



# Living in Mutual Submission

## Part II – Husbands to Wives

Ephesians 5:21-33

(based on a message by Pastor Eugene Boe)

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

*28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

Where do you go if you want to “be all that you can be”? Of course - you join the Army. That theme of Army recruiting also applies to the Body of Christ, the church. Throughout the book of Ephesians, we’ve seen how God works within His body of believers in order that they would grow and mature and become all that He wants them to become.

Last week we heard how wives are to relate to their husbands in such a way that God would work through the wife in order that her husband would grow to be all that God wants him to become. As members of the body of Christ we are to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Even though Paul’s comments here are addressed specifically to the relationship between husband and wife, they apply to any relationship.

How are husbands and wives to relate to one another? Last week, we learned the most amazing thing – that

the marriage relationship is a reflection of the relationship between Christ and His church. Husbands and wives are to relate to one another as Christ (the husband) relates to His bride (the church).

As we look at the husband’s role, two words really seem to stand out in our text: “head” and “love”. What is a Biblical Husband? First of all, he is his wife’s HEAD.

**22 “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.”** Before we talk about what this means, let’s first look at what it doesn’t mean.

It does not mean that husbands are **dictators**. There’s nothing in this passage that would indicate that husbands should be dictators in their homes. A dictator rules for his own selfish reasons. And what happens when husbands rule as dictators? Rebellion and chaos occur in their homes.

It does not mean that husbands are **superior**. No scripture says that man is superior in intellectual ability, emotional stamina, etc. to a woman. Before God, men and women stand equal. It’s not a matter of inferiority on the part of the woman and superiority on the part of the man. Rather, it’s a matter of design, by God’s creation – a design whereby he ordered the various parts of His creation to occupy certain positions.

It does not mean that husbands are the **exclusive decision makers** - in other words, that no one else in the family is to be involved in the decision making process whatsoever.

It does not mean that husbands are **always right**. As husbands, sometimes we have the idea that we should always be right - and if we’re not, we’re in danger of losing our leadership position. Not at all. In fact, just the opposite is true. A husband who acknowledges that he is not always right and humbly confesses his sins to his family and to God - is going

to be much more respected and will have a greater leadership role than a husband who does not.

Many of the problems that exist in families exist because of a misunderstanding of what a man's responsibility and position in that family is to be. A survey was taken among women to discover what their opinion was concerning the failings of their husbands. And they described them as these:

1. a lack of tenderness
2. a lack of politeness
3. a lack of socialability
4. a failure to understand the wife's temperament and peculiarities
5. unfairness in financial matters
6. frequency of snide remarks and sneers at the wife before company or the children
7. a lack of plain honesty and truthfulness

We men often interpret our role in such a way that we excuse these behaviors in our homes. And that's not at all what the Bible means when it says that we are to be the head of the wife and the head of the home.

What does it mean for the husband  
to be head of his home?

The husband is head of the house by POSITION. He doesn't have a choice in the matter. Headship is not something he acquires. It's not something he earns. It's something he has by virtue that he is married.

The moment two people marry, God tells the man, "You are to be head of your home. And you are to exercise all of the responsibilities that go with that position." So, when He talks about being head of the home, or head of the wife, He's talking about a POSITION.

What does this mean to be head of the wife?

First, it means that the husband is his wife's  
**COMPLETER.**

When we say the man is to be head of his wife, the first thought that often comes into our minds is that I am to be my wife's dominator. That's not at all what it means.

You are to be your wife's completer – just as when Paul says that Christ is also head of the church – he is saying that the church doesn't even exist as a church without its head, Christ. It is only because of Christ that the church is able to be the church.

Therefore, when we say that the husband is the head of the wife we are to understand that he is his wife's completer. Just as he is incomplete without a wife,

so a wife is incomplete without a husband (unless God gives special grace to live otherwise). And so, as we view our position as head of the wife we are to view it in terms of completing her.

Some say that opposites attract. You know why that is true? Because opposites find in another person that which they do not have. As two opposite people come together they are often able to complete each other beautifully.

Husbands are to complete their wives in a number of ways. They are to complete them emotionally. The wife's emotions differ from her husband's. She may tend to base decisions on more of an emotional basis. A man may tend to make decisions on more of a basis of reason. Sometimes decisions need more emotional input and sometimes they require more reason. And so, as the couple comes together, they compliment each other.

When the wife is going through an especially difficult time emotionally, her husband may remain firm and strong. In some cases the husband may fall apart emotionally and the wife may remain firm. So the two compliment each other emotionally.

They also complete each other spiritually. For reasons not easily explained, a wife is often more sensitive spiritually than the husband. And as she remains spiritually alive she is able to minister to her husband, enabling him to be the person God wants him to be.

So as head of the wife, I am to complete what is lacking and missing in my wife's life – that God may use me to bring into her life that which she needs to become all that God wants her to be.

Second, as head of the wife,  
the husband is the wife's and the family's  
**UNIFIER.**

The two shall no longer be two, but shall be joined together and become one flesh. So, as head of the family and head of the wife, the husband is responsible to provide unity and oneness and togetherness for his family.

You see what that does to independent thinking? A lot of times, husbands say, "I'm going to do my own thing and you can do your own thing and we'll live in the same house. And the kids - they can do their own thing." And everybody's doing their own thing. And

there exists no unity, no togetherness, no relationships.

As head of the wife and family, the husband is to be the unifier. This is beautifully demonstrated in the analogy of Christ and the church. The moment the church takes its eyes off of Jesus, it falls apart. But as that church keeps its eyes on Jesus, they are united as one. And so it is in the family, that as the head of the family it is the husband's responsibility to bring to his family a sense of unity.

Third, as head of the wife, the husband is the wife's  
**LEADER.**

Another term for leader might be "director". As head of the home it is the husband's responsibility to provide direction for his family. "Oh, this is great. Fantastic! I can just steer my family whatever way I want them to go and they have to follow." The Word of God says that we can only be the proper director of our family as we live under the authority of God's direction.

*1 Corinthians 11:3* Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

The authority that God gives us to direct our family is never an absolute authority but the husband always lies under Christ's direction. When the husband rebels against God and is driven by his own sinful nature his family groans and experiences all kinds of turmoil.

Family leadership can only occur as husbands are  
**THE GREATEST SERVANTS**  
in their families.

Too often, husbands picture themselves sitting in an easy chair with their feet up. And they say to the other members of the family, "Get me a glass of water. Get me the newspaper. Get me the T.V. remote. Bring my supper here."

And so the whole family is running around serving them. And they think, "This is what a leader is to be." And they judge whether or not they are a successful leader by determining how well the rest of the family obeys them and submits to their commands.

Jesus, in Matthew 20 pictures a completely different image of a leader. 25 *Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it*

*over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you.*

*Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

A great leader is not one who sits and  
takes advantage of his subjects,  
but is one who sacrifices,  
making himself a servant,

and asks the question, "How can I best serve my family so that their interests may be developed, so that their lives might be enriched, especially in their relationship with God."

Family authority should always encourage the entire family. It's never for self-good. But family authority is to be a sacrificial giving for the good of all.

How do you think a wife would respond to a husband who sacrifices for her interest? It wouldn't be at all surprising to find that she finds it much easier to submit to his authority than a wife whose husband is not self-sacrificing but demanding his rights.

When husbands discover their wives rebelling against their leadership they need to ask the question,

"What rights and privileges am I exercising  
that I should be sacrificing  
for the benefit of my wife and family?"

Fourth, as head of the home  
the husband is to be his wife's  
**PROVIDER.**

How many times have we as husbands said, "Look woman! I work 12 hours a day and bring home this paycheck every week. I've given you this nice home to live in. I give you a car to drive. I provide food for us to eat. And then you say I'm not head of my home. Why, what more do you want me to do?"

And we say to our children, "Look children! We've given you clothes. We've given you food. We've given you an education. We've given you everything you've needed. Why, look at all I've provided for you!"

There was a father who, whenever he went on a trip, would bring home a present for his child. One day they were going to go to a carnival and the father said, "Here's a dollar - you go." And the little boy said, "No - I don't want it."

And he said, "Why not? Here are two dollars. You go and have a good time." The little boy gave the money to his father and he said, "Dad, I don't want the money. I want you."

As head of your home - you're to provide the loving atmosphere that your family needs. When Jesus provided for the church, what did He give? He gave Himself.

***Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.***

In our society we normally talk about love as something we "fall into." We talk about it in a very passive way - in a feeling sort of way: "It happened. I fell in love."

This romantic love can be very selfish. It is based mostly on feelings and therefore expresses the thought, "I'll love you as long as I get something out of the relationship, as long as being in love makes me feel good." If at some point you no longer feel in love, you can always leave the relationship.

### **What does it mean to love your wife?**

God leaves no doubt as to the answer to that question.

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

Why do husbands so often fail to love their wives? Because of selfishness and self-centeredness. The essence of the love Christ has for the church is its **sacrificial quality**.

Biblical love is always sacrificial. When you think about loving your enemies, it always involves a

sacrifice. When you think about laying down your life for your friends it always involves a sacrifice. When you think about reaching out to those in need, it always involves a sacrifice.

**A person hasn't really loved  
until they've sacrificed,  
until it has cost them something.**

Christ loved the church in a way that she was His number one priority. Nothing interfered between Christ and His mission and His work for the church.

In the same way, nothing is to stand in the way of the love between you and your wife. Not your job. Not your hobbies. Not your children. Your love for your wife is to be so intense that it's number one and there's no doubt about it in her heart.

To love your wife is to sacrifice your interests, to sacrifice your joys, to sacrifice your priorities that she might be made complete, that she might develop into the kind of person God wants her to be.

How is your love for your wife? How does it stand up to the picture God presents here? Are you completing your wife? Are you leading her? Are you sacrificing for her? Are you helping her to be all that God wants her to be?

How have you sinned against her by not loving her? Have you gone to her and said, "Honey, I've sinned against you. Will you forgive me?"

And wives, you are also to love your husbands - even when it seems like he is your enemy.

And how is all this possible? Because God first loved us. Because Jesus sacrificed His life on Calvary and gave Himself for us - that we might be forgiven - that we might experience the love of God - and that we might love as we have been loved.