

Ephesians 5 v 22 - 33

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[0 : 00] After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands, and they cried out in a loud voice, Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Then one of the elders asked me, These in white robes, who are they and where did they come from? I answered, Sir, you know. And he said, These are they who have come out of the great tribulation.

They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. So it's in Ephesians chapter 5.

[1 : 11] And this is the passage that we'll largely be in tonight. It's chapter 5, and we're going to look at verses 22 to 33. Ephesians 5.22 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 saviour. Now, as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

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 of 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. 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 will 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.

[2 : 40] However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Please turn back with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 5.

Now, I'm aware, as we've read this passage, there may be some with the gift of singleness, thinking that this sermon is just for the married people.

It's all about husbands and wives, and there's nothing here for me. Well, I'd encourage you that's not the case. Yes, we shall be looking at the roles of husbands and wives, but it's my prayer that you'd see the significance of Christ and his church.

As that is primarily what Paul is talking about in this part of the letter that I've just read today. I want to challenge your perception of how you see Whitby Evangelical Church, as you see people coming through the doors on a Sunday morning.

And so we'll consider the profound mystery of Christ and his church. And today we'll also see what God has to say to us about submission. Before we look at the role of the wife and before we look at the profound mystery of Christ and the church, we'll hear what God expects from a husband.

[3 : 59] As a guy named Gary Ricucci, he's the co-author of a book called A Love That Lasts. And he writes of his experience as a young man at a Christian conference.

He said this, As I walked into a massive auditorium in Montreat, North Carolina in 1974, men of all ages were already streaming in. Though I was still single and didn't have anyone in mind yet, I wanted to seize any opportunity to prepare for the day when I too might say, I do.

And what happened next is etched on my mind as if it happened yesterday. We settled into our seats and the speaker approached the podium. Scanning the audience, a wry smile crossed his face and he began his presentation with a sentence I have never forgotten.

When you hear how much God expects of you as a husband, you're going to want to quit. Well, what did the speaker mean in that little anecdote? Well, he was referring to the passage, actually, that we have here before us today.

Because in verse 25, husbands are given an extraordinary calling. If your husband sat here today, then you are to love your wife as Christ loved the church.

[5 : 11] That's a massive calling, isn't it? How did Christ love the church? Well, it says he gave himself up for her. He pursued her. Out of love, Christ left heaven and came to earth to win back his bride, the church.

And of course, he did this ultimately by dying for her, dying on a cross. So his love was pursuing, sacrificial and unconditional. He gave himself up for the church.

He gave his all, his very self. And this wasn't a disconnected love where he showered the church with blessings and remained distant. No, he's not aloof or untouchable, loving by giving lots of stuff but not himself.

And we can be good at that ourselves if we're honest as husbands. We can buy some flowers or a box of chocolates perhaps to keep our wives happy while we carry on doing what we like.

It's a lot easier than actually spending time with them, communicating with them, letting them know what makes us tick and opening ourselves up to them. And in turn listening to them, learning more about them and sharing our problems with them.

[6 : 16] Because society around us tells us that that's not very masculine. But in fact it is. Because this way of loving is what being a real man is.

And how do we know? Because we learn it from the one who was the perfect man. A man who lived and loved always in the way that God originally intended.

So if you want to be a real man, whether you're a husband or you're single, then let your love be sacrificial. And if you're a husband, then give yourself up for your wife.

Die to yourself to lead and serve her. Now even the language here describing Christ's love and action towards the church is sacrificial in nature. Our minds are taken back to the sacrificial system of Israel in the Old Testament.

Because the people had God with them. But they had no access to him. No freely available fellowship with him. Why? Because he's the holy creator of the universe.

[7 : 17] And they were unclean. They were tainted by sin and unholy. But Christ pursued his bride, the church. He gave himself up for her. He cleansed her. He gave her fellowship with God.

Through his perfect sacrifice of himself on the cross. And that's why he's able to present the church to himself in splendor. Without stain or wrinkle or blemish.

Because in verse 26 he sanctified her. He's made her holy and pure. And as the church, as believers, doesn't that give you a love for your husband, Jesus?

See how he has given himself up for you. How he has sacrificed himself for you. How he has and is even now sanctifying you. How in verse 26 he cleanses and washes you with his word.

That you might be presented before him on the last day, holy and without blemish. And now we've come to a word that many people don't like very much.

[8 : 21] Submission. Why should wives submit to their husbands? Because in verse 22 Paul writes, Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. And Paul then goes on to give his reasoning.

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. So wives are to submit to their husbands because their husband is their head.

He's their leader with authority to lead. Now who says that husbands are to lead their wives? Well, God does. Does that mean that women are inferior to men?

No. So that's a question that is born out of misunderstanding what submission is. So we'll return to the question in a moment. When we've considered a bit more about what submission is.

Now it's a common misconception that some people have. And I used to be one of them. That this is a consequence of the fall. As a result of Adam and Eve's sin. The woman is now led by the man.

[9 : 21] Well, that's completely false. To understand the relationship between man and wife. And Christ and his church. We must go back to Eden first. Before the fall of mankind.

And that's what Paul does here. In verse 31. He quotes from the first book of the Bible. Genesis. He says, For this reason a man will leave his father and mother.

And be united to his wife. And the two will become one flesh. In Eden. Eve was created as a helper for Adam. She wasn't inferior to Adam. In any way.

But Adam was to lead her. To hold fast to her. And they were to be one flesh. Of course we know, don't we? That things went wrong. That Eve was tempted by the serpent to disobey God.

And Adam freely chose to sin himself too. And it's in this situation. That we see God's intention for man. And his wife reversed. Because remember.

[10:16] That God's intention. Has always been for the man. To be the head of his wife. To lead her. Just as Christ. Is the head of the church. And leads her. So.

Who did the serpent go to? To undermine God's plan for creation. Because he could have gone to Adam. Couldn't he? And now he goes to Eve. The way he goes about undermining God's creation. Here is very intentional. And deliberate. He goes to the woman. For her to take his lead. Rather than Adam's. And so. In persuading Eve to sin.

He subtly reverses the roles of the husband and wife. He undermines God's will. The wife now leads Adam into sin. And Adam obeys Eve's leadership. In agreeing to eat the fruit. And as God pronounces his judgment on the situation.

He tells Eve. That as a consequence of the fall. Her desire will be to rule over her husband. But he will rule over her. So wives.

[11:16] You will be tempted. To usurp your husband's leadership. You'll be tempted. To model Eve in the garden. Be mindful. At times. The tempter will prefer to attack you.

Rather than your husband. To persuade you. To undermine your husband's leadership. To try and make a shipwreck. Of your marriage. Because we're told from this passage.

In Ephesians aren't we. That your marriage is a picture of Christ and his church. And what better way to tarnish this picture. Than to tarnish your marriage. To persuade you to reverse God's given roles.

To yourself and your husband. But as husbands. We must recognize. That this temptation for our wives. Will be greater. If we're not leading ourselves.

If we're not leading biblically. Or something I'm guilty of. And we've just abdicated. And we don't lead at all. Then it's more likely. That our wife's desire. To rule over us. Will be greater.

[12:14] And that's not necessarily. A problem with our wives. It's first and foremost. A problem with us. Because I'm sure. That many wives. Will end up leading. With the best intentions. Because there's no other leader.

In the marriage. The husband is abdicated. He's just. Indifferent. Or lazy. But that is not the picture. Of Christ. And his love towards the church.

Remember. Verse 25 here. That husbands. Love your wives. Just as Christ loved the church. And gave himself up for her. And likewise. Wives.

If you're to model Christ. And his church to the world. Take heed of verse 24. Now as the church. Submits to Christ. So also wives. Should submit to their husbands. In everything.

So why is this all so important. That we get our roles. In marriage correct. Well it's because.

[13:07] Of verse 32. The idea of a man. Holding fast to his wife. Is a profound mystery. Because it refers to Christ. And the church. And what's.

What's so mysterious about this. You might think. Well we'll finish in a moment. By looking at this mystery. But first we'll return. As I said. To our question. About submission. And the specific objection.

That if the wife. Must submit to the husband. Then she must be inferior. In some way. Well turn with me. If you will. To 1st Corinthians. Chapter 11.

Chapter 11. And I'll read from verse 3.

What Paul writes there. Now I want you to realize. That the head of every man is Christ. The head of the woman. Is man. Man. And the head of Christ.

[14:08] Is God. So this passage. Asserts once again. That the husband. Is the head of the wife. But how does it help us. To see that submission. Is beautiful. And that the one who submits.

Is certainly not inferior. For doing so. Well it says that. The head of Christ. Is God the father. That is that Christ himself.

Submits to God. His father. Is whilst on earth. Christ perfectly obeyed. And submitted to God's will. And yet Christ is no less God.

Than his father. Jesus is fully God. And yet he still submits. To his father. Without losing. Any of his equality. To being God. So to say that.

Because a wife. Submits to a husband. Makes her inferior. Is false. Because from. From this verse. To hold such a position. You've got to say. That Jesus isn't fully God.

[15:04] And is inferior to his father. Which is. Patently untrue. And is in fact heretical. So we can see. Can't we. That the idea of submission. And roles in marriage. Is not some man-made invention.

In some. Pre-enlightened age. It is God given. Because we see those roles of submission. Within the Godhead. Itself. Now if we.

Flip back again. To Ephesians 5. And we'll see. That if we look at the verse. Just before where we started reading this evening. In verse 21. It says that believers.

Both male and female. Are to submit to one another. Out of reverence to Christ. So there's to be a mutual submission. Among believers. And all believers.

Submit and turn to Christ. To his authority. You see. In verse 24. The church submits to Christ. In everything. In all matters. The church.

[16:01] Is under Christ's authority. And under his word. As he cleanses her. And makes her holy. So submission. Is God given. And just like every gift from God.

Is wonderful. And pleasing. So let's all behold the beauty. Of submitting. To one another. In Christ. Treating fellow believers. As more important than ourselves. Not arguing over certain issues.

Or not creating stumbling blocks. For one another. Because we are one body together. Under one head. Christ. So let's not. Resent submitting.

Christ is our example. And he clearly. Has certainly never resented. Submitting to his father. The wife submits to your husbands. As it honours him.

And more importantly. It honours Christ himself. And husbands. See that you too. Are called to submit. You are to submit. Your life.

[16:57] To your wife. And that you give yourself up for her. Leading sacrificially. But you also. Must submit yourself to Christ. As you are the head of the wife.

So Christ. Is the head of you. So submitting to Christ. Means that you will lead your wife. In a godly way. By submitting to Christ. You will lead your wife. In the way that pleases him.

It will be tough for us to submit. Because of our fallen nature. However. As we saw this morning. As believers. We have the Holy Spirit. To empower us. Because naturally. We wouldn't submit to Christ.

Would we? We wouldn't submit to other believers. Or to husbands. Because we're. We all naturally. Want to lead our lives. How we would like to lead them. Now there's a.

Rather amusing card. That you could buy. For someone's birthday. Or father's day. A while ago. It had a. Black and white photograph. Of a man. Laid out on his sofa. And he was wearing.

[17:55] Rather a fraught expression. And he had a newspaper. That he'd been trying to read. Strewn across his chest. And the caption read. Something like this. First the hoovering.

Then the dishwasher. And now the lawnmower. How was Fred going to get any peace. With his wife making such a racket. Now as a husband.

If your idea. Of leading. Is giving your wife jobs to do. While you live your life. How you like. Then you're not leading. Biblically. You're not living. Loving your wife. As Christ loves the church.

You're not giving yourself up. For her. What's more. It's a sign. That you're expecting. Your wife to submit. Whilst not actually submitting. To Christ yourself.

It's a sign. That you're not submitting. To Christ. Because if you were. Then you'd be leading your wife. In the way that Christ. Would like you to lead. As if a wife's finding it hard.

[18:52] To submit to her husband. Yes. It might be a sign. Of sin in her heart. But perhaps the reason. She finds it hard. To submit. To the husband's leadership. Is because. She doesn't see you.

Submit to the Lord yourself. She knows that you're not leading. In a biblical way. And wives. If you find yourself. In this situation. Then pray for your husband. And when you go from here.

I'd recommend reading. First Peter. Chapter three. So. In summary. Submissions. God given. It is beautiful. And we're all to practice it.

Out of reverence. To the Lord. And we come. Now finally. To the profound mystery. That Paul talks of. In verse 32. Let me read again.

For us. From verse. 28. In this same way. Husbands. Ought to love their wives. As their own bodies. He who loves his wife.

[19 : 48] Loves himself. 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. See we often get things the wrong way around. We look at marriage.

And we ask. What does this teach us about Christ and the church. But we should be looking at Christ and the church. And asking. What does this teach us about marriage. You see the profound mystery. That Paul talks of here.

Is that it's always been intended. That the church be the body of Christ. The marriage itself. Only exists. To point towards Christ's relationship.

[20 : 43] With the church. That Eve the bride in Eden. Was taken out of Adam. As a picture. The two are one flesh. And hold fast together.

Just as the church is Christ's body. And Christ and the church are one. And hold fast together eternally. And that is the profound mystery. That it's been God's eternal plan.

That Christ would have a bride. His church. And it reminds us of another stunning statement. That's made. In Ephesians. In chapter 3 verse 10. Where Paul writes.

That through the church. The manifold wisdom of God. Is made known to the rulers and authorities. In the heavenly realms. According. To his eternal purpose.

Which he accomplished. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. And doesn't this change. Our view of church. That we are Christ's bride. That we are united with him.

[21 : 39] And that he is the head. And we are the body. Now I don't know what you think. When you see other people arriving at church. On a Sunday. If you are like me. In my home church.

In Leeds. You look around. And you will see friends. People you don't really know. Other believers. That are gathering to worship Jesus. And if I am honest. I have too low a view of church.

Just like the Jew or Muslim. At the synagogue or the mosque. I look around. And I see friends. And people I don't know. And other people with the same beliefs as me. And it's wrong. I need to hear God's word.

From the letter to the Ephesians. I should be blown away. By the mind-boggling mystery. That the people I see on a Sunday morning. The people here. Are all one body. United.

With the creator of the universe. And what's more. That's always been the plan. Eternally. God. Father. Son. And Holy Spirit.

[22 : 38] Has existed. For all eternity. With this purpose. That Christ would have a bride. His church. So yes. This passage. Has important instructions.

For husbands and wives. In how to behave towards one another. But we first must look to Christ. And his church. And when we've understood this. We can live the spirit-filled life.

Talked about. And we see it in verses. 18 to 21. Of Ephesians. Chapter 5. What the spirit-filled life looks like.

In church. He says. Be filled with the spirit. Speaking to one another. With psalms. Hymns. And songs. From the spirit. Sing and make music. From your heart to the Lord.

Always giving thanks to God the Father. For everything. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Submit to one another. Out of reverence. For Christ. So when we see other members of the church.

[23 : 36] Knowing that God has eternally purposed. Us to be the bride of Christ. Then in verse 21. We can submit to one another. Out of reverence for Christ. Our head.

That makes us think about how we do church as well. Doesn't it? How do we sing in church? Do we sing with our eyes closed? Or block everyone else out in the room?

Or now. Knowing that we are one body. That we are eternally intended to be Christ's bride. Do we sing to each other? Like verses 18 to 21. Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

And of course. For those of us who are married. If our marriages are meant to be a small picture. Of Christ's union with his church. That don't you feel both the privilege.

But also the responsibility that you have. That when outsiders look at your marriage. They would see something of how Christ loves and leads his church. Of how his church loves and submits to him.

[24 : 39] So. Let each one of you. Love his wife as himself. And let the wife see. That she respects her husband. And finally.

If you're not a Christian here today. Will you not accept Christ's free gift of forgiveness? Those who have put their faith. In Jesus Christ. Those who have trusted in his death.

As payment to their sins. And believe he's been raised again. They are united to Christ. They are his church. They are his bride. Attending this building.

Called a church on a Sunday. Doesn't make you one with Christ. Attending Whitby Evangelical every Sunday. Does not make you one with him. But putting your faith in him. And being part of his body.

The church. Makes you one with him. And why would you not want Christ as your husband? As the church. As the bride of Christ.

[25 : 36] You know. That he's given himself up for you. That he's made you spotless. And without blemish. So rejoice in what a husband you have. And as you do.

Then submit to him. Following his leadership. For you in your life. Are we going to sing now? As a church together? As Christ's bride.

Of where our hope is found. And it's found in our husband. The Lord Jesus Christ. Who will present us. Before him blameless and pure. And as we sing. Be sure to sing. To one another.

Listen as you sing. And hear the church. The bride. For whom Christ has died. Declare that our hope. Is found. In Christ alone. In Christ alone.

In Christ alone. In my God is found. He is my light. My strength. My soul. His bonnet snow.

[26 : 55] His solid ground. Felt in the face. As ground and stone. But I saw love.

For depths of peace. When fears are still. When striding seas. I love the death.

My holy love. Here in the love of Christ. I stand. Amen. Please do stick around.

For coffee and refreshments afterwards. Let's close in prayer. Heavenly Father. We thank you.

Through Jesus. We are yours.

We are children of yours. That we. The church. Are Christ's bride. We thank you. That no scheme of man. No attempt of hell. Will ever pluck us.

[27 : 53] From your hand. Pray that you will be with us. This week. That you would keep us firm. Through your spirit. To walk in your ways. To love others. Please help us.

In our marriages. Too Father. That we may. Be. A picture of Christ. And his church. And I pray Father. That you would bless this church. Richly.

That we would find it easy. To submit to one another. Out of reverence for Christ. Looking to him. Our head. Submitting to him.

As he has all authority. Over this church. And we pray these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.