

WALK: Taking Steps Toward Maturity in Christ

"Husbands and Wives" (Ephesians 5:22-33)
Community Group Curriculum for the week of May 10, 2015

Big Picture

In this passage the essence of Paul's instruction is "wives submit, husbands love" and it's important to note that these words are different from one another since they recognize the headship which God has given to the husband. Yet when one tries to define the two verbs, it isn't easy to distinguish between them. What does it mean to submit? It is to give oneself up to somebody. What does it mean to love? It is to give oneself up for somebody as Christ gave Himself up for the Church. So *submission* and *love* are two aspects of the very same thing, namely, of that selfless self-giving which is the foundation of an enduring and growing marriage.

Let's Dig In!

Submit Defined: (verses 21, 22) *The command to "subordinate oneself" was a command to a person with free choice to place him in a position not ordained by nature. It meant "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden."*

1. When is it easy to submit to authorities gladly and cheerfully? In what situations do you find it difficult to submit to others?
2. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. Throughout the passage, what is said about the Church? How does your life today reflect submission to Christ? And...how does your life today not reflect submission to Christ?
3. Views on submission in marriage differ. Some would emphasize the wife's submission to the husband (5:22) and others would emphasize mutual submission (5:21). What is your view on how submission ought to work in marriage?
4. Now discuss this statement: "The motivation for the wife's submission is the gospel. As Jesus submitted to the Father's plan for our salvation, so the wife's submission to her husband is out of love and obedience to her Savior."

5. What should submission look like in daily life? How does the Bible's view of submission in relationships run counter to the world's current view?

6. Read Ephesians 5:25-33. Paul spends much more time discussing how husbands should treat their wives than wives submitting to their husbands. Summarize the key points Paul makes to husbands. Why do you think Paul used Christ and His body/church as an illustration of how husbands are to love their wives?

7. What are some practical ways husbands and wives can live out Ephesians 5:33?

Pray

- Ask God to identify a relationship in which you need to be more loving as you exercise authority over someone. Ask God to show you how to meet this person's needs.
- Ask God to identify a relationship in which you need to be more submissive to someone else. Ask God to show you how to submit more completely to that person's authority.
- If you are married, thank God for the gift of your marriage. If you are not married, pray for marriages; that they will grow and represent Christ well.

Final Thought

Marriage isn't ultimately about us; it's about Christ. Christ and His church don't exist to be the example for your marriage; your marriage exists to be the example of Christ and His church. Marriages are key to making disciples and displaying Christ in this world. So what do you need to do?

- For the married, how are you doing with your area of responsibility?
- For the single, what are you looking for in a spouse? Do your expectations need to change? Remember, the goal of marriage is to lift up Christ.
- For the widowed, what married person can you disciple to strengthen their marriage?