

# The Christian Marriage – A Lovely Portrait of Christ’s Love for His Bride

## Ephesians 5:22-33

1. Christ’s call for the wife’s submission in marriage (5:22): <sup>22</sup> **Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

a. Why I approach this topic with extra care and a little nervousness.

b. What the wife’s submission does not mean:

- 1) Submission does not mean that a wife becomes a brain-dead slave.
- 2) Submission does not mean that the wife does not have an opinion or wisdom to share.
- 3) Submission does not mean that she is content to not use her gifts and abilities, so that she does not make her husband feel inferior.
- 4) Submission does not mean that she is inferior to her husband. The Bible teaches male-female equality, but male headship in the church and the home.

c. What the wife’s submission does mean:

- 1) Submission means that the wife personally chooses to obey God’s Word and follows her husband’s lead, <sup>22b</sup> **as to the Lord.**
- 2) Submission is a spiritual concept (Ephesians 5:18).
- 3) Submission is a positive command – to use her energy and talents to help her husband and family serve Jesus together.
- 4) Submission also involves her attitude; Ephesians 5:33 – **However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**
- 5) But the wife’s submission is not absolute. **Colossians 3:18 – Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.**

2. Christ’s reason for the wife’s submission in marriage (5:23): <sup>23</sup> **For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is Himself its Savior.**

a. What does the headship in marriage call a husband to do or be? Servant-leadership, to take responsibility for the welfare and direction of the family.

b. A husband's headship carries immense responsibility. In May 1943, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote *Wedding Sermon from a Prison Cell* to Eberhard Bethge and his fiancée Renate Schleicher:

Now when the husband is called "the head of the wife," and it goes on to say "as Christ is the head of the church" (Ephesians 5:23), something of the divine splendor is reflected in our earthly relationships, and this reflection we should recognize and honor. The dignity that is here ascribed to the man lies, not in any capacities or qualities of his own, but in the office conferred on him by his marriage. The wife should see her husband clothed in this dignity. But for him it is he who is responsible for his wife, for their marriage, and for their home. On him falls the care and protection of the family; he represents it to the outside world; he is its mainstay and comfort; he is the master of the house, who exhorts, punishes, helps, and comforts, and stands for it before God.

3. Christ explains the nature of the wife's submission in marriage (5:24): <sup>24</sup> **Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.**

4. Christ Himself shows a husband how to sacrificially love his wife (5:25): <sup>25</sup> **Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.**

a. Christ's call to sacrificial love is even more radical when we see marriage in the ancient world had fallen on hard times.

b. But what does such Christ-inspired love demand?

1) The example of Christ involves death to self.

2) As Christ is attentive to the Church, so a husband must be with his wife.

3) A husband who loves his wife **as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her** will be ever faithful to her.

5. Christ Himself models for the husband how to spiritually care for his wife (5:26-27): <sup>26</sup> **that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,** <sup>27</sup> **so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.**

Conclusion: <sup>28</sup> **In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.** <sup>29</sup> **For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,** <sup>30</sup> **because we are members of His body.** <sup>31</sup> **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."** <sup>32</sup> **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**