

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	13		Joshua Walker
Text:	Ephesians 5:21-33		
Date:	January 13, 2019 (a.m.)		

THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

To All (5:21)

5:21: "Paul commends an attitude of self-denial and concern for the needs of others as essential within the Christian community. The absence of the practice of this Christian virtue hinders the work of the spirit in the community."¹

5:21: "This short colon belongs as the last exposition of how the church is to express its fullness of God's presence in the Spirit (v. 18) and serves to introduce Paul's admonition for order in the Christian family that follows: wives-husbands (5:22-33), children-parents (6:1-4), and slaves-masters (6:5-9; cf. Col 3:18-25)."²

5:21: "Absolute mutual submission is popular today, particularly where egalitarian or democratic social and political philosophies rule. Paul's general idea of proper submission, however, is explained and illustrated through the particular example of family relationships he develops in 5:22-6:9. Submission is not absolute for any party, but an individual submits in some way to some people and not in other ways to others. The only absolute rule for Christian behavior that is to guide everyone at all times is love. As a general guideline, believers are to submit to one another by considering others and their concerns more highly than themselves (Phil 2:3-4) in mutual love and service (Gal 5:13), and they are to submit to governing authorities in the church and in the world (e.g., Rom 13:1, 5; Titus 3:1; Heb 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13; 5:5)."³

5:21: "The key verb used here means literally to 'arrange under.' It regularly functioned to describe the submission of someone in an ordered array to another person who was above the first in some way, for example, the submission of soldiers in any army to those of superior rank."⁴

To Wives (5:22-24)

5:22: "Paul calls on Christian wives to follow the leadership of their husbands in their marriage relationships. He does not foist on them a demand for blind servitude, but appeals to them to comply willingly with the leadership their husbands provide."⁵

5:22: "The finite verb 'submit' is inferred from the present participle of the previous verse. The absence of the verb led some scribes to assume that the verb had somehow been lost in the copying process, which resulted in different forms of the verb 'submit' being inserted into some manuscripts. As we have already observed, the absence of the finite verb more directly ties this portion of the household instructions to the previous section and the commands to be filled with the Spirit. Improperly ordered family relationships hinder the work of the Spirit in the community."⁶

5:22: "The meaning of 'submit' . . . was commonly used of ordered relationships in a social structure; it is to be distinguished from 'obey;' and the middle voice suggests that Paul is appealing to the woman to make a voluntary choice. The basic idea presented here and repeated in 5:24b is that

women should not seek to assert themselves in the home in a way that could be viewed as ruling, controlling, or dominating. Rather, they must acknowledge that God-given role assigned to the husband and respect the leadership he endeavors to provide for the family.”⁷

5:23: “The reason for the wife’s submission to her husband is now expressed through the causal clause: ‘for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.’ On two earlier occasions in Ephesians the key term ‘head’ has been used, both with reference to Christ (1:22; 4:15). Now, for the first time, the husband’s headship is stated as a fact, and made the basis for his wife’s submission.”⁸

5:23: “But just as Christ’s position as ‘head’ and ‘Savior’ of the church does not vary from one culture to another, neither also does the headship of a husband to his wife and her duty to submit to her husband ‘in everything’ (v. 24).”⁹

To Husbands (5:25-33)

5:25: “Paul now sets a high standard for the kind of love a husband should have for his wife. The example that Christ sets is for a husband to be willing to sacrifice everything for the benefit and well-being of his wife.”¹⁰

5:25: “The extent of Christ’s love for the church is expressed in his action of giving his life for the church (5:25c). Paul uses the same expression earlier in the chapter when he speaks of how ‘Christ also loved us and gave himself for us’ (5:2), which is also how he explained the heart of the Gospel to the Galatians (Gal 2:20). This does not mean it will be necessary for every husband to die for his wife, but it most assuredly means that every husband must deny himself of time, resources, and self-gratification to express his love for his wife.”¹¹

5:28: “Husbands have already been exhorted to love their wives (v. 25a). The warrant and example for this admonition are Christ’s sacrificial love for the church (vv. 25b-27). Now the concluding application is drawn from Christ’s love as husbands are urged again to love their wives. The main point of vv. 25-27 is driven home as Paul reinforces his assertion with a verb that stresses obligation: ‘husbands *ought* to love their wives.’”¹²

5:33: “Paul concludes this set of instructions to husbands and wives by summarizing two of the central admonitions, that each husband should love his wife in a vigilant and caring way and that each wife should be responsive to the leadership her husband provides.”¹³

ENDNOTES

¹Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 355.

²Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 460.

³Baugh, *Ephesians*, 460.

⁴O’Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999), 399.

⁵Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

⁶Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

⁷Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

⁸O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 412-13.

⁹Baugh, *Ephesians*, 480-81.

¹⁰Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

¹¹Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

¹²O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 426.

¹³Arnold, *Ephesians*, 397.