

# EPHESIANS

## LIVING (THE) GOSPEL

### Sermon 9 – Ephesians 5: 21-33 “Wives-husbands”

#### 1. Introduction

- a. Why has this passage been so unpopular? Why do some Christians today utterly reject its concepts?
- b. How has this passage been taken and turned into a husband’s justification to be abusive and dominating?
- c. What does Galatians 2:26-29 tell us about the status of men and women before God in terms of our salvation?

#### 2. The big picture

- a. Israel as God’s bride – Jeremiah 2:2 and 31:32. Hosea 1-3; Ezekiel 23 and Isaiah 54:5-8. Why do you think God’s relationship with Israel is portrayed this way?
- b. Jesus as bridegroom – Mark 2:18-20; John 3:27-30; Matthew 25:1-13; Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 21:1-4. Jesus is now seen in God’s role as the groom of his people. How does this imagery help us to understand the nature of our relationship with Jesus?
- c. The church as the bride, Jesus the Bridegroom. Christ loving the church by giving himself up for her. The church submitting to Christ as her husband. A marriage ‘made in heaven’! How does this big picture help us understand the teaching for husbands and wives?
- d. Review and in revel in what Christ has done for us his bride (his church) as described in 5:22-27.

#### 3. Husbands

- a. *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her* 5:25. A huge call. Why do husbands find it hard to love like this? Husbands – share what you find hard about this exhortation.
- b. *How* can husbands develop this type of love for their wives?
- c. *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.* 5:28 Husbands are good at seeing their needs are met. How can they develop a love for their wives that is as keen to see *her* needs are met as they are that their *own* be met?
- d. Someone has said that one of the problems in many marriages and families today is that husbands and fathers have abdicated any leadership role. They are slack or lazy or distracted. Discuss.
- e. Dr Phil – *I want my wife to feel that when she’s standing in a room with 10,000 women, there is no one better cared for or more loved behind closed doors than she is.* Discuss.

#### 4. Wives

- a. *Wives, submit to your husbands, as to the Lord* 5:22 A huge call. Why do wives find it hard to love like this? Wives – share what you find hard about this exhortation.
- b. *How* can wives develop this type of love for their husbands?
- c. My guess is that one of the hardest problems for wives in this area is that husbands are not loving in the way that is described here. Discuss in your group ways in which our marriages can be strengthened and helped.
- d. Refer to the FAQs at the end of Mark’s sermon and see if you would answer any differently or indeed, add to the list.

*Close in prayer, praying that our marriages would grow to more nearly reflect that most wonderful marriage of Christ and his church.*

**Date:** 03 June 2018  
**Services:** 730, 930 (Tewantin)  
**Series:** Ephesians: Living (the) Gospel  
**Passage:** Ephesians 5:21-33  
**Title:** Wives-Husbands

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## 1. Introduction

- Over the last three weeks we've begun to see what a **radical difference** being Christian will **make**.
- In the **church** – we'll be more interested in **servicing others** than ensuring everything goes the way **we** want it to.
- We'll speak **truthfully**, we'll **deal** with our **anger**, we'll speak only that which builds others **up**, we won't **grieve** God's spirit by being **bitter** or **twisted** or **malicious**.
- In fact, we'll **imitate God**, and as **we** have been so **wonderfully loved and forgiven**; so **we** will **love** and forgive.
- And we will **differentiate** ourselves from the world's **sexual ethics** and instead flood the **darkness** of this world with our **light**.
- We'll *find out what pleases the Lord*, and *understand what the Lord's will is...//*
- And of course **here** is where God's will is **found**.
- But it's true isn't it, that sometimes we won't **like** what we read here... and sometimes we won't want to **do** what we read here...
- And sometimes what we **read** here will have been so **ridiculed** over time, that it will **affect** – or **infect** – the way we **read it** – or **hear** it...
- Like for example when you heard this morning: "*Wives submit to your husbands...*" ... did you automatically start thinking... "**oh yes** – it's **true**... the Bible is **patriarchal**, Paul it is **anti-women**, this is **oppressive**... it's **so** out of date.....!?"
- And often it doesn't **occur** to us to think.... Not that the **Bible** must be wrong... but.... wow... our **culture** has got it **wrong**...
- Rather than look at the Bible and say **what a funny old fashioned document it is**, let's allow **God** to **speak to us this morning and to our culture** and say what a **strange funny culture you have**...  
/
- So I want to ask that if at **all possible** – we put aside whatever **prejudices** we've had against the **passage** and **forget** the **opposition** we've **heard**... and **rather**, ask the Lord to help us understand it in a way which is untainted. //
- Now last week we saw that the instruction to be 'filled with the Spirit' had some present participles following it – outlining for us the impact of being filled with the Spirit... be filled with the Spirit, **speaking**, **singing** and **making music**, **giving thanks** and **submitting**...
- This morning we see how that submitting works itself out in **marriage** (today) and then over the next two weeks, in **parenting** and with **masters and slaves**.

## 2. Big "M" Marriage

- Did you know that the relationship between **God** and his **people** is described as a **marriage**?
- In the **Old Testament**, **marriage** was often used to depict the relationship between **God** and the **people of Israel**.
- So in **Jeremiah 2:2**, the Lord says to Israel through the prophet *I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert.*

- And in **Jeremiah 31:32** – *Israel broke my covenant though I was a **husband** to them.*
- When **Jesus** comes on the scene, he boldly refers to **himself** as the **Bridegroom**. It comes up in **Mark 2** when Jesus is questioned about why his disciples don't **fast**, and Jesus says they cannot fast while (he) the **bridegroom** is **with them**.
- In **John 3**, John the **Baptist** refers to the **arrival** of Jesus on the scene as being the **arrival** of the **bridegroom**.
- Its pictured in Jesus' parable about the **maidens** being ready as they await the arrival of the **bridegroom** – i.e. as they wait for **Jesus' return!**
- The end time **feast** of eternity is pictured as a **marriage feast**, and the **holy city** where God's people **live** is prepared as a **bride** beautifully dressed for her **husband** in **Revelation 21**.
- Brothers and sisters gathered this morning – **we** are the **bride** of **Christ**. **Jesus** is our **bridegroom**.
- And our **relationship** with **him** – is a **marriage**. //
- That is a **very important background** to understanding what Paul is saying here – because he **draws** from **Christ's** marriage to **us**, to teach about **the marriage of men and women to one another**. //
- **Christ our bridegroom loves us!!!**
- His **desire** is only for our **good**.
- In the words of vv26-27 here; to make us **holy** (set apart entirely for him), to **cleanse** us and to **present** us as a **radiant church**, without **stain** or **wrinkle** or **any other blemish**, but **holy** and **blameless**.
- And how did he do this? v25 – **he gave himself up for us**.
- In **humble obedience** to his Father, he endured the **shame**, the **humiliation** and the **agony** of the **cross**... ///
- **Yes he loved us**. He put **our** needs before his **own**. It **cost** him. It was **sacrificial love**. **Costly love**. **Selfless**. **Unconditional**. **Generous**.
- **Our bridegroom** is utterly **for** us. He is **completely** on our **side**. He only **ever** wants our **best**. **Nothing** will **ever** separate us from his **love**.
- and we his **bride** – the **church** – the **people of God**, **willingly, joyfully** submit to him.
- And it's a **beautiful thing**. For he deals with us **graciously** and **tenderly** and we surrender **our life** into **his service**...
- As he laid **his** life down in **our** service, so **we** now lay down **our life** in **His!**
- ... and **THAT** becomes the pattern for marriage between a man and woman...
- **Paul's exhortation** to **wives** and **husbands**, is based on the marriage between Christ and the church being a **pattern – a template** - for **our** marriages.

### 3. Husbands

- So let me deal with **husbands first**.
- It can't be an **accident** can it that it takes Paul at least **three times longer** to deal with **husbands** than with **wives**?
- We need a lot more **help** and a lot more **instruction**. We're a lot **slower** to **learn!**
- The **instruction** is **simple: husbands**, we are to **love** our **wives**.
- Now was this so **unusual**? Was this so **unheard of** that Paul had to **mention it**?
- Well there are **lists** around in other writings from the 1<sup>st</sup> century giving **instructions** to various

members of **society**, but they say almost **nothing** about husbands needing to **love** their **wives**. The **emphasis** was more on the **rights** and **status** of **husbands** and **fathers**.

- (it's interesting that the similar passage in **Colossians**, Paul adds '**and do not be harsh with them**'... perhaps suggesting that being harsh was **very common**).
- And **how** are we husbands to **love**? Two **standards** are **given**.
- **First**: as **Christ** loved the church and gave himself up for her.
- That seems to me to be a **huge call**.
- Do you **remember** what we just **explored** of that love? He **rescued** us, **restored** us to **life**, **cleaned** us **up** and made us **his**... **by giving himself up for us**. He **laid down his life for us**.
- **Yes he loved us**. He put **our** needs before his **own**. It was **sacrificial**. It was **costly**. **Selfless**. **Unconditional**. **Generous**.
- **Husbands? That's the standard. That's the benchmark. That's the inspiration.**
- **That** is how we are to love our **lives**.
- **A costly, sacrificial love.**
- Our job is to constantly ask - "what are **her** needs?" -
- "What are her **needs**?" "How can I meet **them**?"
- "How can I make her life **better**?" "How can I **serve** her?" "What will be **helpful**?"
- If its **anything** like Christ's love, it will **cost** us.
- It will involve **sacrifice**.
- It will be **selfless**.
- It will be **unconditional**.
- It will be **generous**.
- It means you are to be **gracious** and **kind** and **tender** to her **always**. And to pick up the **Colossians' passage** - *never harsh*. //
- A friend of mine was walking through a **shopping mall in North Sydney** and he heard a man talking on his mobile phone - yelling - "*well it's very easy where you are sitting but it's very difficult from here...*" and my friend wanted to say to him 'I **bet** you're talking to your **wife**...' // Certainly wasn't talking to his **secretary** or his **mistress**, certainly wasn't talking to his **boss**... there was something in the **sharp dismissive way** that he **spoke** that **husbands really only reserve** for their **wives**... /
- And he **wished** he had the courage to say 'are you **talking** to your **wife**, the **one woman** that you promised to **love** and **cherish** and to be **tender** with?' //
- **Husbands: Love your wives. As Christ loved the church.**
- That's the **first** standard. //
- And the **other** standard of love? To **love** their wives as their own **bodies**...
- This is an extension of **love** your neighbour as **yourself**. Your **wife** is your **closest of neighbours**... And to **love** your **wife** is to love your **own body** - because the **two** have become **one**!
- So to the **same degree** you see to it that **your** needs are met - see to it **her** needs are met. //
- What does this love look like in **practice**?
- I was watching **Dr Phil** some time ago, and there was a **very sad** story on about a rather **stupid man** who was **demanding** all sorts of things from his **wife**.

- **Dr Phil** shared of his own **marriage** and referred to **Robin**.
- His **aim**, he said, is to make Robin feel that if she's in a room with **10,000** women in it, she **knows** she is the **best cared for** and **most loved woman there...** and that means **behind closed doors** – where **no one** else sees...
- He also claimed to wake **every morning** and ask himself how can he can make **her** day **easier** or **better**.
- Now I don't know if he's a **Christian** and what **inspires** him to such **ideals...** but that seems to me to be a **good example** of what Paul is **saying here....**
- And if we **husbands** started down **that** track... then I guarantee there would be a lot more happy **marriages** and happy **families** and happy **homes**.

#### 4. Wives

- Which brings us to **wives**.
- *v22 wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*
- Notice its **submit** – in the **same way** you submit to the **Lord**. This is taken up again in **v24... as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**
- So we return to the model and ask 'what does the **church's** submission to **Christ** look like...?'
- Do you recall what we saw?: that **we** (the church) **surrender** our life into his (**Christ's**) **service...** we put **ourselves** at his **disposal**. We offer ourselves **sacrificially** to him. As he laid **his life** down in **our service**, so we now lay down **ours** in **His!**
- And so **wives** are to **receive** their husband's love – and **return** it.
- As your husband **gives** himself for you in **every way** – putting **your** needs before **his**, so **you** give yourself for **him...** putting **his** needs before **yours**.
- it **almost** looks **reciprocal...** almost
- but the **passage** does infer there is a **leader** and a **follower**. *v23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...//*
- **Dancing with Stars** was very **popular** on TV...
- Now – I'm not a **dancer...** but I **understand** the principle that one has to **lead** in that type of dancing... and the result is – **harmony** and a **beautiful unity...**
- And the **lead** the husband takes in **marriage** is a **leadership** in **setting** the **standard** of **love**.
- Wives – **let** your husbands to take the **lead** in **loving you**.
- And follow **their lead** in **love**. **Return their** love for **you**, with love for **them**.
- Someone has described it as getting into a **joyful synchronicity** with your **husbands...** that's a **good description** because that is **exactly** what you and I are trying to do with **Christ...** get into **joyful synchronicity** with **him**. *//*
- So here is the pattern for **husbands** and **wives**.
- It's not '**wives** – get into **joyful synchronicity** with your **husbands** if he's **worth** it, if you **agree** with him...'
- Nor is it '**husbands love** your wives, unless they are **particularly stupid** and **annoying ...!**'
- It's for all time... it's a **huge** call on **both** sides... someone has cheekily said – look, it's only for **50-60 years** – so it's not all that **hard!** *///*
- By the **grace of God**, may our marriages reflect that **very wonderful** and **eternal marriage** – between **Christ** and **we his people**.

- But now - a post script.
- Some very quick FAQs – frequently asked questions.

1. **Surely wives submitting to husbands suggests some sort of inferiority of wife to husband?**

No. The Bible is very clear on that. As far as our **standing** before God is concerned there is no difference between male and female: Gal 3:26-28 *In Jesus Christ you are all children of God through faith ... there is neither Jew nor Greek (as we saw in Ephesians 2) slave or free, male or female, you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Now that was a watershed revelation in the 1<sup>st</sup> century – that **Gentiles** and **females** and **slaves** weren't second rate. Women were **not** to be treated as **stupid** or **fools** or whatever... A **radical teaching**... Paul, **with Jesus**, turned the **status** of **women** on its **head**. They **taught** women. **Unheard of!** Women played **leadership** roles in the **early church!** **Unheard of.** No, there is **no inferiority** inferred here.

And **anecdotally**, **submission** doesn't infer **inferiority**. So the **Prime Minister** would have to submit to the **person on the crossing out here** if he was driving past **Sunshine Beach or Tewanin school at 3.15pm**, - no **inferiority** implied.

2. **Surely Mark you are overlooking v21 where it says submit to one another?** The word 'submit' is used 40 times in the NT – 23 times by the apostle Paul. And it is **never** used in a way which suggests a **mutual** or **reciprocal** submission. It's always within **ordered** relationships... otherwise here you would have **parents** submitting to **children** – that sounds like a **nightmare**... and **masters** submitting to **slaves**...

**But** / there is a **sense** in which a husband submits to his wife... in that he constantly **submits** himself to putting **her** needs **first!**

3. **What if my husband is not a Christian?** Well of course there are many **non-Christian husbands** who **love** their lives **beautifully**... and **receiving** and **returning** their love will **not** be an **issue**... but at the **point** he (or your Christian husband for that matter) demands you do something **contrary** to God's **will**, then the principle from **Scripture** is that you must obey **God** rather than **man**.
4. **What if my husband is abusing me?** He has broken the bonds of marriage and for your own **safety's** sake as much as anything else, you need to get help to **leave**. It's a massive twisting of Scripture which uses this passage to justify domestic abuse!
5. **What if my wife doesn't do what I say?** Well – I would want to know what it is you're **asking** her to **do**... This doesn't give you permission to beat your chest and say '**submit**'. You're her '**lover**' in the **best sense** of the **word**... if she doesn't **want** to do what it is you're **asking** her to **do**, then you have to ask the question are **you loving her?**
6. **Does this mean that the husband has final authority in decision making?** E.g. **Husband** loves going to the **beach** on holidays and **she** loves the **mountains**. You talk it out, share your **desires**. Where do you **go?** The **mountains** – for the **husband** puts **her needs** before his **own!**
7. **My husband is not loving me like this!** This was written by Susan...! Not really... Give me his name and I'll have lunch with him... **Seriously**... this is a **huge call**. And one of the problems I had in preparing is knowing I don't love Susan like **this**. If he's here this morning... perhaps he will have been challenged. If he's not here, get him to listen online! But significantly – talk to him – speak the truth in love. And ensure **you** are loving **him!**
8. **I feel a failure when I compare myself to this:** here is the reality that we are all human and frail and the only way we can truly love like this is as we are inspired and empowered by God's love and Jesus' example and transformed by the Holy Spirit! Only when you grasp and comprehend how you have been loved... then you can begin to love like this!

And so I end as I did last week – with an invitation to come to the Lord and find mercy and forgiveness; to repent and to change with the Holy Spirit's help.