

ROCK GROUP BIBLE STUDY

August 22, 2003

Walk in Wisdom [Part 3]

Ephesians 5:21-33

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. 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, so also the wives {ought to 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 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 should 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 CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE 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 let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and {let} the wife {see to it} that she respect her husband.

Remember that Paul has been instructing the Ephesian believers how they should be living out their lives in light of their high calling. As we have examined chapter 5, Paul has instructed the Ephesian believers to walk in love, walk in light and to walk in wisdom. As we study verses 21-33, Paul is still instructing the Ephesian believers how to walk in wisdom. Paul began in verse 15 with the admonition to walk not as unwise men, but as wise. Paul further described walking in wisdom as making the most of your time. He supported this admonition with two prohibitions followed by contrasting positive commands. The first prohibition was "Do not be foolish!" Paul suggested that to walk in wisdom or make the most of your time required that the believer not lack understanding, but strive to understand the will of God. Paul's second prohibition was "Do not get drunk with wine!" Paul taught that the believer should not be controlled by physical substances such as alcohol, but instead should be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Paul then discussed the natural result of those who are controlled by the Spirit. Those who are controlled by the Spirit will manifest a worshipful attitude (vs. 19), a thankful attitude (vs. 20) and an attitude of submission (vs. 21).

Although verse 21 grammatically goes with what comes before, it is the attitude of submission that Paul now begins to focus on. He applies this attitude of submission to the lives of believers with three different illustrations. He first applies it to the husband/wife relationship; then the parent/child relationship and lastly to the master/servant relationship. This week we will begin by examining the husband/wife relationship in Ephesians 5:22-33.

· According to verse 21, what is the general attitude that Christians should have toward one another and how would you define or describe that attitude?

SUBMISSION! The Greek term from [HUPOTASSO] is a military term, which means to freely place oneself under. It is the idea subordinating oneself to another. It is often used in a military context of submission to those in a superior rank. It is a voluntary attitude of giving, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden. The main idea is to relinquish one's rights to another

person. It does not suggest inequality or superiority for equals certainly may operate in a different role or position (i.e. the Trinity). So believers should have this attitude toward one another.

THE ROLE & PRIORITIES OF THE WIFE:

· ***According to verse 22, what should be the wife's conduct or role in the marriage relationship?***

Wives should have an attitude of submission to their own husbands. It is important to note that the phrase "*be subject to*" is usually in italics, because it does not directly appear in the text of verse 22. It literally reads, "wives to your own husbands as to the Lord." Although the phrase does not directly appear in the text of verse 22, the thought is carried over from the previous verse. Speaking of being subject to one another in the fear of Christ, Wives [be subject to] your own husbands as to the Lord. Paul is primarily focussing on a role. He is not emphasizing inequality. He is merely identifying a difference in role. The priority of the wife is to have an attitude of submission to her own husband. She is to willingly place herself under the leadership of her husband.

· ***How is the wife to submit to her husband?***

"*As to the Lord.*" As a wife is submitted to the Lord, so she should submit to her husband. This does not mean that the husband is lord over the wife. It simply means that the wife has a peaceful attitude of submission. She freely places herself under her husband with an attitude of giving, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden. Elisabeth Elliot says, "The best thing a woman can do for her husband is to make it easy for him to do the will of God."

· ***Why is the wife to submit to her husband?***

The wife's supreme motive for submitting to her husband is the fact that he is the functional and spiritual head in the family, just as Christ also is the head of the church. In other words, the husband has been given the role of functional and spiritual leader of the family as Christ functions as the head of the church. Because the husband has been given the role of spiritual leader, the wife should freely submit to her husband. The focus here is one of role and it does not suggest that the wife is somehow a lesser individual than the husband. In fact the entire context of Ephesians 5:22-6:9 deals specifically with the roles of those in positions of leadership and subordination.

· ***What is the wife's model for submission?***

The supreme and ultimate model of submission for the wife is Jesus Christ Himself. He performed the greatest act of submission by giving His own sinless life on the cross. Christ is the Savior of the body, His church, for whom He died. Just as the church is subject to Christ so also the wife should be subject to her husband. She should be subject only in the things she sees fit? No! She should be subject in everything. To follow God's plan is not always easy. His plan is not for the exaltation of man, nor for the suppression of woman (or vice versa), it is for the glory of God. If the husband is fulfilling his role of sacrificial, loving servant leadership and the wife is willfully placing herself under the husband's leadership in Christ, then God will be glorified in and through this marriage.

THE ROLE & PRIORITIES OF THE HUSBAND:

· ***According to verse 25, what should be the husband's conduct or role in the marriage relationship?***

HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES! Paul commands husbands to love their wives. The term love [AGAPE] emphasizes that this is not simply an emotional or physical response, but an act of the

will. It also identifies it as a self-sacrificing love. It is a love that impels the one loving to give himself as a sacrifice for the well-being of the one being loved. The following verses deal with the husband's duty to submit to his wife through his love for her. Verses 25-32 explain the manner of that love.

· ***Who is the husband's greatest example to follow as he strives to love his wife?***

"Just as Christ also loved the church." Christ is the supreme example that the husband should follow in loving their wives. Just as Christ loved the church so should the husband love his wife. The husband who is controlled by the Holy Spirit and is manifesting an attitude of submission to the Lord is able to love His wife with the same kind of love that Christ has for the church. The Lord's pattern of love for His church is the husband's pattern of love for his wife. Let's look at the various aspects of love that Paul emphasizes in verses 25-32 in Christ's love for the church.

· ***What aspect of love does Paul emphasize in the rest of verse 25? Explain its significance to the marriage relationship.***

"And He gave Himself up for her." This phrase emphasizes the aspect of sacrificial love. When Christ came to earth in human form, He was mocked, ridiculed, maligned, rejected, beaten and crucified. He gave up His own prerogatives as God's Son, "*not regarding equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, ...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*" (Philippians 2:6-8). Christ so loved us that He sacrificially gave Himself up for the church. Likewise the husband should have a sacrificial love for his wife.

· ***What aspect of love does Paul emphasize in verses 26-27? Explain its significance to the marriage relationship.***

The aspect of love that Paul emphasizes here is a purifying love. "The soteriological truth in this analogy is that saving grace makes believers holy through the cleansing agency of the Word of God, so that they may be presented to Christ as His pure bride, forever to dwell in His love. It is with that same purpose and in that same love that husbands are to cultivate the purity, righteousness, and sanctity of their wives. This kind of love wants only the best for the one it loves, and it cannot bear for a loved one to be corrupted or misled by anything evil or harmful. When a husband's love for his wife is like Christ's love for His church, he will continually seek to help purify her from any sort of defilement. He will seek to protect her from the world's contamination and protect her holiness, virtue, and purity in every way. He will never induce her to do that which is wrong or unwise or expose her to that which is less than good." [MacArthur, p. 300]

· ***What aspect of love does Paul emphasize in verses 28-30? Explain its significance to the marriage relationship.***

The emphasis here is a love that is an affectionately caring love. Paul uses the analogy of loving one's own body here. Certainly most people love their own bodies. In fact in our age there seems to be a preoccupation with loving our own body. As Christians we must remember that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We should strive to take care of our own bodies--giving them proper food, maintaining strength, and getting enough rest. The husband is to have the same care over his wife. It should be his desire to love his wife in such a way that he nourishes and cherishes her, just as he does his own body and as Christ cares for His body the church. The husband who loves his wife in this way will seek to meet her needs. If she needs encouragement, he will provide her with encouragement. If she needs spiritual strength and nourishment, then he will see to it that those needs are met as well. For a husband to meet his wife's needs is to give to her that which helps her

to grow and mature in favor with God and man. She is a God-given treasure and should be loved, nourished, and cherished.

· *Why does Paul quote Genesis 2:24 here in verse 31?*

Clearly Paul has in mind God's original intention for the marriage relationship. Both partners are to leave their "fathers and mothers" and shall cleave to each other as husband and wife. The term cleave [PROSKOLLAO] literally means to be glued or cemented to each other. Paul is painting a picture of an unbreakable love here. If a husband truly loves his wife as Christ loves the church, then that love is an unbreakable love. God designed the marriage relationship to be an unbreakable bond between husband and wife. The husband must maintain a loving commitment to his wife. God is not pleased when husbands and wives fail to keep their commitment to each other (Malachi 2:16). True agape love will always place the other in higher regard than oneself.

Paul concludes this section with a summary statement in verse 33 regarding the husband/wife relationship: *"Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and {let} the wife {see to it} that she respect her husband."* The husband is responsible to love his wife and the wife is responsible to respect her husband.

ROCK GROUP APPLICATION: "Dating & Marriage"

· *What is dating?*

The World's definition (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary): A pre-arranged social engagement between two persons of the opposite sex.

An alternate definition: A commitment to seriously evaluate a member of the opposite sex as a potential marriage partner.

· *What is the relationship between dating and marriage?*

Marriages typically begin by dating.

Why is my alternate definition important? (1) It protects us from some of the risks of temptation (2) It protects us from defrauding our partner (building false hope) (3) It makes a more defined distinction between marriage and other relationships (4) It redeems the time" (Ephesians 5:16) (5) It corresponds to reality.

· *Why do people date? Why should believers date?*

(The world dates to meet their needs)

But believers should do all things, including dating, because it will please God and bring Him glory. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 5:10)

We date (A commitment to seriously evaluate a member of the opposite sex as a potential marriage partner) to please God, never to please ourselves!

· *Who should believers date?*

2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Corinthians 7:39 -- eligible believers only

1 Corinthians 7:34, 1 Peter 3:4, 7 -- someone concerned about the affairs of God

Ephesians 5:22-33 -- someone who understands God's design

* We should seek to be the right person, rather than to find the right person.

· ***When should believers date?***

1. Acts 20:35 -- When we desire to give rather than receive

2. 1 Corinthians 7:33-35 -- When the spiritual impact on our lives and when our service to God is enhanced rather than diminished. There are times when it is better not to date or marry.

· ***Where should believers date?***

1. 2 Timothy 2:22, 1 Corinthians 6:18 -- It will be easier to maintain purity by dating in public areas only. Do not allow yourself to be in a compromising position.

2. In a variety of settings (reason: in order to seriously evaluate)

- groups (observe interaction) -

- family

- with friends (what kind of friends do they choose?)

- under difficult circumstances

· ***How should believers date?***

1. The male ought to be the leader (Ephesians 5; Prov.7)

a. Initiating the relationship

b. Paying the way

2. Not excluding ourselves from others.

3. Have realistic expectations. If we don't tear up our ideals, we will tear up the person. Have basic and reasonable expectations.