



EPHESIANS 5:21-33

IN HIM  
I AM

# EPHESIANS



# EPHESIANS 5:21-33

**Know:** Read Ephesians 5:21-33

**Note:** Read slowly, carefully marking keywords- continue to mark the words from previous lessons—Mark keywords with a different color or with a symbol to differentiate them.

- Subject/ submit
- Husbands
- Wives

**Observation:** Study notes below for context. Journal your thoughts or questions.

**What:** How can you love one another in a way that makes the gospel attractive to the world?

***“21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.***

The word “subject (submit)” is *hypotasso*, which is a military term meaning “to arrange [troop divisions] in a military fashion under the command of a leader; in non-military use, it was “a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden, responding to one another’s needs for the good and vision of the whole.”

This word is used forty times in the Epistles. It is a word that was understood to suggest that we are to cover and protect one another. To submit means to come under the safety and protection of another. Jesus submitted to his parents. The church was instructed to submit to authority. We submit ourselves to the word of God; the church is submitted to Christ. It was used about the conduct of Christians, the conduct of those suffering to Christ, and the conduct of elders and young men.

Submission is voluntary. The purpose is to reflect Christ. It voluntarily yields one’s preferences to another- for the overall good.

It is trusting the one who is covering us.

In the days of the first-century church, during the Roman occupation, if soldiers were not pulling their weight, they were told to submit. During wartime, the captain would always take the most risks but expected his soldiers to come up under his command to protect his troops by locking their shields together so that no gap was exposed.

We submit to one another by protecting one another and speaking life over each other. We encourage, comfort, and build one another up in the Lord.

***“22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, the wives should also be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.” Ephesians 5:22-33***

Paul uses the example of Christ to help us understand how we are to love one another within a marriage. Jesus is the head of the church; we are the body. Without the head, the body is dead.

The word “head” in Greek is “kephale,” which means “foremost, capstone, the cornerstone (note: Paul does not use the Greek word “archay” which means leader, boss or chief).

In the Roman military, those who led went before the troops; they took the most risk and were the first to lay down their life. He served those who followed his leadership. They were appointed as a scout and point-man for their troops. If they failed, the entire troop failed; if he was successful, the troop was victorious. The soldiers, in turn, would have his back. They would lock shields with him so that an enemy weapon would have no gap to penetrate.

Jesus laid down his life so that we might live through Him. He is our cornerstone who lifts us up, serves us, and protects us. We are hidden in Him.

In the same way, husbands are to love their wives. Paul was suggesting that men are to be the ones who cover their wives with their servant-love. A love that covers, protects, honors, and lays down their life for his wife.

Wives are to come up under that protection, not as servants or as those of lesser rank. She is to share in his burden. Like the blood of Jesus has brought us in, we must stand close to one another, communicate, listen to, and rely on the Holy Spirit for help.

Years ago, my son and I discovered a cave while we were hiking in the desert mountains. The cave required that we crawl on our bellies to get to a larger room where we discover ancient

pictographs. For a second, I had a fleeting sense of fear that the cave would decide to fall in while we were in it, burying us in stone. My sense of reason immediately kicked in with the confidence that the cave would remain standing just like it had for centuries; it would hold us secure while inside.

This is the confidence wives should have with their husbands.

Generally speaking, the idea to submit has created a bad taste for women. There has been a teaching that women must obey their husbands because she is beneath the husband, and the husband is under Jesus - like a pecking order. He rules over her, and she is to remain silent and do as he says. He makes the rules, and she obeys. He leads, she follows.

This idea has created abuse because a wife no longer has a voice. If a marriage is mutually peaceful and she is cared for and loved, this model works fine, but it has fueled abuse in many marriages because she had no protection, even from the church, if her husband decides to rule over her like a warlord. Women have been told to “do more” for their husbands, to “serve him more,” and to “submit” rather than husbands being held to account for their dominance. When there is an imbalance in honor, there will always be room for abuse.

Equality and mutual respect are essential ingredients of a healthy marriage, but equality is never the goal; love is. A good marriage is a partnership between equals who don't see themselves as equal. The husband loves his wife more than his own life, and the wife submits to her husband as to the Lord. Each prefers the other to themselves.

**Husbands love your wives like Christ loves His church.** The Greek word for love is “agape,” which is a sacrificial, God-love. Do not treat your wives as lesser beings. In 1 Peter, the apostle uses the word “weaker vessel” regarding women. “Vessel” was a term used for very precious objects of high value. The woman who anointed Jesus' feet used an alabaster vessel; the vessels in the Mosaic Temple were of high value and treated with reverence and respect. We are vessels of God's love.

When living with your wife, do you treat her like a precious vessel?

Wives, do you have your husband's back?

In Titus 2:5, women are encouraged to love their husbands and children. The word “love” used toward husbands is the Greek word “philandros,” meaning “fond of, affectionate.”

For children, the word love is different. It is the Greek word “philoteknos,” which is a maternal love. (The Greek language has multiple meanings to our English word for love).

Paul was specific in what word for love women are told to walk in. We are not to treat our husbands like children. Women are naturally maternal. This maternal love is good and healthy when given to our children, but if it is how we treat our husbands, we will have disunity.

In the grind of life, if we are not careful to love one another well, we can fall back into patterns like treating our husbands like infantile children, especially if they fall back into their old patterns. The way to counter this is to live from the Spirit and turn on the right kind of love toward him.

Here in Ephesians, Paul exhorts husbands to love sacrificially as Jesus loved His church. Wives are not told to love but to submit, to come up under His love and security. Men and wives should feel safe, not ruled over, ordered about, and silenced. Wives, don't antagonize your husband so that His love becomes a difficult duty rather than a joy.

What is the purpose of all of this?

*Titus 2:10 tells us, "so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."*

When the world observes our marriages, they should see the gospel displayed by how we love one another, which makes the gospel attractive!

In 1 Peter 3:5-6, Peter wrote to wives, *"They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."*

Peter wrote to wives regarding submitting to husbands who did not believe the word of God.

In Genesis, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in Genesis 15:1,4-5. Abraham "believed the Lord" and was immediately credited with righteousness.

What exactly did Abraham believe?

He believed that God was his shield and his exceedingly great reward.

Sarah was given the gift of righteousness along with her husband.

Sara had many opportunities to fear when her husband acted foolishly. At one point, after Sari (before her name change) took matters into her own hands to have a child, she gave her

handmaid to Abraham so that she could have a child through her. Sari became angry because Hagar had become proud and difficult.

“Then Sarai told Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

“Your servant is in your hands,” Abram said. “Do with her whatever you think best.”

Then Sarai mistreated Hagar, so she fled from her (Genesis 16:5, 6).

Here we see Abram letting Sarai have her own way. He isn't dominating her like some warlord. We see that God justified not him, but her. And she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

The matter upset Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned” (Genesis 21:10–12). God defended Sarah's decision.

Sometimes, wives face seasons where they are tempted to fear. In 1 Peter, we learn that wives are tempted to fear when husbands don't believe God's word. They are either unbelievers, or they are simply living from the flesh and not believing the promises of God and have become controlling, angry, fearful, etc.

Abraham was a man revered for being the father of the faith. But even he missed the way from time to time. He pretended his wife was his sister and allowed her to be taken into Pharaoh's household, and then he repeated his deception with Abimelech. Yet even when Abraham acted foolishly, Sarah never called him a fool. She remained a faithful partner for better or worse. She called him lord.

The point is not that Sarah served Abraham in the way a servant serves a master, but she submitted to him in the way a loving wife submits to her husband. A wife may refer to her husband as “babe,” and a husband refers to his wife as “my love.” Both do so out of love and affection rather than coercion and control.

Rather than calling her husband a fool when He failed, Sara called him lord. When tempted to fear, we, too, can call our husbands by a name that calls out love rather than reminding them of their foolishness.