

Eph 5:22-33

I. How wives and husbands should behave toward one another (22-32)

A. How Wives should behave toward husbands (22-24)

1. Wives should submit to their husbands (22-23)

a Wives should submit to their husbands, as to the Lord (22)

1) Wives, [submit] to your own husbands (22a)

This is a debated verse.

The verb “submit” is actually not in the original of this verse, but it is clearly implied from the previous verse.

Therefore, it clearly states that wives should submit to their husbands.

This is voluntarily putting themselves under submission; it is a free act of volition, and therefore, this verse should not be used to ‘force’ submission by crushing the will of the wife

This verse speaks of wives submitting to husbands, and does not say anything (either way) about male/female relationships in general apart from the marriage relationship

Because v. 21 says “submit to one another”, some have argued that the husband-wife relationship is equal and mutual submission

However, there are many factors which argue against this interpretation

The word “one another” in v. 21 is not always reciprocal

For instance, in Mark 4:41, the disciples asked one another. This does not mean that each disciple asked equally

In Eph. 4:2 we are commanded to bear with one another. This does not mean that each person will have equal need or opportunity to show patience.

In Rev. 6:4, men will kill one another. This does not mean that each individual will equally kill and be killed. Some may be killed without ever killing, and vice versa

Therefore, this word, does not prove equal submission

The parallel passage in Col. 3:18 argues against equal submission

Wives are clearly told to submit to husbands, and husbands are not told to submit to wives.

A different command is given to husbands in the Colossians passage

If the submission of v. 21 implied equal submission,

then the submission in the parent-child relationship of 6:1-4 and the slave-master relationship of 6:5-9 would have to be equal submission as well,

Because v. 21 is the theme statement for these passages as well

But equal submission does not work in these relationships, and no one argues for it.

And finally, the word submit is clearly implied for wives, but a different verb is used for husbands later in this passage

The standard for the command given to husbands is much higher than the command of submission

The husband who faithfully obeys this passage will sacrifice and give much more than the wife will sacrifice and give by voluntarily submitting to her husband

But there is no way to soften the force of the command from the Lord that wives should submit to their husbands

It is a command and should be obeyed

The wife’s submission will be a joy and should flow out of obedience to Christ as shown in the next phrase

2) As [you submit] to the Lord (22b)

There are a few implications of this phrase:

First, the necessity of submission to husbands is equated with the necessity of submission to Christ – i.e. “you should submit to husbands, just like you should submit to Christ”

Second, the manner of submission is equated – i.e. “you should submit to husbands in the same way, with the same intensity, with the same mindset and joy, as you submit to Christ”

And Third, the reality of submission is equated, - i.e. “you should submit to husbands, as [because] you are submitting to the Lord”

– i.e. give the same level of submission that you should give to the Lord

b Reason: Because the husband is in a headship relationship, modeling Christ (23)

1) Because the husband is the head of the wife (23a)

cf. 1 Cor. 11:3

Some suggest that “head” here has the meaning of “source”

This view is not defensible lexically or exegetically

And the evidence given for this view is weak, fairly obscure and clearly slanted to bolster a pre-decided conclusion

The one example most often given is this term used of the “head” of a river, thereby taken to mean its “source”

This is better explained by the more basic and widely attested meaning of “head” as “highest part of something”

Of course the highest part of a river is its source, but that does not mean this word carries the meaning of “source”, neither does this give any evidence that this word carries this meaning in this context.

Almost certainly, this word has the primary connotation of “authority” or “superior rank”

See the standard Greek lexicons

And this is a common attested meaning of this word in the contemporary culture

“head” has this meaning in 1:22, Col. 2:10, Judges 11:11 and 2 Sam. 22:44 among others

And the meaning of “superior rank” is confirmed by the parallel made with Christ being head over the church in the next proposition (23b) and 1 Cor 11:3

If Christ has superior rank and authority over the church (which He does, and which Paul emphasizes in many passages, including this one), Paul would have needed to qualify this statement if he did not intend the same kind of authority relationship in this proposition as well.

Many of the objections raised against the meaning of “authority” are unnecessary

These objections would disappear with a closer inspection of the kind of authority, and the way it is exercised, which are described in the following verses

2) This headship models Christ’s relationship to the church (23b-c)

a) As Christ is also head of the church (23b)

cf. 1:22, 4:15, 2:10

b) This One is Savior of the body (23c)

2. Therefore: Wives should submit to husbands as the church submits to Christ (24)

a As the church submits to Christ (24a)

b In this same way, also the wives should submit to their husbands in all things (24b)

B. How Husbands should behave toward wives (25-32)

1. Husbands should demonstrate Christ-like love to their wives (25-31)

a Husbands should love their wives like Christ loves the church (25-27)

1) Husbands, love your wives (25a)

2) Just like Christ gave His life to make the church holy (25b-27)

a) Just as Christ loved and gave Himself for the church (25b-c)

(1) Just as Christ also loved the church (25b)

(2) And He gave up Himself on behalf of it (25c)

The standard for husbands loving wives is Christ dying for His church

Husbands are to put aside their status, convenience, and ease in order to do whatever is necessary to bring about the good for their wives and families

This includes giving time, effort and attention, but also includes the possibility (if necessary) of the husband giving his very life on behalf of his wife

b) Purpose: That He may purify His church until it is completely holy (26-27)

(1) That He may purify the church (26)

(a) So that He may make it holy (26a)

(b) By purifying by washing in water by the word (26b)

(2) Purpose: so that the church will be completely pure and holy (27)

(a) To make a purified, perfected church without imperfections (27a-b)

(i) So that He Himself may present the church to Himself glorious in purity (27a)

(ii) Not having a blemish or imperfection or anything like that (27b)

(b) Rather, that she may be holy and blameless (27c)

b Therefore: Husbands take care of your wives in God designed unity with her (28-31)

1) Husbands should love and take care of their wives as Christ does to the church (28-30)

a) Husbands should love and take care of their wives (28)

(1) Husbands should love their wives as they love themselves (28a-b)

(a) Therefore, husbands in this same way ought to love their own wives (28a)

(b) As their own body (28b)

This possibly means "...as if they were your own body"

This is not very likely, because the other options make much more sense

This possibly means "...in the same way that they love their own body"

This makes sense as the standard by which they should love their wives

And Jesus used a similar standard – "Love your neighbor as yourself"

But the best option is probably "...because they ARE your own body"

This fits best in context with the next statement (28c)

This also fits with God's creation purpose for marriage – "The two shall become one flesh" Gen. 2:24 quoted later in this passage

And this fits best with comparing marriage to Jesus' relationship with His 'body'

(2) Reason: Because the one who loves his own wife loves himself (28c)

- b) Reason: It is right to take care of your own, like Christ does (29-30)
 - (1) Neg: Because no one ever hates his own flesh (29a)
 - (2) Pos: But everyone loves and cherishes his own flesh, like Christ nourishes the church (29b-30)
 - (a) But everyone loves and cherishes his own flesh (29b-c)
 - (i) But he nourishes [it] (29b)
 - (ii) And he cherishes it (29c)
 - (b) Just as Christ nourishes His own body, the church (29d-30)
 - (i) Just as also Christ [nourishes and cherishes] the church (29d)
 - (ii) Reason: Because we are members of His body (30)
- 2) Reason: (Quoting Gen. 2:24) God has designed the married couple to become one (31)
 - a) A man will marry a woman (31a-b)
 - (1) For this reason a man will leave his father and mother (31a)
 - (2) And he will join himself to his wife (31b)
 - b) Result: And the two will be into one flesh (31c)
- 2. This is important because marriage demonstrates Christ's relationship with the church (32)
 - a) This mystery is important (32a)
 - b) I am speaking with reference to Christ and with reference to the church (32b)

II. Therefore: Summary of responsibilities of husband and wife (33)

- A. The husband must love his wife as himself (33a-b)
 - 1. Nevertheless, in the same ways, each and every one of you is to love your own wife (33a)
 - 2. As [you love] yourself (33b)
 - cf. Matt. 22:39 – "Love your neighbor as yourself"
- B. And the wife must respect her husband (33c-d)
 - 1. And the wife [is under obligation] (33c)
 - 2. So that she will fear/respect her husband (33d)