

- **III** – In a survey of 4,500 men and women, the question was asked: “What are men and women responsible for at home?” The survey results:

The woman’s role was planning meals, cooking meals, working out the household budget, and raising the children

Men and women were both responsible for: holidays, spending money on major purchases, and choosing insurance.

Men were responsible for: deciding what to watch on TV.

Conclusive results!

When we read a passage like Ephesians 5, what are we thinking about?

Marriage? Gender roles? Submission? Conservative, old fashioned views on marriage?

This is NOT what Ephesians 5 is about. The big picture of Ephesians 5 is:

- **Christians living under the rule of Christ**

Verse 21:

- ***21**Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

It’s all about Jesus. Out of reverence for him. Ephesians is about Jesus and his church and about how we relate to each other. To make this a passage about marriage or parents and children is to actually lose the big idea. **It’s about Christians living under the rule of Jesus.**

Paul wants to help us understand the relationship between Jesus and his Church, so he uses our everyday relationships – husband and wife, parent and child, slave and master – to explain to us this relationship and bring it all back to Jesus.

- **It’s all about Jesus**

- **22**Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands **as you do to the Lord.**
- **23**For the husband is the head of the wife **as Christ is the head of the church...**
- **24**Now **as the church submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit to their husbands
- **25**Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ loved the church ...**
- **29**After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, **just as Christ does the church—**
- **... the two will become one flesh.” 32**This is a profound mystery—**but I am talking about Christ and the church.**
- **5**Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, **just as you would obey Christ.**
- **7**Serve wholeheartedly, **as if you were serving the Lord, ...**

It's all about Jesus!

It's all about Jesus and His Church being a model for the way WE relate to each other. Paul knows that if we can just grasp (back to chapter 3) the love of Christ – the length and width and height and depth of Jesus' love for us, THEN we will be able to show that love in our other relationships.

And so that's what Ephesians 5 is about. Grasping the relationship between Jesus and His Church, and applying that to our human relationships. So...

- **Wives and Husbands**

- **WIVES:**

- *22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands **as you do to the Lord.***

There it is. Pretty simple. Submit to your husband **as you submit to Jesus**. But think about that. How do you submit to Jesus?

Well, very easily. We submit to Jesus voluntarily! Jesus doesn't say: "You must submit to me! Do everything I say and do not question me!"

No – we submit freely to Jesus – we CHOOSE to submit. Why? **Because we know he loves us**. We know he died for us. We know he sacrificially cares for us, and so we freely choose to submit to him.

Wives, that is how to submit to your husband. Freely.

- **Submission is a free response to Christ-like headship.**

That's the type of husband a wife is to submit to. You are NOT called to submit to a husband who abuses you, or takes advantage of you. You are ONLY called to submit to a husband who is Christ-like to you. What that simply means is that you accept the headship, or leadership, of your husband, as he leads you in a Christ-like way. So...

- **HUSBANDS:**

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

You cannot MAKE your wife submit to you. Just as Jesus didn't **force** his Church to submit. The Church **chooses** to submit to Jesus because he has shown his sacrificial love.

Husbands – you are to love your wife as Christ loves the Church. You do not have a **right** to headship. You have a **responsibility**. You cannot MAKE your wife submit. She is to CHOOSE to submit to Christ-like headship. You cannot force this relationship. It must be mutual and loving.

Headship is not about ruling or dominating or controlling.

- **Headship is about sacrificial love –v25**

The role of the husband is to imitate the love of Christ. When a husband is prepared to lay down his life for his wife, I want to suggest that she would have no problem submitting to his headship, his leadership, in their family.

Headship is not about ruling, or about making the final decision, or about controlling the finances, or deciding what you watch on TV. In the Bible, headship is NEVER defined by decision making. It's defined by Christ-like love.

In verses 25, 28 and 33 – 3 times – the Husband is told to ... LOVE your wife, LOVE your wife, LOVE your wife! That is headship. Love. That is the **only** type of headship a wife is called to submit to.

A wife is not called to submit to a husband who is abusive. Or a husband who is controlling. Or a husband who rules over her. She is called to willingly submit to a husband who loves her like Jesus loves his Church.

Husbands are to actively show their love for their wife, and actively take the responsibility of headship and leadership. NOT decision making. Good headship is about leading your family **through** decisions. Not making them all.

So Paul continues with a few more examples. Verses 1 and 4:

- **Parents and Children**

- *1Children, obey your parents **in the Lord***
- *4Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction **of the Lord**.*

Again, it's all about Jesus! As a Christian child or parent, we are to reflect the relationship between Jesus and the Church – a relationship of love.

As a parent, don't exasperate your children. Like Jesus and his Church – Jesus doesn't exasperate us! That's what we should model. Despite our sin and our disobedience, Jesus still loves us. He doesn't stress us and irritate us and annoy us. As parents, we do need to remember that. As a Christian parent, parent your children the way Jesus parents his church – With virtues like patience and forgiveness and endurance!

Children – obey your parents in the Lord. In other words, obey your parents, as long as it doesn't go against God. And Jesus is our example. Jesus was obedient to his Father. Even to death. Of course, God is the perfect Father. As human children, we have imperfect parents. But as Christian children, we are to obey them **in the Lord, under Jesus**, for the sake of peaceful and loving relationships. And finally...

- **Slaves and Masters**

Or in today's context – **workers and bosses.**

- *5Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, **just as you would obey Christ***

Again – it's all about Jesus.

Workers – work sincerely and wholeheartedly. We are to work for our boss **the same way we work for Jesus.** Honestly. Fairly.

But masters – verse 9:

- *9And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven...*

Don't forget that God is their true ruler! So treat them with respect. Be a boss **like Jesus.** Loving and patient and kind and fair.

In **ALL** of our relationships, we are working for God. HE is our ruler and master. And that means that ALL of our relationships should reflect, in some measure, our relationship with God.

But the greatest struggle we have in our human relationships is the struggle to rule. The struggle to dominate. The struggle to put ourselves first. That's why Paul keeps reminding us in Ephesians that we must come under the rule of Jesus.

None of our human relationships are about **ruling.** They are relationships of **love.** None of our relationships make one person **better** than the other. They are relationships of **equality.**

None of our relationships are about **power** over others. They are relationships of **order.**

- **God wants us to be in loving relationships with equality and order.**

This is written to help us understand the relationship between Jesus and his church. Like a husband and wife. A parent and child. A worker and boss. In a perfect world, all of these relationships would be just like Jesus and his church.

So that's what he calls us to do. Not to make a perfect world, but to show a **glimpse** of that world – a glimpse of how Jesus loves his Church – in our marriages, with our children and at work.

Do you have a relationship that's struggling at the moment? How can you bring the cross of Jesus, the love of Jesus, into that relationship more? How can you relate to that person in the way that Jesus relates to his church? And most importantly, have you placed that relationship under the rule of Christ?

Let's pray.

Ephesians 5:3-6:9

3But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. **4**Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. **5**For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **6**Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. **7**Therefore do not be partners with them. **8**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light **9**(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) **10**and find out what pleases the Lord. **11**Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. **12**It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. **13**But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. **14**This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

15Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16**making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17**Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. **18**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19**speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20**always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instructions for Christian Households

21Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22**Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do 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 their own body, but they feed and care for their body, 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.

1Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. **2**“Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— **3**“so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” **4**Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. **5**Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. **6**Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. **7**Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, **8**because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. **9**And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.