

Ephesians 5:22-33 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 5:22-24: SPIRIT-FILLED FAMILIES, PART
1
by Dr. Wayne Barber

NEXT

We are going to begin the first part of a series within a series. This is called **Spirit-Filled Families, Part I**.

I hope that you are not forgetting the context of Ephesians. Paul is talking to believers in a pagan city called Ephesus. These believers in this pagan city are in a hostile world. Paul is trying to let them know they have everything that they will ever need in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have all of God they will ever get.

They lived in a pagan society. Ephesus was an awful, awful place. They lived in a hostile world. In this letter he is trying to encourage them. He wants them to know they have everything they need for life and for godliness. He wants them to know that when they were pagans, when they didn't know Jesus, what they couldn't do, they now can do because Jesus lives in their hearts in the person of His Spirit.

Go back to [Ephesians 3](#). In verse 16 he prays

"that He [God] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." (Click for first of 6 messages on a Prayer for fullness)

That is very important to realize. There is an inner man, and the Spirit of God lives there. The Spirit of God wants to strengthen us with power and give us an ability that we would not have apart from Him.

Verse 17 continues,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

How am I strengthened? How do I experience the power of God? I experience it by accommodating His presence. How do we accommodate His presence? By obeying Him. By faith. When I am willing to do what He says to do, when I choose to obey Him, I am saying "**no**" to my wicked flesh. Immediately I begin to experience the empowering of the Holy Spirit of God.

In [Ephesians 4](#) we have a **new garment**. (Click here for a discussion of putting off the old and putting on the new "garment" and what this looks like practically) What is on the inside is going to affect you on the outside. A garment is what people see.

In [Ephesians 5](#) we begin to imitate, mime the love of God. It is not what we say, it is how we live. We are children of light. We walk in a world of darkness that is hostile to us.

In [Eph 5:15](#) he warns the Ephesian believers in the pagan world they live in:

"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise." (Click for message on Be imitators)

How do wise men walk in a hostile world? [Verse 16](#) tells you. First of all, "making the most of your time." The word "time" is the word **kairos**, which means opportunity.

From the time I got saved to the time I die I have an opportunity. I am to make the most of that opportunity. How do I do that? By redeeming the time. How do you purchase time? By the choices that we make. We have to suffer the consequences of wrong choices. Paul says, "You only have from the time you are born again until the time you die. Now make the most of that time. Redeem the time. Make wise choices."

[Ephesians 5:17](#) says,

"So then do not be foolish."

That is the word **aphron**. That means don't act as if you don't have the ability to put together in situations in your life what God wants you to do because you do. Second Timothy tells us we are not like people who are lost. We have minds that have been saved. We can actually understand what God wants us to do.

[Ephesians 5:17](#) goes on,

"but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Generically, the will of the Lord is that we be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God, that we obey Him, that we depend

completely on Him, that we be surrendered in our attitude towards Him. Specifically because of that fear of God, God will give us wisdom in the specific areas of our life. He says, "Know what the will of the Lord is."

In this context of walking wisely, [Ephesians 5:18](#) begins with the word "and." It is a connector. [Verse 18](#) is still in the context of walking wisely in a world that is hostile towards us. He says,

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation (or waste), but be filled with the Spirit." (Click for message on being filled with the Spirit)

The word "**filled**" means controlled by the Spirit of God. How do I live wisely in a dark, hostile world? I am constantly saying to the Lord,

"Yes, Lord, whatever it is."

By saying "**yes**" to Him, I am saying "**no**" to my flesh. I am being **controlled** moment by moment by moment. I am constantly aware of His presence in my life, moment by moment by moment, practicing the presence of Christ as I am willing to yield to whatever His will is in my life.

This is going to have a powerful impact on our families. Do you realize that God's first institution on this earth was the family? This was not man's idea. This was not man's plan. This is why the world today has such an attack on the family. Satan began that in Genesis. You see, God came up with the idea of the family. He created the man first. He created the woman out of his side and immediately they were to bear children. This institution is God's idea. Not only it is His idea, but He has the only master plan for how the family is supposed to function.

Let's work our way from Ephesians 5:22 down to 6:9. Let's look at God's design so that we don't have to go back and redo what we should have done years ago. Hopefully this will be a real help to some of you who are just getting your families started. Some of us who have been there a while are just going to have to swallow real deep and say, "Thank you, Lord, for your grace and your forgiveness and your mercy," and start afresh as we are.

The first instruction in [verse 22](#) is to the ladies, the wives. Paul wrote this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. You won't understand why he started with wives right now, but you will understand later. There is just one verse addressed to the wives, but wait until we get to the husbands, folks. It is quite different.

[Ephesians 5:22-24](#) read,

"Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."

You may notice in verse 22 that [be subject] is in italics (in the NASB), meaning the verb there is not in that verse (in the original Greek text). It is picked up from the preceding verse. In verse 21 Paul had said,

"and **be subject** to one another in the fear of Christ."

Then goes on in verse 22 to literally say,

"Wives, to your own husbands." ("*be subject*" is added by the translators)

So it is picked up from verse 21. It is also reinforced in verse 24 when he tells them,

"Just as the church submits to Christ, you also **be subject** to your husbands."

So we know that it is there, but let's look at some things about it. We will find some observations that might help us to decide what is God's design. The family is His idea, not ours. He is the only one who has the design. What is it?

First of all let's look at the meaning of the phrase "be subject."

The word "subject" is the word **hupotássō**. (Click for in depth study of hupotasso) It is more commonly understood to mean to submit. So when I use the term "submit" I am saying the same thing as "subject yourself."

Hupotasso comes from two Greek words, the word hupó, which means "under," and tasso, which means "to set in place."

In other words, the word means to set something in place up under something else. In the context it is talking about submitting to the authority of another. So Paul is saying to the wives,

"Be willing to place yourself in a position under your husband who is the authority of your family. Be in that

position of being submissive."

Now, let's make sure we understand what *hupotasso* doesn't mean. Sometimes when you look and see what it doesn't mean, it tells you better what it does mean. For instance, it does not mean that she is commanded to obey her husband as a child would obey his parents or a slave would obey his master. A lot of men treat their wives as if they are a door mat. They walk all over them as if they have no sense, as if they have no ability, as if they are inferiors. That is not what the word means at all. As a matter of fact, there is another Greek word that is used in that kind of relationship. It is the word *hupakouo*. That is entirely different.

Let me show you where it is used. Look in Ephesians 6:1:

"Children, **obey** your parents in the Lord, for this is right."

Guess what word the word "**obey**" is? *Hupakouo*. In other words, you are an inferior to a superior and God says you must obey your parents. You have no option, and it is only by God's grace they ever give you a reason why they tell you to do what they tell you to do. **Hupakouo** is never used with a husband and wife.

Look in 6:5:

"Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ."

That word "**obedient**" is the same word, **hupakouo**. One is of an inferior to a superior. The other is not that at all.

Hupotasso, the word that is used for wives to husbands, is the word that talks about two people who are absolutely equal in God's eyes, totally equal. There is not one level of inferiority of one to the other. But the wife makes a choice to place herself as an equal underneath another equal, her husband, in order that there can be order and function in the family. The whole purpose of it is so that it meets the design that God has already ordered.

So what is the meaning of the word **hupotasso**? Does it mean that your wife is a slave to obey your every command? Does it mean that you treat her like a child? NO! If there is a man who thinks for one second that they have any superiority in God's eyes over their wife, they are gravely mistaken from God's Word. However, by His design to have a functional family, concessions have to be made. So God says, "Wives, you make it and you choose to put yourself underneath the headship of your husband" in order that the design can be what God says it ought to be.

The meaning of it has nothing to do with inferior to superior. It takes nothing from the dignity of a woman for her to submit, but rather it enhances it. It takes great integrity for a person to do what God says should be done.

Secondly, let's look at the mindset of submission.

In verse 22 it says,

"Wives, be submissive to your husbands."

It says nothing about their ability. There are many families in which the wife is a whole lot more gifted than the man.

Maybe the wife is full of personality, full of character, full of all kinds of ability. It is the exact reverse of what you think the model ought to be. God says, "Wives, I don't care how much intelligence you have. I don't care how many spiritual gifts you have. I don't care how much energy you have. I don't care how much better you look than your husband. Wives, submit to your husbands." "But God, my husband is a bully! God, you don't want me submitting to my husband, do you?" God said, "That's right. You submit to your husband."

The mindset comes up in the verb:

"be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord."

The verb there is **present tense** and **middle voice**. This is not something you do one time so you can get something. Present tense means this is constant: every day be being under submission to your husband at all times. But even more than that is the middle voice. The middle voice means, you yourself make your own choice. If you want to have a properly functioning family, wives, you yourself make up your mind you are going to live in the state of submissiveness to your husband, no matter what he is like. God says,

"Submit to that man in your family."

The meaning is of two equals. Oh, what integrity a person who loves God has who is willing to put themselves under an equal in order that God's order and function may take place in the family.

Thirdly, there is the motivation of being submissive.

Now what in the world would make a woman who is equal, probably more gifted, probably more educated than her husband, put herself under submission to him? Well, look at the verse: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." I have had people ask me, "You mean to tell me I am to treat my husband as I treat the Lord? Is that what he is saying there?" No, he is not saying that. A lot of husbands want to be treated that way, but that is not what he is saying. Paul is saying, "You do this as an act of love to the Lord."

What should motivate you to do this? The verse is saying the thing that ought to motivate you is because the Spirit of God controls your life and the Spirit of God has revealed to you what the Scriptures say. In order for the Lord to make your family a functional family, you are willing to obey what He says. It's not because you love your husband that much, but it is because you love Jesus that much. That is the key. As I love the Lord Jesus, I am willing to do whatever it is he tells me to do. A wife's love for Christ motivates her to obey. So, she looks in God's Word. She is a student of Scripture. She can't be Spirit-filled if she is not because the Scripture has to play a role in our obeying the Lord Jesus Christ. She gets into the Word. Ephesians 5:22 says,

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands."

Jesus said in John 14:21,

"If you love Me, you will obey Me."

She says,

"Out of loving You, Lord, I am going to do what You have told me to do."

That is the motivation of submission.

Fourthly, let's look at the model of submission.

Ladies, God has honored you because He has asked you to do what He also has done. The model, of course, is the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul says in verses 23-24,

"For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."

We will get into some more of the details of that later. I want you to see first of all the model of submission.

Look in Philippians 2:5-8. In verses 5 and 6 it reads,

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient."

The word there is not the one he is asking wives to do. Oh, no, it is a much more severe word. It is *hupakouo*. He chose to be a reflection of His Father. He says in John, "I can do nothing of my own initiative. What I see My Father do, I do. What I hear My Father saying, I say. I have absolutely, unconditionally obeyed everything He says because I am a reflex of Him." Yet He doesn't ask the wives to obey that way. He simply asks them to obey as equals who choose to put themselves underneath them. He did that for us. As an equal He did that and modeled it for us. But He went a step further. He could do nothing except of His Father. That is not what He asks you to do, but He has already modeled it before you.

You may ask,

"Well, where does the Lord Jesus live now? How is He going to help me?"

That is why I started where I started. He lives in us. We are the Temple of the Spirit of God. Where does Christ live? He lives in my heart. His Spirit resides in my heart! Therefore, whatever He can do, He can still do in and through me, for God is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ever ask or even think. God can do that in your life. That is the model of the Lord Jesus.

Look over in I Peter 2. This is the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to see what he says about submission over here. He takes it right into the marriage relationship but he doesn't start there. He says in verses 13-15:

"Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is

the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men."

In other words, he is saying,

"If you are not willing to submit to authority, then you are bringing all kinds of confusion to these people."

Verses 16-25 go on:

"Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

Peter continues the thought in 3:1:

"In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Lord, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives."

Peter talks about a beauty of a wife when she submits. It is not outward. It is inward. God turns that light on, and even a disobedient husband can actually be won to Christ.

So the meaning of submission is not an inferior to a superior. It is of two equals. One chooses for the sake of the design to do what God says to do. You are going to have to make up your own mind. It is going to have to be a lifestyle. The motivation is the Lord Jesus living in you. You are doing it for Him. You are loving Him. The model is Jesus Himself. He has already modeled it out for us and showed us exactly what to do. So the responsibility of the wife is to submit to her husband in order for the home to have order and for it to function properly.

Now, this is not the easiest thing for a wife to do. I want to tell you why it is so difficult. In Genesis 3:16 he is talking about the curse of original sin and he is dealing with the woman. Ladies, do you wonder why some things are difficult in your life, particularly bearing children? Here we go.

"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'"

Now that word translated as "desire" almost makes it look like that desire is emotional or whatever. That is not what he is talking about. The word "desire" has a root that means to seek control over, to master your husband. As a matter of fact, it is all the result of sin.

Look over in Genesis 4:7. The same word is used and it shows you exactly what it means. The NIV reads:

"If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?

And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." In other words, its desire is to master you, but you must master sin.

So the word "desire" there doesn't mean what you think. It means that because of Adam, ladies, you have built in your flesh the desire to rule over your husband.

You see, this is why it is so important. Paul starts with wives. He says,

"Wives, from Eve on, you have had a desire within you to control and run over a man."

I know you are more educated, smarter, more gifted, your personality puts him to shame and you are a whole lot prettier, but you need to die to that and be filled with the Spirit of God. Do it God's way. Until you ladies are filled with the Spirit of God, there is no ability within you at all to control that urge that comes from Adam to take control and to dominate. You can't control it. But remember, He will strengthen you with power in the inner man to do what you never could do before when you were willing to accommodate Him and say, "God, this is Your design. I don't like it particularly, but I choose to do it." God says,

"Great. I will meet you at the point of your obedience and will do something in you that will blow you away. I will fill you to the fulness of God."

You see, only when a wife is submitting to the Lord Jesus and to her husband can the family ever have any hope of being functional. God's design is God's design.

Ephesians 5:25-31: SPIRIT-FILLED FAMILIES, PART

II

by Dr. Wayne Barber

I want you to see something in Ephesians 3:19 that we didn't bring out earlier. This is the ultimate goal of Paul's prayer. How do we experience God's power? Verse 17 says by accommodating His presence. But what is the goal? Verse 19 reads, "that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

Now, remember being filled with the Spirit is like taking a glass, knocking the bottom out of it, sticking it in the river, and letting the river flow through it. It is not filling it up, drinking it and emptying it. No, you don't empty yourself of God. God has come into you to be a permanent resident. The way in which you are controlled by His Spirit, that river of living water that is there, is simply to deal with the sin in your life, the unwillingness to let Him control every area of your life. Then that flow can be what it ought to be. So hang on to that. Be fully exposed to the Lord Jesus. Then you begin to experience the strengthening in the inner man by His ability that is far beyond yours.

"The responsibilities of the husband"

What are the responsibilities of the husband? Look at verses 25-31:

25 "[Husbands, love](#) (2PPAM) your wives, just as Christ also [loved](#) the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to [love](#) their own wives as their own bodies. He who [loves](#) his own wife [loves](#) himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but [nourishes](#) (3SPAI) and [cherishes](#) (3SPAI) it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

So what are the responsibilities of the husband? Paul jumps right in and says in verse 25,

"Husbands, love your wives."

Now to the casual observer that sounds rather easy. Buy them some flowers, take them out to eat, and let them go shopping. A lot of husbands have odd ideas about what it means to love their wives. The further you go in the verse the more you realize how beyond human possibility this is. It becomes a little frightening when you realize we are going to be held accountable for this love to our wives. He didn't say love as the world loves. The world has a lot of ideas how you can appreciate your wife, but what he is talking about here is beyond human possibility. I want us to look at it very carefully.

First of all, let's look at the meaning of this love.

Secondly, there is the model of this love.

What does Paul mean when he says, "Husbands, love your wives." Well, the first thing he means is it is a command and we have no option. The verb used here is in a different form than the verb which is used for the ladies. It is used in a different sense. It is a **present middle imperative**. You can almost hear the Apostle Paul saying,

"Ladies, wives, will you submit to your husbands? Men, love your wives!"

It is almost like a command that catches you right between the eyes.

When we get to commands, you have to understand this is not a suggestion. This is a command from God to all of us who are husbands. So we need to know that. Present tense means that you are constantly in a state of doing this. It is not a one-time thing. The wives don't submit to us one time so they can go do something they want. In the same manner we don't love our wives one day so we can go fishing on Saturday. It works the same way. It is a lifestyle of loving your wife. It is not a one-time thing. We have got to see that. Secondly, it is in the middle voice. Middle voice means you yourselves, by your own free will and your own choice, choose to do it. In other words, nobody is going to tell you to do this. God has already told you. You are commanded. Now make up your mind to do what God says. Imperative means it is a command.

THE MEANING OF LOVE

To me the word **"love"** (Click here for more detailed discussion of agape) is what really stretches us all. You begin to see how far beyond human possibility this kind of love really is. Paul could have chosen another Greek word. There were two other Greek words that the world would have quickly thrown in. As a matter of fact, if you ask somebody on a talk show, they would probably tell you one of these other two words, not the word that is chosen.

They could have picked **eros**, which is a sensual, passionate kind of sexual love. By the way, that word is not found in Scripture. That is interesting. We find it everywhere today.

Paul could have picked the word **philos**, which is the word that means to share things in common. Aren't these things involved in a marriage? Yes, in a proper context. But Paul didn't choose that word. It is wonderful to be friends with your wife, to be friends with your mate, but he didn't choose that word.

He chose a powerful word that we just take flippantly. We don't realize how difficult it is. He chose the word *agapao*. Now let me explain the difference to you. This is the highest form of love there is. It is the word used in John 3:16:

"For God so **loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

First of all, this is love that is totally unselfish. Do you realize until you are **filled with the Spirit of God** that you cannot love anybody except in a selfish way? Remember the garments in chapter 4? Don't get away from that. You have two garments. The Apostle Paul says that you are to put on the right garment. If I put on somebody else's garment it would look rather ridiculous. I want you to see this, husbands. If you have a wife who is Spirit-filled and she is submitting to you, but you won't let the Spirit of God empower you, how ridiculous you are going to look in that family. As a matter of fact, consider how you look before God and every other Spirit-filled believer. That is the old man, folks. We are not to put that on anymore.

God says,

"Husbands, love your wives."

God set the standard so high it is humanly impossible to do it. Then what is going on in our families? I'll tell you. We have men who claim to be Christians wearing the old garment and they look stupid when they put it on. We are to put on the new garment. If I am filled with the Spirit of God I am enabled by a divine power. A person lives within me to do what I cannot do apart from Jesus Christ. That old garment is there when I say,

"I'm doing fine. In my marriage everything is super. I've got money in the bank and food in the refrigerator. God, I will call you if I ever have a problem."

That is the stupidity of that old garment .

Now men, understand how to take the bulk of Ephesians in its context and put it in the right place. Therefore Paul says **to love**. This love is the kind of love that never seeks its own satisfaction. It is not affection answering to affection. This is what a lot of people think.

"Well, yes. I could love my wife if she would just love me. If she would show me a little attention I could love her back."

No, sir. It is not affection responding to affection. As a matter of fact, it is so unconditional she doesn't even have to do a thing for us to be commanded to love her. It is love that strives to the highest good of the one loved and will pay any price for it to take place, whatever it is. Whatever is necessary for that person, the highest good, he will pay any price in order to see those needs met, especially the spiritual ones. It is the highest form of love. So the meaning of this tells us that it is selfless, unconditional and committed to the highest good of our wife.

God asks us, "Do you want My design? To have a functional family, wives, put yourself up under your husband and let them be the authority in your home. Husbands, you, (commanded by God), love your wife." But make sure you understand the standard of this love. Jesus is the standard of the love life of His children. There is nothing less and certainly there can be nothing more.

Ephesians 5:18 says,

"be filled with the Spirit."

Look in Galatians 5:22. I want to show you something to make sure we understand that this is humanly impossible. It has to be from the strengthening of the Holy Spirit of God in our life. It all has to do with the garments. It all has to do with being strengthened in the inner man. This is what Ephesians is all about. This is the flow of the whole book. Galatians 5:22 says,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love."

That is **agape**. The fruit of the Spirit is not the result of my working it up in my own energy. No. I cannot do that. The fruit of the Spirit comes from the Person living within me. He produces a love that is exactly the divine love of God. It is the same love Jesus had when He came to this earth because it is Jesus in the person of His Spirit manifesting and producing that love in my life. That is the key.

Guys, when we come to the meaning of the word, **we also see our motivation**. It is a command. We also see the mindset we can get into. It is not us, but it is Jesus being Jesus in us. We are commanded to love our wife!

THE MODEL OF THIS LOVE

The second thing I wanted you to see is the model of this love. Paul is so super. Remember I told you that Paul is overwhelmed by his salvation. Men listen, you cannot love until you know you are loved. We have already covered that in Ephesians. Once you know you are loved then you can love your wife. You have to know that. You can't know that until you learn to love Jesus by your obedience. In Ephesians 5:25 look at what he says:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Number one, under the model of this love, is Jesus' love for His church. Paul gives the example of Jesus to the church and the husband to his wife. It is a beautiful parallel.

A SACRIFICIAL LOVE

It was a sacrificial love. I want you to see this first:

"just as Christ also loved the church and He gave Himself up for her."

The Apostle Paul points to the one supreme act of the Godhead that clears out any doubt that God loves us. The supreme act was not Jesus coming to this earth, but it was Jesus taking our sin upon Himself, going to the cross and dying for all mankind. Jesus Himself said,

"Greater love hath no man but to lay down his life for his brother."

It is the supreme act of being willing to literally die for the sake of seeing someone else's desperate needs met if that is what it takes. It is a sacrificial love. Christ's love for the church was a divine sacrificial act.

It is incredible how God says you are to love in the same way Jesus loved. You can do that because of the Spirit of Christ is living within you. It is a sacrificial love. Don't put what Jesus did for the church in such a realm that you can't relate to it and bring it down to where we all live. When we are willing to stoop down to the level of saying, "I am dying to myself," humbling ourselves before God and am willing to do what is necessary to meet the needs of my wife, then you are moving into the realm of loving your wife on a divine level with His sacrificial love. Then as husbands we begin to sense the needs in our wives that the Holy Spirit points out and we are willing to do whatever it takes to meet those needs, no matter the costs us, no matter what we have to give up to meet those needs.

A SANCTIFYING LOVE

Secondly, not only was it a sacrificial love, but it was a sanctifying love. Look at verse 26:

"that He might **sanctify** her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."

In other words, Jesus did everything that was necessary in order to sanctify the church. In sanctifying her, one day His reward is presenting the church to Himself spotless and clean before Him.

What is the parallel you can draw? Well, the word "**sanctify**" means to set apart, to put in a class all by itself, to make special by sanctifying.

"You mean to tell me that when I begin to be filled with the Spirit of God, wear the right garment and the Holy Spirit of God begins to manifest His presence in me, that the love that God brings forth in and through me, puts my wife into a category that all by itself is unique?"

Yes. It is a special place. As a matter of fact, that love actually sanctifies her and keeps her from defilement of any kind in her life. It's an overwhelming, sanctifying love. Guys, if we could just understand what it means to wear this garment, we would never take it

off because it is this love that puts our wives up on the pedestal they deserve to be put on. It is this garment that causes them to be put into a class unique all by themselves. It turns the focus on what God is doing to honor that relationship. Just as a church senses they are special to Christ because of what He has done and because of what He is doing, His love sets them apart in a class all by themselves, so must it be in the husband's love for his wife.

Verse 26 goes on to say that Christ cleansed the church by the washing of the water of His word. Let's put that aside for a minute and just remember what He did for the church was what was needed to be done for the church in order that the church might be sanctified and cleansed. You see, when you love somebody, pure love never wants to see the one loved defiled in any way. You see, guys, when we begin to love our wives with the right garment, it puts them into a class unique and all by themselves, and they feel special. They feel loved. Not only that, it protects them from all the defilement that is out there in the world. If you want to make sure your wife is faithful, love her as Christ loved the church. That puts her into a very special category. She senses that she has all of your love and you will do whatever is necessary. That, in a sense, becomes a protection, a cleansing type, a keeping from being defiled in any way.

You see, for a husband to love for his wife is to actually cooperate with Christ in such a way that one day when they stand side by side as sister and brother, she will be presented along with the rest of the bride with her garment clean and spotless. Remember Revelation 19? Each of us is going to be given a garment. Is that corporate righteousness or is that individual righteousness? Folks, if it is individual righteousness, then we have a responsibility that is as grave as anything you have ever heard. My responsibility to my wife is to make sure every day I do nothing that will contribute to her defilement in any way. In a sense, I become a partner with God. I step in alongside in my marriage relationship and say,

"I need to help you in the Word. I need to pray for you. I need to do whatever I do to keep you from being defiled in any way whatsoever so that one day we can help each other keep our garments clean and one day we will stand side by side with the Lord Jesus as the whole church is presented to Himself spotless and blameless."

Do you realize what that does? Sometimes my wife has to remind me to pray, but it is wonderful when I can remind her. When I love her the way God wants me to love her, it becomes a sanctifying situation in my marriage. It sets her apart, makes her special and protects her from any defilement that is around her. When this garment is on, everything I am doing for her is for the sake of the Lord Jesus and she knows it. Therefore, His name is much mentioned in the process and it becomes a protection around the wife.

Verse 27 shows the ultimate goal that He has:

"that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless."

So this "mode of love" is to be sacrificial and sanctifying, but finally Christ's love for the church was satisfied. Look in verses 28-30. It says,

"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body."

When I have this garment on, strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God, then there is going to be a tender, caring attitude towards my wife, just like I would tenderly take care of my own body.

What Paul says here is,

"Give the same tender care that you give to your own body to your wife. Begin to care for her as you would yourself."

Why? It goes on down in verse 31 to say that we have become one flesh. In other words, if I love myself, I am going to love my wife. If I love my wife, I am loving myself. We are one body. Therefore, it is going to become very satisfying to my wife at some point because as much as I want to be satisfied, I want to make sure she is satisfied because she is a part of my body. Therefore, just move it over and make sure that they are taken care of.

NOURISH AND CHERISH

Look at verses 28-30. Paul says,

"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but [nourishes](#) and [cherishes](#) it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body."

I want to take those two words. The word "[nourish](#)" is the word that speaks of the tender care of nourishing children to maturity. Now I realize we are not going to treat our wife as a child. I am talking about that tenderness. Have you ever watched a man when a little child comes into the room? When a little child comes into the room I don't care how big they are or how strong they are, that little

child just tenderizes them. There is just something about the way you treat a little child. It is a tenderness. It is not rough. Have you ever watched a man trying to show a child something? They say, "No, no, that is not quite right." They just walk them through it. It is a tender caring. Do you know that word "nourish" is the same word that is used of the way you would bring a little child up into maturity? It is the tenderness, the care, the extra effort, the extra time to make sure that you are covering all the bases in whatever it is that goes on in your life. I want to tell you something, folks, when you start satisfying somebody with that kind of time, with that kind of direction, with that kind of care, it transmits to your own self. That is the way you want to be treated, so that is the way you treat them.

The other word is "[cherish](#)" which means to make warm. Do you know what came to my mind? One of the things that came to my mind was when I would be with my mother years ago. This just came to my mind when I was studying this. I was so distraught over several things. I remember how she would put her arms around me and just hold me. The warmth of that embrace was the most secure thing I have ever known. I don't know how many times I have sat in the house and just held my precious dear wife. There is something about the warmth and the security and the oneness that was cherishing. I never wanted that moment to end. That is the word he uses right here.

Men, I want to tell you something, when you start treating your wife that way, nourishing and cherishing them, and they feel the warmth of your love and they feel the security that you are not going to run out on them, they begin to feel the fact that you really do care. Listen, it becomes that much easier for your wife to do what she is supposed to do in submitting to the headship that you have been appointed and assigned in your family.

It's through the love that Christ has, that garment, not this garment (the old garment of the flesh). When we put the new garment on it is sacrificial. We are willing to die to what we think is important to meet our wife's needs. It is sanctifying love which puts them in a class all by themselves and puts them into a situation to where they know they are unique. There is a cleansing effect to that and it keeps them from defilement from anything coming in that would be a detriment to their growth. Finally it is a love that satisfies. When you start satisfying them, I'm telling you straight out, you had better believe that satisfaction is returned because you are one flesh. You see, we are commanded to love our wives.

Ephesians 5:31-33: SPIRIT FILLED FAMILIES, PART

3

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Our problems are not in our **homes**
as much as they are in our **hearts**.

We must allow the Spirit of God, Who lives within us, to strengthen us with power in our inner man.

How does this supernatural process work? By letting Jesus dwell in your heart by faith. In other words, accommodate Him by your willingness to obey Him in all of the rooms of your heart. When you let Jesus be Jesus in you, when you learn to obey Him in every area, the thoughts, the emotions, the attitudes, all the areas of your heart, your home will be different. That causes Spirit-filled families.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

God has the only design and this design, when it is fulfilled in the power of God's Spirit, will cause us to have spiritually functional families. We hear the term "dysfunctional" a lot these days. The only real functional family is the family that functions the way God has designed it to function. It is God's idea, not man's.

There are three things I want you to see in verses 31-33.

First of all, in verse 31 he quotes from the Old Testament. This verse is also used in the New Testament. It is found three times in scripture. Moses used it, Jesus used it and Paul uses it here in verse 31 of Ephesians 5. I want you to see first of all God's intention for marriage. What is God's original intention for marriage that has never changed even though we live in the 21st Century?

Turn with me to [Genesis 2:18](#). God said "Then the LORD God said,

"It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

This was God's idea! Marriage never began with man. Man is not smart enough to know what he needs.

God knew what he needed. Verse 18 continues,

"I will make him a helper suitable for him."

That word "[helper](#)" ('ezer) in the Hebrew is the word that has the idea of **help-mate**, one who is assisting someone. It is not a demeaning word. God uses the same word ('ezer) to describe His own character (Click for some examples of 'ezer used of God in Psalms), and I doubt very seriously He would use that for woman if He meant to demean her. She is a helper. I have heard all kinds of people talk about what that word means, but that is what it means, a helper, one who assists.

To make it even more understandable, he goes on in the verse and says,

"[suitable](#) for him"

In other words, corresponding to him. The wife that He makes, the woman that He makes for the man is one who completes the picture of a man. It is not good for man to be alone. He is incomplete. He needs a woman. Whatever he lacks she supplies. Whatever she lacks, he supplies. When you put the two individuals together they are one unit. They are one flesh. One needs the other. They are equal, yet they need one another. One balances the other. Man should not be alone.

Now everything else in Genesis was good. The light was good in 1:4. The earth and the seas were good in 1:10. The plants and the trees were good in 1:12. The sun and the moon and the stars were good in 1:14-18. In verse 21, the creatures in the sea and the birds of the air were good. In verse 25 the animals were good. But it wasn't good for man to be alone ([Ge2:18](#)). God said,

"I am going to make someone exactly for what he needs. I am going to complete the picture. Man is incomplete, therefore, I will make a woman."

As a matter of fact in verse 23 when man sees what God has made, not from under his feet, but from his side, he says,

"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ([Ge2:23](#))

I had a very notable Hebrew scholar tell me that if you wanted to put that in 20th Century vernacular, what he really said was,

"Hot diggity dog! This is exactly what I need in my life!"

Man was too stupid to know what he needed. God said, "I know what you need." He made the woman and the man said,

"Whew! This is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man."

Well, God came up with the idea. Then in [Ge2:24](#) we find the verse that we are looking at in Ephesians 5:31:

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

Now I need to make sure we understand this. Marriage is a union that does not involve mama and daddy. They are not designed to live with mama and daddy. There is a leaving and a cleaving.

On our church marriage retreat there was a couple who came to us. They were not doing well. I thought maybe it was between the two of them, but it really wasn't. They loved each other. They loved Jesus. They loved His Word. I couldn't understand what in the world was going on. What is the problem? He said, "I am living with my in-laws." I said, "I want to tell you something straight out. As quickly as you can get out of there." In Hebrew "[leave](#)" means leave! When a man and a woman marry, they leave mama and daddy and become one flesh. That is the way God designed it.

Some kids don't want to leave mama and daddy because it is good to stay around mama and daddy. God says you had better leave and start trusting Him. Grow up and become mature individuals. Learn that you are now one flesh. There is a leaving, but there is also a cleaving.

Do you know what the word "[cleave](#)" means? The word "[cleave](#)" is the word for glue. I like that. You can even use it for cement. You know glue is called cement sometimes. It is something that cements two things together. God doesn't mean my wife has to walk around with me saying, "Are you okay?" That is not what He is talking about. He is talking about the union. The relationship is something that is sealed. It is glued. It is cemented, and that cement is never to come apart.

Now you see, we don't like this. We are living in a day when the cement has been broken so much that you almost have to apologize for what God's design originally was. Folks, I am not here to preach on what God did not design. I am here to preach on what did God design. That is the key. We know God's grace. We know God's mercy. God can take broken pieces of anything and put it back together. He can take tomorrow and make it the first day of the rest of your life, but as you live the rest of your life, you know and I know that we live with the scars of the wrong choices we have made when we fragment God's design. There is going to be a consequence. His mercy helps us bear up under it. His grace will transform us in the midst of it. His forgiveness will cleanse us and restore our relationship with Him. But the consequences are always there. God hates it when His cement is broken. He says in Malachi that he hates divorce.

I have never talked to a person who has been through a divorce who doesn't hate it. As a matter of fact, they have been my best friends when we have ever talked about what God's design is all about. They have come to me I don't know how many times and said,

"Keep preaching it. Keep preaching it. I can't go back and unscramble eggs, but I wish I could have known God's design from the beginning."

Thank God you can know it now. Many can't look back. Paul says,

"Forgetting those things which are behind me, I press on."

All of that is built into scripture. What I am trying to show you is that God's intention was that cement, that cleaving never ever be broken.

That takes us to the second time we find that verse ever used in Scripture. Turn to Matthew 19. You know and I know that this is a most controversial chapter. It has divided more conservative Christians than just about anything that I know. We are looking at God's original intention. What is God's intention for marriage? That we leave and that we cleave and that the cleaving never be broken. I want you to see this in chapter 19.

The culture of the day when Matthew 19 was written was awful. As a matter of fact, it was so much like the 20th century it is hard to look at it differently. They were putting their wives away for little or nothing. If they didn't like the way the wife wore her hair, they would put her away. It was awful. Let me show you how bad it was. In verse 10, after hearing what Jesus says about it, look at what the disciples say.

"The disciples said to Him, 'If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.'"

That shows you how bad it was. They are sitting there thinking, "Good night, if it is that tough, I'm not going to get married." See. They couldn't understand what He said. They were thinking in light of the permissiveness of their culture.

Folks, we have the same problem in the 20th century. To hear what God says about something pulls us so far back from where we are, we think we are imbalanced. We have forgotten what dead center is all about. Look back at verse 3.

"And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, 'Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any cause at all?' And He answered and said, '**Have you not read, that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall leave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh"? Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.**' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?'"

Here was their trick question. Why did Moses command. I want you to notice what Jesus said. Jesus said, "He never commanded anything."

"He said to them, **Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.**"

You see, there has been a clause put in. Jesus goes on to say in verse 9,

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery"

Of course many of us could go over to 1 Corinthians 7 and see what that says. The original intent was that the glue never be broken. He says here, "except for immorality." That is what Jesus said. You see, folks, we try to cover bases that we are not supposed to cover. Jesus said, "Except for immorality." Now, He also said, "Moses permitted it." That is not what He suggests and that is certainly not what He commands, but evidently there is an exception. Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians that if an unbeliever leaves and will not return, the yoke is broken. The word means you are no longer enslaved. There appears to be some permission here, but I want to tell you something. That is never God's original intent. Never. Never.

"Well, what about me. I have been through it."

Listen, precious friend. God has grace and mercy and forgiveness. Go on and get up tomorrow morning and live the rest of your life and let God develop a brand new plan for you wherever you are. You don't unscramble eggs. What I am trying to point out is God's original design was not that the cleaving ever be unclefted, that the glue ever be broken. What did God say the rule is? You cleave and that cleaving is forever, until death do us part.

God's illustration of marriage

Secondly, there is God's illustration of marriage. This brings it out very clearly. God's illustration of marriage. In Ephesians 5:32 we find the illustration of marriage from God. God's own illustration. We have His intention. It is very clear. Leave and cleave. We also have His illustration. It says in verse 32,

"This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

One of the beautiful things that Paul does is weave in the illustration of Christ loving the church, what Christ has done for the church from verse 22 all the way down to verse 32. In verse 23 He is the Savior of the body, the church. In verse 25 He gave Himself up for. In verse 26 His love cleansed her. In verse 27 His love keeps her from being defiled. In verse 29 He loves the church because in verse 30 the church is a member of His body. He keeps showing you. Here is the illustration.

What is He trying to show us? That a man should love his wife as Christ loves the church. How does Christ love the church? Listen, guys, the key is with us, not our wives. How does Christ love the church? Jesus doesn't cast us away. I am glad, aren't you? Even though we deserve to be cast away. He loves us when we are unlovable. He blesses us when we do not deserve blessing. He is faithful to us even when we are unfaithful to Him. God's intention is that husband and wife love one another in the same way Christ loves the church. Ironically, the only way to do that is by being strengthened in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that He produces this kind of love. A man cannot do it outside of being filled with the Spirit of God. That is God's intention, and His illustration is clear. As Christ loves the church, so you are also to love your wife.

Paul is wrapping it all up, and I am kind of glad. As he wraps it up he says, "Nevertheless..." He comes right back to what he has already said and gives the final instructions towards marriage. They are very simple and yet they are very complex. This time he doesn't start with the wife. He starts with the husband. I knew it all along and so did you. We know we are the problem. Look at what he says in verse 33.

"Nevertheless let each individual among you also **love** his own wife even as himself."

Now what does that mean again? To provide for, to protect her, to please her, to preserve her and to praise her. Those are some of the things it means. Sometimes we run across situations where the wife works and the husband doesn't and won't. I want to tell you something, friend. In God's word, you are to provide for your wife. Now whatever the wife does, that is between you and God and her. But the man is responsible for providing for his wife, to protect her, to please her, to preserve her, to praise her. Why? Because we are to love her as Christ loves the church. He is the one who does it all for the church. In us, he gives us the power to do the same thing.

"... and *let the wife see to it* that she respect her husband."

What does the word "**respect**" mean? It means to revere. It is used even with God. You respect Him. Now how can a wife respect her husband to where he really feels like he is the man of the home? By her willingness to submit to his leadership.

You see, wives help your husband be what he ought to be. Put him in a position. Listen, we have covered this ground. Some of you are smarter than your husbands. Some of you are definitely better looking than your husband. Some of you have more personality than your husbands. Some of you, if they would just give you the chance, could run the show. I know that and so does God. Back off. Let the man get with God and respect him in the position that God has put him in. Watch the miracle that will take place in your family. God says it won't work unless you do it My way.

What I am telling you is "Yes you can." If you say you can't do it, you are saying you won't do it because in Ephesians if you are a believer, he says be strengthened with power in the inner man. "Power" (dunamis) means the ability to do what you couldn't do until you received Jesus in your life. I love the Nike commercial. Three words, you know it. What does it say? "Just do it!" That is it. God says,

"You know what to do. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." You do it My way or you are going to have a dysfunctional family."

It is only functional when it is what God says it ought to be.

Isn't it wonderful how practical the Word of God really is? I mean it is clear.

What is God's **intention**? Leave, cleave.

What is God's **illustration**? Christ and the church.

What is God's final **instructions**? Husbands, love your wives as you love yourself. Wives, show respect to your husbands by being willing to put them in the position that God has designed them to be.

That is so simple. I want to tell you something, folks.

If the seminars work on marriage, if the marriage books that you can buy work on marriage, then tell me why three out of every four marriages are entering into divorce. If they work, help yourself.

But if you want to do it God's way, it is pretty simple.

First of all, get your heart right with Jesus. Let Him come into the heart. He is already there if you are a believer. Let Him fully reign in your heart. Then the rest is history as you just choose to obey Him

[Return to TOP of page](#)