

Ephesians 5:22-24

Ephesians  
*How To Be The Wife He's Always Wanted*

Video Clip: *Eve Harmony* Community Christian Church

Marriage, relationships, love, guys & girls sometimes it seems all of these relationship issues either make life really exciting or really complicated. They can be a joy or they can really be the pits depending on where we end up in the mix.

What is this all about, this man women thing? Where did it all get started and how can we navigate our way through all twists and turns of relationships?

We've been studying the New Testament book of Ephesians now since the middle of last August. Along the way we've learned some rich theological truths about the God who created us.

We've seen His love demonstrated by the cross, His power demonstrated by the resurrection, His holiness demonstrated by His challenge to us to lay aside sinful habits and to put on God's new way of living.

Today we've come to a section in Ephesians where we're given some very specific applications of what we've learned so far.

A few weeks ago we saw a skit where two ladies were making cakes. One followed the recipe and the other just threw in whatever she happened to have sitting around the kitchen.

Think how ridiculous it would be for us to totally ignore the recipe and then blame the author of the recipe when the cake didn't turn out.

Have you ever noticed that's the way a lot of people try to do life. God, who made us and knows how we operate, has a plan for our lives. It's a published recipe with lots of specifics, especially about relationships. But people ignore the plan, get into a mess in life, and then get mad at God for the way things turned out.

The plan that God has for the family is God's best for us. Rather than ignore the plan, we should want to know it and follow it with our lives.

We want to begin to look at God's plan for the family this morning by looking at God's design for wives. In the coming weeks we're going to see God's instructions for husbands, parents, and children.

Let's begin with the very important background information in Genesis.

*I. God Is The Originator Of Marriage*

**Turn to Genesis 2 page 4**

**Read vs 7**

**Read vs 15-18**

It's absolutely crucial that we get this background information.

If we don't understand where we've come from and where the attraction that pulls us into romantic relationships comes from we won't understand the directions in Ephesians 5.

We are creations of Almighty God. In Genesis 1 we're told that we alone, of all creation, are made in the image of God.

God creates man and the first thing that He pronounces "not good" is for man to be alone. He didn't mean that it was evil for man to be alone but that man, at that point, was incomplete.

To me this is so fascinating. Adam has first hand knowledge of God in the garden. There's no distortion of sin yet so Adam has a very personal relationship with his Creator. But God still defines Adam as "alone."

Not only that, but God says, "I'll solve this lack in Adam's life by making him someone who is comparable to him."

**Read vs 21-25**

This is so important for us to grasp on to. God says Adam is alone. God says, "I'll solve the problem." And God's solution is to make one like Adam but with some important differences.

God makes Eve, joins the two together, and pronounces them “one flesh.”

When you go to the New Testament passages on marriage, like Ephesians chapter 5, they consistently refer back to Genesis chapter 2.

That tells us some things that are basic to our understanding of man/woman relationships.

1. The attraction that exists between men and women is God-given.
2. The main reason God designed that attraction was because of the need for companionship, which He created.
3. The woman was someone who was comparable to Adam. If you’re reading in the NASV you’ll notice they have a footnote that says “corresponding to” him. The idea is two halves that make up a whole.
4. The ultimate fulfillment of that attraction was to take place in the context of marriage.
5. Marriage, including the physical union of husband and wife is the most intimate human relationship possible. It’s more intimate than even parent and child. Only a husband and wife are called “one flesh.”

All of this is foundational to understanding Ephesians chapter 5.

### **Turn to Ephesians 5 page 1041**

Every wedding ceremony I perform I read from Ephesians 5. Over the years I noticed I’m getting more and more of a reaction to this passage. Not from the couple getting married, because we discuss it at length.

The reaction comes from the guests. They usually don’t say anything to me but I hear the feedback.

What people balk at are the concepts we’re about to read about. The usual reaction is that this is archaic, out of touch, chauvinistic, and has nothing to do with life today.

But now remember, this is God's Word to us just as much as it was 2000 years ago. The same God who created men and women with the need for companionship is the same God who tells us how to live out that relationship.

God's best, God's plan, is revealed in the Bible.

This is truth that never becomes outdated. It just needs to be understood and applied to each generation.

Last week we spent the whole time on verse 21 because it set the stage for the rest of the book of Ephesians.

Just by way of review, remember we saw that the governing principle for all Christian relationships is submission.

Look at verse 21 again. **Read vs 21**

We're to submit our agendas and our wants to the good of others and our example is Jesus Christ. He didn't come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus submitted Himself to Joseph and Mary growing up. He submitted Himself to His disciples when He washed their feet. And then finally, He submitted Himself to all of us by going to the cross to suffer and bleed for our sins.

For the Creator to become one of His creation is submission. He had to set aside His entitlements, rights, privileges, and advantage to lock Himself in a frail human body.

But that was just the beginning. Then He submitted Himself to the abuse and ultimate brutal murder by His created ones.

All of that was to take the penalty for our sins so we wouldn't have to spend an eternity in hell.

He came to give His life a ransom for many and the Bible says *and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

That's the backdrop for what comes next.

Now as we pick up today in our passage we find God zeroing in on a specific aspect of submission.

*I. God Is The Originator Of Marriage*

*II. God Has Specific Functions For Husbands And Wives Within Marriage*

## **Read vs 22**

This verse has a history of false interpretations. One of the reasons it generates the controversy it does is because it is easily misunderstood if you take it out of it's context.

Here's one end of the spectrum. One Christian teacher says that wives must obey their husbands every command. If he commands something sinful the wife must do it. God will judge the husband if he orders his wife to do something that is against God's Word. Her job is to obey her husband.

Here's the opposite end. A writer says Ephesians 5 is non-revelatory, "a discrepancy within scripture."

If we're all equal in God's sight then this must be a mistake in the Bible.

We've said this before but remember while any passage in the Bible can have a variety of applications, it can only have one correct interpretation.

The Bible uses human language to get across divine truth and so we need to use some basic principles of interpretation to determine the meaning.

Once we understand what God is saying in a passage then we can apply it to the various situations of life.

The first principle would be consider the context.

In the context of "Submitting to one another in the fear of the God" wives are to submit to their husbands. Obviously we're going to see equivalent commands for husbands to submit their priorities to serve their wives.

But here's the thing, if Almighty God could submit Himself for us then it would be arrogant of us to refuse a command to submit ourselves to others. The next interpretive principle is find out word meanings.

As we saw last week, the word translated "submit" is the Greek term *hupotasso*. It was used as a military term and literally means "to arrange yourself under."

In the design of God, wives are to follow the leadership of their husband.

I know that one of the unpardonable sins of our culture is to talk about different roles for men and women but the Bible addresses different functions and responsibilities for husbands and wives within the family.

So wives are to recognize that God has designated their husband as the one who is responsible to provide spiritual leadership in the home.

This isn't my personal opinion. It isn't about male domination of women. It's about God's principles for the family.

This is not some general principle of women submitting to men. This is submission in the sense of a wife respecting and honoring her husband.

In fact, look at the last verse in this chapter. **Read vs 33**

Here the Bible clearly substitutes "respect" for "submit." The idea isn't some blind obedience. There isn't a verse that says, "Wives obey your husbands." But there is the command to respect your husband.

We all need a lot from one another but one of the things that husbands desire most from their wives is their respect.

The submission is not in self-worth or in ability.

In other words women are not to consider themselves inferior to men and men are not to consider themselves superior to women.

In the case of the home, wives are to acknowledge their husband's God given place of leadership.

And they're to do it according to verse 22, "As unto the Lord." That doesn't mean husbands are supposed to act like little gods, but it does mean as you are subject to the Lord, so be to your own husband as the one God has given you for guidance and leadership and protection.

As you would respect and desire to follow Jesus Christ, respect and desire to follow your husband.

The Bible doesn't mince any words, does it? God designed us and He knows human nature. He knows that if you give people the chance they'll quickly excuse themselves from responsibility.

That's why He speaks directly to wives in verses 22-24 and to the husbands in 25-32. No where does God say, "Husbands make your wife honor you." It's like God wants husbands to be concerned with their responsibilities and wives to focus on theirs.

There's no excuses. He doesn't let a wife say, "If you knew my husband you'd know why I won't respect his leadership." He doesn't even let the wife say, "My husband doesn't lead."

He just flat out says, this is the way things are to be.

You might paraphrase this, "If you're anxious to please Jesus Christ then you'll want to submit yourself to your husband."

Just like Jesus Christ voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father, wives submit yourselves to your own husbands.

Why? **Verse 23**

Once again, let's not forget the context here. *Submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

There's plenty of debate about what the Bible means when it says, "*The husband is the head of the wife...*"

For centuries Bible commentators just assumed that "head" must mean "leader" or "ruler." That's the way we use the word when we say someone is the head of state.

It's interesting though, that when you do a word study on the Greek noun *kephale* that's translated "head" here, it wasn't used by the Greeks to mean "chief ruler."

Along with that, when the Bible speaks about Christ being the head of the Church it's for the benefit of the Church, part of Christ's role as Savior and protector to the Church which is called His Bride.

Notice how carefully verse 23 says that as the Head Jesus is also the Savior.

I really believe that God wants to clarify things here so we don't get the wrong idea. It would be easy for us to read this and say husbands are to dominate their wives.

In the 1998 the Southern Baptist Convention clarified the Baptist Faith and Message to state that wives must submit to their husbands.

Critics of the Southern Baptists and critics of the Bible went wild. This was front page news in the New York Times. People were up in arms. They said, "How could they be so archaic. What a throwback to unenlightened times."

That's the reaction that a lot of people have who don't read this passage in it's context.

God is so clear. The husband is the head as Christ is the Savior. Jesus isn't the Savior because he subjugates and dominates everyone. Jesus is the Savior because He sacrificed Himself.

One of the reasons this becomes so distorted in our thinking is because something else happened back in Genesis that clouds the real issue.

*I. God Is The Originator Of Marriage*

*II. God Has A Plan For Husbands And Wives Are To Function Within Marriage*

*III. Sin Has Clouded Our Understanding Of The Functions In Marriage*

We didn't read anything about authority and submission in Genesis 2. What we saw was that the woman was made as a companion and a helper to man.

He was the lord of creation but she was created to make up a deficiency in him.

What happens next though, changes things radically. The serpent deceives the woman, she eats the fruit and leads the man on in the temptation.



Since she was his helper, Adam had the main responsibility for the family. But, Eve took control and acted independently of Adam. Adam then acted independently of God.

**Turn back to Genesis 3 page 5**

**Read verse 16a through “children”**

God had already told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply so having children wasn't part of the curse. There was no pain before the fall but now there would be pain and toil in childbirth.

The word that is used for “pain” in this verse is from the same root that the word “toil” is in verse 17. It's going to be work having children. Isn't it interesting that we call that process “labor.”

**Read vs 16b**

The woman acted independently of the man when they were supposed to be a team so God places a desire in her for her husband but at the same time placed him in a place of authority. Ever since there's been a constant struggle there.

God made husbands and wives for unique functions and men and women are equipped for different aspects of family living.

The more we try to deny those differences the more confused our society becomes.

God has designed headship into the very make up of men. But because we now see things through the distorted lense of our sin nature men want to abuse that headship.

The way to solve the problem of that abuse isn't to ignore the differences and try to force an unnatural egalitarianism. The solution is to bring that natural drive under control of the Holy Spirit so it can be used for God's glory and God's purposes in strengthening the family.

Eve was created for Adam, to be at his side. When she was deceived, the man was held responsible for perverting the order God had specified.

The Bible doesn't talk about the sin of Eve. It only talks about the sin of Adam.

Rather than correcting her and getting her back on the right track, the man indulged with her. When their sin was found out, the man, instead of defending her and treating her with honor, pointed a finger and tried to put his failure all on her head. In fact, he tried to implicate God in it too, as the One who had given the woman to him.

### **Read vs 12**

All through the scriptures, God's laws, His reactions toward men who fail to fulfill their proper role and duty toward their women, all these things clearly put forth the message that God expects the man to be the woman's protector.

### **Back to Ephesians 5:23**

The husband's headship of the wife is to be patterned after Christ's headship of the church. That means it's servant-leadership.

That means a godly husband won't walk around the house with a swagger stick under his arm barking out orders. Jesus Christ doesn't do that.

Rather he'll guard, he'll preserve, he'll care, he'll be concerned with his wife's growth with God and as a person and he'll make sure their home is a place where that growth is encouraged.

This concept of submission doesn't mean that the wife won't have opinions. It doesn't mean she won't have unique abilities. It doesn't mean that she's in any way inferior to her husband.

It means she's different. She's his complement. She has her own place in the family full of honor and respect.

It's heartbreaking to me when I hear couples that don't respect one another, that don't recognize the importance of one another. That don't submit to one another in the fear of God.

What happens all too often is the husband fails to fulfill his spiritual role in the home. He doesn't provide leadership for his family so the wife picks up his

responsibilities. The more she leads the less he does.

The less he does the more she resents him. The more she takes over leadership the more he begins to resent her. That's a recipe for disaster.

*I. God Is The Originator Of Marriage*

*II. God Has Specific Functions For Husbands And Wives Within Marriage*

*III. Sin Has Clouded Our Understanding Of The Functions In Marriage*

*IV. Following God's Truth Will Allow Us To Have The Marriage That God Intends For Us To Have*

So, what's the conclusion? **Read vs 24**

The Message translates this passage, *Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.*

See, submission keeps coming back to this idea respect. Wives, according to the Bible, you have an obligation to submit to your husband in the same way that the church does to Christ. Part of that is making him feel like he is the most important person in the world to you.

Part of that is not being a nag. Part of that is not verbally abusing him or putting him down. Part of that is not making him beg for intimacy.

The truth is that husbands aren't always what they should be. But remember something wives, your husband is God's gift to you.

As one writer put it, "Our homes would be a lot happier if wives would stop regretting what their husbands aren't and put their emphasis on what their husbands are."

Here's how to be the wife your husband's always wanted.

Follow his leadership. Be leadable. Let him know you enjoy following him. Encourage him because he may not be comfortable with leading yet.

Have confidence in him. Find ways to build him up. Let him know that you believe in him. Express confidence in his ability and in his decisions.

Admire him. Admiration is respect verbalized. "I just want you to know it's awesome to be married to you."

Let your husband make major decisions. Give advice. Be a part of the process. But let him know you trust him with the final decision.

Give him room for freedom to fail. We all make mistakes. When a wife constantly holds past mistakes over her husband's head, he'll start backing off and be fearful of making future decisions. Your husband needs to know he can fail at something and still have your respect.

Communicate. Let him know what your needs are. Be careful of thinking, "I shouldn't have to spell it out for him. He should just know what I'm feeling."

Listen ladies. Guys are really slow sometimes. What you think is so obvious he should trip over it is probably not even showing up on his radar screen. Have mercy on us, it's an inherent defect in most males.

Encourage him as a provider. Husbands can have a lot of pressure at work and the last thing he needs is to come home to a wife who is tense and upset with a long list of complaints. If he comes home and hear you say, "When are you going to make something of yourself? When are you going to get a descent job so we can afford to live like everybody else?"

That's just going to beat him down.

Maybe he needs to change jobs. Maybe he needs to get more education. If he does, encourage him. Stand with him. Don't trample him down.

Make sure you spend money wisely and demonstrate contentment.

Appreciate his hard work. Some guys work hard because that's part of the way they show their love.

Then finally, let your husband know you need him. Don't ever tell him, "I can get along just fine without you." Tell him just the opposite.

Submit to your husband. Respect him, if for no other reason than the fact that God says to. Allow God to be unique in him. Trust God to lead you and the family

through your husband.

You say, “You know what Ed, that’s pretty tough stuff.” You’re right. And next week we’ll be just as tough on the guys.

Just remember the example of Jesus and the command to submit to one another in the fear of God.