

# EPHESIANS | It Takes Two to Be One

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## Introduction

### Ephesians 5:21-33 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <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. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <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.<sup>[a]</sup> <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. <sup>33</sup>However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

- 1) Read **Ephesians 5:21-33**.
- 2) We want to talk about the marriage relationship today. Challenges.
  - a. Submission and Headship
  - b. Roles in a godly marriage
  - c. Cultivating Oneness
- 3) Some background on Ephesus and the marriage culture at the time.
  - a. By the time Paul arrived in Ephesus it was the capital of the Province of Asia, had an estimated population of about 200,000, and was one of the greatest cities in the Roman Empire, eclipsed only by Rome and Alexandria.
  - b. The church in Ephesus consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, facing challenges in being unified with one another as well as being distinct from their godless culture.
  - c. Ephesian Christians, who were Gentiles, had not been informed by Jewish laws or their faith experience. Living in a culture quite contrary to their newfound belief in Jesus, they needed to be disciplined in the ways of God to better understand what it meant to live and lead like Jesus. This included their understanding of marriage.
  - d. Some cultural context around marriage as we look at this passage today:
    - i. At the time of the writing of Ephesians, women were treated poorly by their husbands.
      1. In the Jewish world, the process of divorce was disastrously easy. A man could divorce his wife for something as minor as spoiling his dinner with too much salt.
      2. Among the Greeks, prostitution was an integral part of their culture and wives were only for having legitimate children and overseeing the household. Companionship within marriage was next to impossible.
      3. For the Romans, family life was in ruins. It was stated that women “were married to be divorced and divorced to be married”, and that the best days of a woman’s life were the day she wed and the day she was buried.
    - ii. At this time, wives were already submitting to their husbands. When Paul wrote this passage, he was calling men and women to a mutual commitment to purity and

- companionship in marriage that had not yet been seen in the culture of the times.
- iii. The real challenge by Paul in this passage was for men to love their wives to such an extent that they lay down their lives for them, just as Jesus did for the church. This can result in wives loving, trusting and desiring to follow the lead of their husbands. (Like Jesus and His Church!)

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## Leading up to Chapter 5

### 1) Truths and principles that are to also be applied to our marriages!

#### 2) Chapter 4

- a. "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of your calling...with all humility, and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-4)
- b. "Speaking the truth in love..." (Ephesians 4:15)
- c. "Put off your old self...be renewed in the spirit of your minds...put on the new self." (Ephesians 4:22-23)
- d. "Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." (Ephesians 4:26-27)
- e. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..." (Ephesians 4:30)
- f. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- g. *Jimmy last week on the previous verses in Chapter 5: live a life of love; walk in the light and in purity; always giving thanks; submitting to one another out of reverence for Jesus!*

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## Submission (Takes two to make this work!)

### Ephesians 5:21-24 (ESV)

<sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <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. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

#### 1) Submission

- a. It is interesting to note that the word "submit", in verse 22, isn't there in the Greek. It is assumed in the spirit of verse 21 of mutual submission to the Lord and one another.
- b. Verse 22 is one of the most abused verses in the Bible. Its focus is *not* on the privilege and dominance of the husband, and Paul never intended to suggest that wives were simply servants compelled to follow every wish and demand of their husband.
- c. The word submission, in the Greek (*hupotasso*), means to "arrange oneself under."
- d. Submission was very important to the writers of the New Testament as it described the selfless love, humility, faith, and willingness to die that was required of all Christians, modeled in the life of Jesus.
- e. The meaning here is *as part of their submission to the Lord* a wife submits to her husband; a wife's relationship to the Lord is the foundation and motivation of her submission to her husband. It is also part of walking in the Spirit from a few verses before in Ephesians 5:15-20. ***A humble, loyal and loving cooperation and deference.***

- f. Mutual submission – a husband is also to be submitted to his wife (mutual submission as believers to one another – verse 21) by receiving their input, thoughts, ideas, and corrections. Where is she on point in the home?
- g. Wives are to submit to their husbands, standing in a giving relationship to them. Genesis 2:18 “helpmate” – the attitude of *how can I help you, come alongside you?*
- h. This text does not endorse a chauvinist mentality with wives doing all the work or agreeing to any request their husbands think up. Rather, it does ask wives to give up self-centeredness (as disciples of Jesus who are submitted to the Lord), to take seriously their companionship with their husband, and to do all they can to benefit his life.

## 2) Headship

- a. The head of the wife is also part of the church that submits to Christ and other believers – which would include their wives.
- b. Many assume that the Greek word for “head” (*kephale*) means “boss, person in charge” since the word has those metaphorical meanings in the English language.
- c. However, the focus here is not on authority, but rather on the self-giving love of Jesus, and the husband giving from his life to his wife.
- d. In this context it suggests more or a “taking responsibility for” – the husband has God-given authority to take responsibility for loving, nourishing, and cherishing his wife.
- e. The husband does indeed have a leadership role in his home, though not to boss his wife around or to use his position as a privilege.
- f. Just as Jesus redefined greatness as being a servant, so Paul redefines being “the head” as *taking responsibility to love, nourish and cherish his wife. Laying down his life for her.*
- g. The emphasis here in the passage is placed on the husband, but contrary to the culture around them, it is for the benefit of the wife.
- h. In the end, the activity of both husband and wife is based upon their relating first and foremost to each other as disciples of Jesus!!!
- i. The way godly marriages are to function is therefore clear from this text. Both man and woman live first of all in, unto, and for the Lord. The real “head” of the marriage is always Jesus. Both partners are to live in mutual submission to one another, seek come alongside each other to fulfill the purposes of God, and operate out of oneness, or agreement.
- j. In summary, this text is not intended to provide husbands with a place of privilege, nor make women second-class citizens, but rather points out a mutual submitting to one another – in the wife submitting to her husband and the husband’s giving of his life for his wife. However, in light of the context of Ephesus, the greater emphasis here is on the husband stepping up to love, nourish and cherish his wife! Paul is bringing here a culture-shifting correction that was to better reflect the heart of Jesus in a marriage!

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## The Roles of Wives and Husbands (Takes two to make this work!)

### Ephesians 5:25-33 (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <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.<sup>[a]</sup> <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. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

## 1) Wives: To Help and Respect

- a. A wife was uniquely made by God to come alongside and support her husband (Genesis 2:18, 20-22). *“Helpmate”*. Grace on your life, and anointing to do so – more than anyone else!
- b. She can offer him help and support by loving him well (Titus 2:4).
- c. By being the kind of woman that he can rejoice in (Proverbs 5:18), developing godly character and an inner beauty (Proverbs 12:4; 31:10-11, 30; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-6).
- d. She can help him by teaming together to tend family and home. (Proverbs 31:15, 21, 27; Titus 2:4-5).
- e. She can help him by using her skills and gifts at home and beyond (Proverbs 31:12-29).
- f. He will feel helped and supported by affirming words and wise counsel (Proverbs 31:26).
- g. He is helped and strengthened by her expressions of respect and honor (Ephesians 5:33; Proverbs 12:4). Things that can actually hinder this and tear him down:
  - i. Criticizing him
    1. Public joking about him
    2. Talking about him behind his back
    3. Comparing him with others
  - ii. Tendency to share his secrets
  - iii. Rejecting attempts of affection
  - iv. Lack of interest in his dreams
  - v. Under involvement in his interests
- h. A husband desperately needs to know a wife’s support through her regular prayers for him (1 Timothy 2:1-2), especially in the midst of challenging times.
- i. He feels helped when they walk in peace with each other (Proverbs 19:13, 21:9).
- j. A woman who loves and helps her husband like this will be openly honored by him and her family (Proverbs 31:23, 28-29, 31 – “The Proverbs 31 Woman”).
- k. To compliment her husband, a woman must understand his greatest needs:
  - To Feel Trusted – believing in who he is, receiving her confidence and loyalty.
  - To Feel Supported – helped, comforted, and encouraged in the pursuit of God-given steps of obedience.
  - To Feel Admired – honored through words and actions of affirmation, and championed before others.

## 2) Husbands: To Love, Nourish and Cherish

- a. A husband is asked by God to lay his life down for his wife. He is to replicate the self-sacrificial, giving love demonstrated by Jesus for His Bride, the Church. Jesus loved the Church, not for what she would do for Him, but so that He might give Himself to her. This is the model for husbands to follow in relation to their wives.

### Ephesians 5:25-29 (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <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.<sup>[a]</sup> <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,

- b. The quality of love here seeks not its own satisfaction, or even affection responding to affection, but is a complete giving of oneself for the highest good of the one being served.

- c. The husband is to forego his own rights and desires so that he can place the well-being of his wife first. The choice to lay his life down for his wife is also a husband's way of expressing his choice to follow Jesus.
- d. In his loving and serving, a husband is to nurture and care for his wife so that she will be holy and radiant, fulfilling God's purposes through her life and through their lives together as a couple (Ephesians 5:25-33).
- e. In the Greek to cherish means to care for, to comfort and impart warmth. *Treasure*.
- f. When a husband consistently loves, nourishes and cherishes his wife like this, she is more able to freely submit herself to him and follow his lead.
- g. A husband can express his in love for his wife by:
  - i. Accepting her exactly as she is throughout the entire journey of marriage.
  - ii. Actively looking for ways to serve and bless her, expressing kindness.
  - iii. Making time to sincerely listen to her, without having to "fix" the situation.
  - iv. Communicating well, sharing your heart with her, not just information.
  - v. Praying regularly with her, for her and over her (1 Peter 3:7).
  - vi. Helping with the kids, housework and "honey-dos."
  - vii. Keeping your marriage fresh by initiating and planning "date nights," having fun, laughing together, and enjoying each other.
  - viii. Verbally honoring her both personally and in front of others.
  - ix. Celebrating her achievements, whether big or small.
  - x. Tending her by being aware of how she is doing (of course, her for him too!)
    - 1. **Spiritually** – Knowing the condition of your spouse's walk with Jesus, to encourage growth and friendship with God, obedience to His Word and the Spirit.
    - 2. **Emotionally** – Knowing the condition of your spouse's heart and emotions, to come alongside them to strengthen and comfort them.
    - 3. **Mentally** – Knowing what is weighing on your spouse's mind, so you can carry their burdens in prayer and be used by God to impart peace.
    - 4. **Physically** – Knowing the condition of your spouse's physical well-being, to encourage and provide rest, refreshment and overall health and wellness.
    - 5. **Relationally** – Knowing the condition of your spouse's friendships, to provide opportunities for their recreation and meaningful sharing, especially encouraging more time with healthy, life-giving friends.
    - 6. **Destiny** – Knowing your spouse's life calling from God, to encourage them in it, help them grow and find their place in it, while always being their biggest fan and prayer warrior.
- h. To compliment his wife, a man must understand her greatest needs:
  - **To Feel Secure** – safe and free from fear, protected in areas of vulnerability.
  - **To Feel Cared For** – listened to, understood, invested in by his time and attention, and meeting her needs.
  - **To Feel Adored** – expressions of being highly prized and valued above all else, "you're still the one!"

**This means men need to submit to and respect their wives,  
just as women need to love, nourish and cherish their husbands too!**

*Note: In the Garden in Genesis: Man got passive; Woman took control — is this God's fix? Asking the man to step up and lead, and the woman to yield control?*

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## Cultivating Oneness (Takes two to make this work!)

### 1) Leave and Cleave

- a. Leave in Hebrew: “to loosen, depart, withdraw”
- b. Cleave in Hebrew: “to be joined together, to hold fast”
- c. Marriage is an entity of its own; establishing an independence and identity apart from parents. “Island”
- d. Hebrews 13:4 – “Let marriage be held in honor among all...”
- e. Mark 10:9 – “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

### 2) Cultivating Oneness: *mutual self-sacrifice and loving by laying down lives for each other*

- a. The instructions for mutual submission and sacrificial love in Ephesians 5 are given to all of Paul’s audience, both men and to women. Submission isn’t just for wives; sacrificial love isn’t just for husbands.
- b. Genuine and mutual love and faithfulness were absent in many marriages in the time of the writing of Ephesians. It is in this context that Paul pressed for unity in Christian marriage, with the union of Jesus and the Church as the model.
- c. Marriage is a covenant before God. Therefore, the most important relational commitment in a married person’s life is to their spouse. No other relationship, or anything in life, should ever come between this covenant commitment (Mark 10:6-9).
- d. Oneness: spiritually, physically, functionally, purpose, etc.
  - i. Commitment
    - 1. A commitment to guard the “affairs of the heart” — allowing needs to be met through other sources that should rightfully be met by your spouse.
    - 2. A commitment to work it out! Divorce has become a way to easy option! God is using your spouse as His primary discipleship tool in your life – stop fighting it and yield to it!
    - 3. A commitment to seeking God and advance His purposes in and through each other’s lives.
  - ii. Companionship
    - 1. Tenderness of heart; hearing each other; forgiving quickly.
    - 2. Communication is key: seek first to understand – laying aside your opinions, answers – LISTENING.
    - 3. Verbal cues that can aid your communication:
      - a. “I feel” – When expressing emotions and you don’t expect your spouse to do anything about it except listen to the point of understanding.
      - b. “I think” – When pondering or processing something out loud, and after your spouse has listened and understood you, you invite their feedback.
      - c. “I believe” – When expressing a deep conviction or a decision made, inviting your spouse to respond to you.
      - d. “I need” – When you simply have a need that you would desire for your spouse to help you meet.
  - iii. Complement
    - 1. Personalities – recognize each other’s strengths and weaknesses, and cover and complement each other.
    - 2. Gifts and Callings – how can you team well to raise your family? How about for Jesus and His Kingdom?

3. Interests – offering each other a different perspective
4. In Hearing from God - As a matter of fact, next to your own walk with God, the loudest voice of God in your life comes from your spouse!

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## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the meaning of “submission” in Ephesians 5:21-24.
2. What does it mean for the man to be the “head of the wife” in this biblical passage?
3. In what ways can a wife help and support her husband?
4. How can a husband express his love for his wife?
5. How can a couple cultivate oneness?

**Prayer Retreat Basics is on the following page.**

## NOTES



# Prayer Retreat Basics

Dave & Cheryl Buehring

When heading out for a couple of days on a Prayer Retreat, we look for a location where we can unwind from day-to-day “noise” and focus on hearing from God. We take a good block of time each morning, again in the afternoon (along with some rest/fun/good meals if not fasting), and another block after dinner.

When it comes to praying together, Cheryl and I block out an hour or more per topic. We follow these steps as we simply ask the Lord questions and wait quietly on Him to put things in our hearts and minds, and then we share what impressions we each got. We continue doing this until we sense His clarity and we are in agreement on it. We repeat this for as many topics as we desire to cover. Agreement on what the Lord showed us is the key, and we move forward on those things. The things we're not so sure of (guidance, clarity, timing, etc.) we put "on the back burner" until another season of seeking God in prayer.

## 1) Prepare Your Hearts Together

- Acknowledge that you cannot pray without the direction and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:26-27).
- Confess your sins and forgive those who have sinned against you (Ps.66:18; Mt.5:23-24). Address any issues between you and God, and your spouse.
- Replace your thoughts and imaginations with God's truths, and set aside your desires and personal burdens (Is.55:8; 2Cor.10:5).
- Together, resist the enemy who would like to disrupt your prayer time (Mt.4:1-11; Jam.4:7).
- Ask for the Fear of the Lord to share what God puts in your heart.

## 2) Wait on The Lord Together

- Ask the Lord the guidance question on your heart – one at a time.
- Take a few minutes to wait quietly before Him, listening for impressions He desires to put in your hearts and minds.
- Have your Bible with you in case He desires to speak to you from His Word.

## 3) Share Impressions Together

- Share what the Lord has shown each of you. Listen to the Lord “through” each other. You both may have received something, one of you, or neither of you.
- Compare what the Lord's said to each other, asking the Holy Spirit to help you discern what He is saying. Go back to prayer for the pieces you still need to get.
- Make sure to record what He has shown you (Mac, iPad, Tablet, Yellow Pad, etc.)

## 4) Obey Jesus Together

- Talk about and prayerfully create a plan for being obedient to anything that God has revealed to you. *Also, remember that God's timing is just as important as His direction!*
- What has what God revealed mean? What are practical next steps? Where do you need to “trust and obey”? What is for now, what may be for later?
- Wrap-up with a time of thanksgiving and praise for God meeting with you.

Dave Buehring (Copyright ©2012; updated 2023)