

A close-up photograph of a man in a dark suit and white shirt kissing a woman on the forehead. The woman has long brown hair and her eyes are closed. The background is bright and out of focus.

**HONOR MARRIAGE!**

**EPHESIANS 5:21-33**

Adapted from a Jim Black sermon

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**Ephesians 5:21** NET *and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.* **22**

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church — he himself being the savior of the body. 24 But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

**25** *Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her*  
**26** *to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, **27** so that he may present the church to himself as glorious — not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless. **28** In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.*

**29** *For no one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 for we are members of his body. 31 For **this reason** a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*

**(Deu 24:1)**

**32** *This mystery is great — but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

Christians are called to submit to one another; to put the other's will over & above your own *out of reverence for Christ*; especially in the marriage relationship.

We are to honor the institution of Christian Marriage.



We need to honor marriage in our society & especially within the Church! With the divorce rate climbing to almost 50%, we need to lift up and honor marriage in the church! With more and more of our kids growing up in homes with only one parent for a variety of circumstances, we need (for their sake) to be lifting up Christian marriage before them!

Marriage is a wonderful thing and we need to honor those who have demonstrated successful Christian marriages to us! But, what makes a marriage successful? What's the secret to a long and successful marriage? A man was being interviewed on TV as he and his wife celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary. The reporter asked him what's the secret. The man's face turned intensely serious and he said that the secret was two simple words: "Yes, Dear."



One of the largest television audiences in history gathered around their sets on July 29, 1981 to witness one of the most glamorous, storybook weddings of all time! Britain's Prince Charles of Wales and Lady Diana were married in an elaborate ceremony that was watched by an estimated 750 million people worldwide. 75 technicians with 21 cameras allowed us to watch this fairy tale wedding.

A royal prince weds a lovely lady in a grand cathedral surrounded by hundreds of adoring subjects! What more could a woman want? They were the envy of millions; young, rich, handsome; a marriage made in heaven, right? We know better now, don't we? As may have happened to some of you, reality hit when the cameras were turned off and the guests went home.

Charles' & Diana's dream wedding soon became a nightmare marriage. Britain's tabloids were filled with stories of unfaithfulness, of a royal couple growing farther and farther apart. It takes more than a prince, a lovely lady and a storybook palace to make a happy marriage!

In today's text, Paul gives us a picture of a Christian marriage and some tremendous advice. As we look at it again, let's remember where Paul is coming from. Since Chapter. 4, he's been discussing what it means to live worthy of our call as Christians. We're to live worthy by preserving the unity of the Spirit thru the bond of peace among fellow Christians.

We're to live worthy by being different from the world around us. And part of that being different is avoiding *sexual immorality of ANY KIND*! And WE made the observation last week that sexual immorality not only destroys the soul, but it destroys marriages by perverting God's intention for the way men & women are to live in relationship together.

Verse 21 is another transitional statement, I believe.

Ephesians 5:21 NET *and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Part of what it means to ‘*live worthy*’; of what it means to live in Christian community is to “*submit to one another,*” WHY? “*Out of reverence for Christ.*” I.e. because we ‘fear’ God; because we respect God!



We're not extremely comfortable talking about 'submission' today, are we? What's the dream in America? It's to be your own boss! To answer to nobody but yourself! Like one child tells another, "You're not the boss of me!" We don't like to be told what to do; to live in submission to another person, but that's just what the Bible is saying: We are to submit our will to the will of others.

# SUBMISSION IS A CRUCIAL INGREDIENT IN CHRISTIAN LIVING IN GENERAL.

In **1 Corinthians 16:16**, Christians in Corinth were asked to submit to workers who had become servants to the church— they were to submit to servants! Jesus himself repeatedly taught throughout his ministry: **Matthew 23:12** NET *And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*

That's the same idea! Christians are to live in mutual submission! Notice, Paul is NOT saying that SOME Christians are to submit to other Christians. RATHER that ALL Christians are to submit to each other!

Submission, is deference to another's needs and direction. We should be in a mind-set of pliability and compromise where methods are concerned and absolutely firm where principles are concerned. If we are oriented to someone else's needs, rather than our own, we will be most likely to imitate God. Since this is precisely the attitude and motivation of Christ, it is being most like Him. (CBC)

# SUBMISSION IS A CRUCIAL INGREDIENT IN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES, SPECIFICALLY

*22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church — he himself being the savior of the body. 24 But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Let's stop here and acknowledge something that I'm afraid may keep us from hearing God's Message in this text: This passage has been horribly twisted and perverted by some over the years. The message in which Paul intended to convey an encouraging and counter-cultural message about Christian marriage has been turned by some into a terrible club used against women.



In extreme cases, this text has been used as justification for husbands to be abusive to their wives. It's reported a judge in Canada was removed from the bench because he was sending women back into the home with their abusive husbands after reading to them this text. Folks, that's just plain wrong! That's NOT what this passage is saying and to believe that is to believe a lie!

Husbands, abuse (physical OR mental) is absolutely a sin. If you are guilty of treating your wife in that manner, then God will not fail to hold you accountable for that action.

Wives, I'm convinced that if you're in an abusive home, God wants you to get to safety, especially if there are children involved- for your own sake as well as your children's.

But that's NOT the intent of this text! Quite the opposite! The message is, WIVES, YOU have a role to play in your marriage. Back in Genesis, the Bible tells us that after God had created man he saw that it wasn't good for him to be alone and so he created a "helper"; "help meet", "suitable for him." Not a helper in the sense of a 'lower level assistant', but a helper in the sense of a companion, a supporter who would complement him.

And Eve was created to complement the man, to help him, to support him; to complete him. Wives, this means that you actively support the leadership of your husband in the home, not balking at or undermining him. Why? *'Out of reverence for Christ.'* This doesn't mean that your husband is a god - I know that comes as quite a surprise. Rather, you submit to his leadership out of respect for the Lord.

It isn't a 'forced' submission . . . where your husband says, "I will make you submit to me." It is a 'voluntary' submission where you willingly choose to put your husband's needs ahead of your own needs. You allow him to lead in the home and you support him by your words and actions. That's Bible submission! 'Submission' isn't a bad word.

# NOTICE WHAT PAUL SAYS TO HUSBANDS NEXT

**25** *Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her*  
**26** *to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, **27** so that he may present the church to himself as glorious — not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.*



**28** *In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 for we are members of his body.*

We usually don't understand that this is an extremely counter-cultural message today!

We tend to get too hung up on the word 'submit' because that pushes a lot of buttons in our 'politically correct' culture of 21st century America, but this was an extremely liberating message for women in the first century! Remember, women were viewed as inferior and had relatively little freedom.

In most places, women were minimally educated, could not be witnesses in a court of law, could not adopt children or make a contract, could not own property or inherit property.

(NIV Application Commentary, 303)

Respectable women didn't go out in public very much. They walked behind their husbands without speaking.

While women were expected to be faithful to their husbands, there existed a fairly accepted double standard when it came to men. But for Christians, it was to be DIFFERENT! God has a very high view of women! For Paul to exhort Christian men to love their wives as Christ loved the church was a profoundly counter-cultural message.

He's saying essentially, "be willing to lay down your life for your wife. Put her needs above your own. Live your life sacrificially FOR her." Love her, like your own body! We take care of our bodies, we protect it, we care for it. We try not to take our health for granted. Take care of your wife and don't take her for granted either! She is a part of you!

**31** *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.* (Gen 2:24)

I love to read this text at weddings! What does it mean for *the two* to *become one*?  
What a profound mystery!



I can remember the challenge of learning to think in terms of 'us' and 'we' instead of 'I' and 'me.' In marriage, what was formerly two separate lives becomes one life! Two partners sharing a lifetime together! What an amazing and wonderful thing! God really knew what he was doing, didn't he?

**32** *This mystery is great — but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

Again, Paul reminds us that the basis for this 'Submission' is found in what Christ did for us! Wives, he says the way you submit to your husband is patterned after how the church submits to Christ.

If your relationship with your husband was the only indicator to someone else of how the church should follow Christ, what would they think? What are you teaching?

Husbands, the Bible is saying that the way you love your wife is to be patterned after how Christ loved the church. If your relationship with your wife was the only picture someone had of how much Jesus loves the church, what would they see?

While many of us grew up in a time when traditional marriage was very much the norm in our culture; when you saw very few divorces and children were taught God's will for a Christian marriage, BUT, I'm afraid that more and more this message is becoming a counter-cultural one. Who could ever imagine Jesus proclaiming his love for the church (i.e. me & you), and then giving it all up when the going got tough?

Who could ever imagine Jesus before Pilate and when asked if he was the Messiah thinking 'you know what, this is just too hard. I know God wants me to be happy, so I'm just not going to do this. I'm not going to the cross. I just don't feel like loving these people that much.' Could you imagine Jesus doing that? He certainly would have reason to, wouldn't he? God's people weren't exactly faithful to him always, were they?

I hope this message is an encouraging one to you! I hope you've heard God this morning say to you, "Hang in there! Keep working on your marriage! Don't give up!" Maybe you need to make a commitment that you're going to work on your relationship.



Say to your spouse that your marriage is too important for you to give up on it! Maybe one of you needs to swallow your pride and say, "I'm sorry." What is it going to take? You've got to be willing to do **WHATEVER** it takes! God wants to restore your marriage! And he wants to strengthen **ALL** of our marriages!

If you're one of those whose life has been affected by divorce, (whether it was your own or your parents) then you know firsthand how hurtful and destructive 'missing the mark' in our marriages can be. I hope the message for you this morning has been an encouraging one as well- a confirming one for you. I know many of you would heartily 'amen' what Paul has said about Christian marriage.

I say to you, continue to seek the Lord's will for your life. Find peace and comfort in Him and healing for those wounds of the past. God is still there for you, regardless of what has happened!

By the way, I believe God is a forgiving God and that any of us can find forgiveness for what we've done to contribute to problems in our marriages.

Maybe you're a young person, single and wonder what this has to say to you. You've not even thought about marriage! I hope this message will emphasize to you the importance of building ANY relationship you have on the foundation of Jesus Christ. If you're dating someone right now who is NOT a Christian; who has no inclination to pattern their life after Jesus Christ, this should stand as a huge red flag to you!

What are you doing? Would you really want to spend the rest of your life with someone who won't put the Lord in their life? This message should encourage you to make sure that the person you decide to marry, is already first and foremost 'married' to Jesus Christ! This world is a harsh place and I'm just not convinced that you have much hope for a strong marriage if you both aren't committed to God FIRST!

How can we encourage you in your  
marriage this morning?

If you need the prayers and encouragement  
of your church family, we'd love to pray with  
you.

If you've never accepted Christ as your  
Lord & Savior, won't you do so as we stand  
and sing this invitation song?