "gune" [goo **nay**] means "woman, wife," but means "wife" in this context.
 - The words "be subject" are supplied and are in italics. Lit. "the wives to the [their] own husbands."
 - The words "be subject" are supplied from verse 21. In verse 21 Christians are to be submissive to one another, but the meaning of this is clearly explained in the following section. (Eph. 5:22-6:5).
 - The words do not mean that every Christian must obey every other Christian.
1. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands" - See also Col. 3:18
 - a. Wives are commanded to be submissive to their "own husbands." This was true even if the husband was not a Christian. (1 Pet. 3:1).
 - b. The word "own" is significant.
 - 1) The wife was to be submissive to her husband.
 - 2) Paul used the word "idios" [**id ee ahs**] meaning "one's own, own."
 - c. Being in Christ did not free the wife from her responsibility of obeying her husband and was part of her obedience to Christ.
 - d. This responsibility of wives obeying their husbands began in the garden of Eden. (Gen. 3:16).

GEN 3:16 To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, **And he shall rule over you.**"

- e. The plural "wives" and plural "husbands" is used in a singular sense. Each wife was to be submissive to her "own" husband. It is not a reference to a woman having a plurality of husbands or a man having a plurality of wives.
2. Submission does not mean inferiority.
 - a. Jesus submitted to the Father, but He is not inferior to Him. (Phil. 2:5-8; Jn. 10:30).

PHI 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

PHI 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

PHI 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

PHI 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

JOH 10:30 "I and the Father are one."

1) Jesus had "equality with God."

2) He "emptied Himself" only in the sense that for a short time He became flesh and took on "the form of a bondservant." In the flesh He could hunger and thirst, get tired, suffer, die, etc.. The fact He was flesh did not mean He was not also God. (Jn. 20:28).

3) Even during the period of His incarnation He was Deity. (Matt. 1:23; Col. 1:15; 2:9; Jn. 1:1; 10:30; 14:9; 20:30,31).

4) Jesus never lost His Deity even for a second. He has always been Deity and will always be Deity.

b. Neither is the wife inferior to her husband, and she is not to be treated as inferior.

1) The husband who treats his wife as an inferior is certainly not following the law of Christ.

2) He is to honor his wife. (1 Pet. 3:7).

c. God intended for woman to be the companion and helper of man - not a slave.

3. "as to the Lord" - "as you submit yourselves to the Lord" Phi.

a. These words assume the Christian wives are submitting to the Lord Jesus.

b. There was, likewise, an obligation for wives to obey their husbands.

c. Submitting to the Lord meant also obeying husbands.

1) Christ did not free women of this responsibility.

2) See Gal. 3:27-29.

4. See Colossians 3:18-19 where Paul sets forth the duty of wives to obey their husbands.

COL 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. "aneko" [ah **na**y koh] - "proper, fitting."

COL 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.

EPH 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church [the called-out people], He Himself being the Savior of the body.

- "for" is from "hoti" [**hah** tee] literally "because, that."
- Greek "the body" - "tou somatos" [**too sah** mah tahs]

1. "For the husband is the head of the wife" - See also 1 Cor. 11:3.

a. Husbands have authority over their wives.

- b. The husband who loves his wife will not abuse this authority, but will be loving and considerate toward his wife.
 - c. This is the way Christ treats His bride, and the way a husband should treat his wife.
2. “as Christ also is the head of the church”
- a. The church is the bride of Christ. (Eph. 5:22-31; Rom. 7:4).
 - b. The church is sometimes spoken of as the betrothed of Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2).

2CO 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. “harmoazo” [har mah zoh] - “I betroth, join in marriage.”

- c. Christ is coming one day to take His bride, who has made herself ready, home to heaven.
3. “He Himself being the Savior of the body”
- a. “The body” is identified in Ephesians 1:22,23. See Col. 1:18.
 - b. Christ “Himself” is the Savior of His body.
 - c. He is never said to be “the Savior” of any other body.
 - d. He gave His life for it. (Eph. 5:25).
 - e. One must be in the body to be saved.

EPH 5:24 But as the church [the called-out people] is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be [submissive] to their husbands in everything.

- This verse brings out again that Christ is not only the Savior of the church, but He is the Head of the body and “the church is subject” to Him.
- The church [the called-out people] has one Head, one King, one Chief Shepherd - Jesus Christ.

1. “But as the church is subject to Christ”
- a. The church is to be completely submissive to Christ.
 - b. He is the Head of the body (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18), and He has “all authority.” (Matt. 28:18).
 - c. He is “the chief shepherd.” (1 Pet. 5:3,4). See Jn. 10:16 “one flock with one shepherd.”
 - d. He is the King of the kingdom. (Acts 2:32,33).
 - 1) The kingdom is another way of describing the saved body (the church).
 - 2) Christ is King of those in His body, and they let Jesus reign in their hearts.
2. “so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything”
- a. “In everything” is not absolutely literal. Other scriptures show these words have some limitations.

- b. Wives must not be disobedient to their Lord even if the husband desires or demands it. Wives are not to practice “the works of the flesh” even if the husband expects or demands it. Neither are they to break the law of the land to please their husbands. (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).
- c. Obedience to the Lord must always come first.
- d. Jesus expects complete obedience. (Lk. 6:46). See Jn. 14:15; 15:14; Heb. 5:9.
- e. “in everything” refer to everything in the marriage relationship as long as it does not conflict with God’s law. It does not demand absolute obedience regardless of the demands of the husband.

EPH 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church [the called-out people] and gave Himself up for her; See Col. 3:19

- 1. “Husbands, love your wives” - Each husband is to love his own wife - not the wife of someone else.
 - a. Love can be a feeling, an emotion, but it is much more than a love of passion.
 - b. The love commanded here is primarily honoring and seeking the good of one’s wife.
 - c. It is a sacrificial love in which the husband treats the wife with the same kind of love in which Christ treated the church.
- 2. “just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her”
 - a. This reveals how much the husband is to love his wife.
 - b. Christ did not have a weak, inferior love for the church.
 - c. He gave His life for it (Acts 20:28), and husbands should love their wives more than their own lives.
 - d. There is no greater love than the giving of one’s life for another. (Jn. 15:13).

EPH 5:26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with [by] the word,

- “with the word” is most literally “in word.” NIV has “through the word.”
 - 1. “that He might sanctify her”
 - a. “sanctify” is from “hagiazo” [hah gee ah zoh] - “to set apart, sanctify”
 - b. He cleansed His church and makes it ready for eternal glory with God by the shedding of His own blood.
 - 2. “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word”
 - a. “washing of water” is a reference to water baptism. (Jn. 3:5,23; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 8:36).
 - b. It is through the proclamation of the word, the gospel, the truth that one comes to know Christ, and submits to Him in faith, repentance, confession and baptism.
 - c. Those baptized into Christ have their sins washed away. (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

- d. It is the blood of Christ that cleanses one of sin, and one is washed by His blood when he lets the word of God lead him to submit to Christ in faith and baptism.
- e. One must receive the word of God to be saved. (Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:18, 21; 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:22-25).

EPH 5:27 that He might present to Himself the church [the called-out people] in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she [the called-out people] should be holy and blameless.

1. “that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory” - NIV has “as a radiant church”
 - a. This seems to be speaking of His second coming.
 - b. One day the Lord is coming to receive believers, His church, to Himself. (Jn. 14:3).
 - c. Those in Christ [the church] will ascend to be with the Lord and be with Him forever. (1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 22:5; Matt. 25:46; Tit. 1:2).
2. “having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing” - This refers to the cleansing of sin through the blood of Christ.
 - a. Because of the blood of Christ the bride is to be without moral blemish in the future state of heaven
 - b. No matter how hard a Christians tries in this life, he/she cannot live above sin and must be cleansed by the blood of Jesus (1 Jn. 1:7-10).
3. “but that she should be holy and blameless”
 - a. The church is made up of fallible, sinful people who can “be holy and blameless” through Christ and His blood. (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).
 - b. This is what God had in mind before the world was created. (Eph. 1:4).

EPH 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love

EPH 5:28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

1. “So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies”
 - a. Once again this indicates the love for one’s wife is to be very strong.
 - b. He is to love his wife as his own body and as Christ loved the church. (Eph. 5:28, 25).
2. “He who loves his own wife loves himself” - This is explained in the next verse.

EPH 5:29 for no one ever hated his own flesh [body], but nourishes [feeds] and cherishes [cares for] it, just as Christ also does the church [the called-out people],

1. “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it”
 - a. Normally a man does not hate his own flesh, but there may be rare exceptions. There are some who have mental problems that motivate harmful behavior against themselves. Paul does not have the exception in mind. See also

Matt. 22:39. This is also applied to normal people who have a love for self.

- b. The normal man loves himself and takes care of himself.
- c. The words of Adam give some insight into the meaning of this verse.

GEN 2:23 And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

d. Adam considered Eve as part of him.

2. "just as Christ also does the church"

- a. Christ treats His church with love, and husbands ought to treat their wives in the same way.
- b. Peter stressed husbands are to honor their wives as the weaker vessel. (1 Pet. 3:7).

1PE 3:7 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

EPH 5:30 because we are members [parts] of His body.

1. "because we are members" - Each baptized believer is a member of Christ's body. (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - a. Christ exercises love for the members of His body.
 - b. He died for all (Jn. 3:16; Heb. 2:9), but He only saves those who trust and obey Him. (Jn. 3:36; Lk. 6:46; Heb. 5:9).
 - c. Christ gives those in Him [His body] "all spiritual blessings." (Eph. 1:3). See notes on Eph. 1:3.
2. "of His body" - Christ "nourishes and cherishes" His body - the saved.

EPH 5:31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to [be united joined to] his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.

- "For this cause" is literally "for this" "anti touton" [ahn tee too tahn].
- "Leave" is from "kataleipo" [kah tah lay poh] - "to leave behind, depart from." This does not mean he goes far away, but means that he establishes a loving and binding relationship with the one becoming his wife.
- "cleave to" is from "proskollao" [prahs kahl lah oh] - "faithfully devoted to, join, cleave to, glue to, stick to, united to." It is used only here in the New Testament. This compound word denotes a most intimate union.
- A form of the same verb "kollao" [kah lah oh] having the same meaning is found in Matthew 19:5.

1. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother"

- a. These words go back to God plan for man and woman.
- b. It is God's intention that a man and woman unite in marriage. (Gen. 2:24).

GEN 2:24 For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

c. This does not mean that one sins if he/she does not marry.

1) Both Jesus and Paul were single.

2) Read 1 Corinthians 7 that indicates if one can exercise self-control he/she is not required to marry. (1 Cor. 7:1, 2).

2. “and shall cleave to his wife”

a. Sexual union is an important part of marriage. See 1 Cor. 7:1-5.

b. The words “cleave to his wife,” but are not exhausted in the sexual union.

c. Marriage is a sexual union, but is more than a sexual union.

d. It is a life long commitment.

3. “and the two shall become one flesh” - This is through sexual union and mutual love and honor for one another. The man and woman are joined, glued to one another.

EPH 5:32 This mystery [secret] is great; but I am speaking with reference to [about] Christ and the church [the called-out body].

1. “This mystery is great” is a better rendering of the Greek than “great is this mystery.”

a. The mystery is the fact that Jew and Gentiles believers would have such a close union to Christ and one another.

b. This mystery could not be known unless it was revealed by God.

c. God had revealed this through the gospel.

2. “but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church”

a. He is speaking of the marriage between Christ and the church.

b. The church is Christ’s bride, and it is very special to Him.

c. He blesses and saves His bride.

d. He promises salvation only to His bride.

EPH 5:33 Nevertheless let each individual [man] among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect [reverence] her husband.

1. “Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself”

a. Men have a great love for themselves.

b. They should have this degree of love for their wives.

- c. The husband who loves his wife, as himself, will not abuse and mistreat her.
- d. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 should be true of the love husbands have for their wives and the love wives have for their husbands.

1CO 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,
 1CO 13:5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,
 1CO 13:6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;
 1CO 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

2. “and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband”

- The Greek “phobeo” [fah **beh** oh] means “to fear, to be afraid of, to reverence, reverential obedience.”
 - a. The wife is to have deep respect for her husband.
 - b. She is to obey, praise and honor him - not seek to belittle and hurt him.
 - c. Wives are also to love their husbands as well as have respect for them.
 - d. Paul instructed older Christian women to “encourage young women to love their husbands.”

TIT 2:3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,
 TIT 2:4 that they may **encourage the young women to love their husbands**, to love their children,

Some Observations

- 1. Christ has one bride - the church. He is not a polygamous.
- 2. This passage is one of many teaching monogamy - one man, one woman.
 - a. The New Testament does not authorize polygamy.
 - b. This is something once tolerated during the Patriarchal and Mosaical ages.
 - c. There is no reference or hint of it in the church. (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

1CO 7:2 But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.
 1CO 7:3 Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.
 1CO 7:4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
 1CO 7:5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- 3. This passage sets forth the great importance of the church.
 - a. There are those who belittle the church and discredit its importance and even say “the church want save you.” The church will not save us, but this passage teaches the church is the saved.
 - b. One must be in the church to be saved. (Eph. 5:23, 25).

- c. It is the body of Christ and is the bride of Christ.
 - d. It is not a human institution, but it a divine institution that will never be destroyed. (Matt. 16:18).
4. This passage sets forth the great love and reverence couples should have for one another.
- a. Couples who follow this passage will have a blessed relationship.
 - b. Couples who ignore or reject this passage will have a very stressful and stormy marriage at best.

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