

# Ephesians 5:22-33

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm turning to Ephesians chapter 5, Ephesians 5, verse 22, on page 979. Obviously, last week's sermon on marriage, and I'm looking at fatherhood last Sunday night for Acer issues,! And I want to recommend two books to you. First of all, they're both on the book called The Meaning of Marriage.

Timothy and Kathy Keller is a terrific book. Just a very, very helpful book. It's an honest book. I think it's by far the best thing out there on marriage, so I'd really recommend that.

And then a book on fatherhood by Tony Payne. What is it? And what's it for? And it's readable and simple and a really, really good book. So I'd recommend that. I think it's about six quid.

And then one more thing is, we're going to have at the end of February on a Sunday night, hopefully the start of something regular, we're going to have a question and answer session. And so this sermon, I hope every sermon raises questions.

And Church Life raises questions. And you might think, why on earth can they do it that way? And so there's a question box at the back. It's in the blue file. We're hoping we get a nicely decorated question box soon. But if you've got any questions, put them in there. And we'll seek to try and answer them on the last Sunday night of February.

[ 1 : 19 ] And I hope it'll be the start of a regular thing. But I think it's a good thing for us to do. So, second sermon on marriage. And this is the last one. Here are the headlines from last week. If you missed last week, here they are.

A marriage works when it copies the divine marriage between Christ and the church. A marriage works when it copies the divine marriage between Christ and the church. And a marriage works when the husband and wife play different roles.

For the wife, the part of submission and respect. And for the husband, the part of headship and love. Last week was a sermon on the pattern of marriage. Christ is like a groom who loves us covenantally and unbreakably.

And we, the church, are his bride. Christ did certain things for us. And in return, we do certain things towards him. And that, says Paul, is the pattern for marriage.

The pattern for all marriages. Which, over time, become deeply beautiful marriages. The man acts like Christ, who is the head of his body. And the husband is the head.

[ 2 : 24 ] Now I said last week that I take that to mean that the husband is completely responsible for everything that happens in a marriage. Completely responsible. For everything that happens in a marriage.

And you might want to listen to that last week to see why I say that and what it means. Because Christ is completely responsible. For everything that happens in a marriage. The woman acts like the church, who is the bride of Christ.

And has a role of submission to her head. Like the church submits to Christ. So what does it actually mean? What does it actually look like? What are we saying that a marriage that does these things looks like?

So four points. And I'm going to give you them at the front. Because I might not spell them out clearly enough as we go on. First of all, headship carries a deadly cross. And then secondly, love bestows loveliness.

And submission, thirdly, creates a voluntary unity. And thirdly, respect bestows dignity. They're really catchy, aren't they? Headship carries a deadly cross.

[ 3 : 32 ] Love bestows loveliness. Submission creates a voluntary unity. And respect bestows dignity. Now I don't know whether you noticed. Two points for the husband. Two points for the wife. And the first of these points is this.

About the practical application and the meaning of their roles. What headship looks like, what it means, is that a husband has an instrument of execution strapped to his back. That's what headship means. And what submission actually means, it looks like a woman who brings into existence one new unity of two. One new entity of two.

So two points related to the meaning of their roles. And then two points related to what the wife and the husband actually do. So men, husbands, your job is to bestow loveliness on your wife. And wives, your job is to bestow dignity on your husbands. So I'm going to reverse the passage. I hope you don't mind me doing that. I'm going to speak to husbands first. And then wives. My reason for that is the weight of Paul's argument falls on husbands.

[ 4 : 41 ] So in the original text there are 40 words to wives. But 115 words to husbands. And culturally at the time, I think this is profoundly significant.

Because it was very commonplace in the New Testament era for wives to be told to submit to their husbands. But it was commonly joined with injunctions. With husbands being told, you keep your wives in submission.

So wives submit. And husbands, you make sure they submit. An order at home, a submissive wife, obedient children. Good standing in society and all is well.

But that is not the way the Bible says it. And that is not so with the Apostle Paul. With Christian men and Christian husbands, in Colossians 3, Paul simply tells husbands not to be harsh with their wives.

And I wonder if it's any less true that male harshness and male unkindness is endemic in marriage.

[ 5 : 44 ] And I would want to say that male harshness is endemic regardless of whether somebody accepts or rejects what we might call from this parish traditional gender roles in marriage.

It's a problem that every male faces. Because it's perfectly possible, isn't it, for somebody, maybe for you to say, in our marriage we're not going to go in for all this headship and all this submission. That is simply demeaning to a woman.

And we're going to have completely identical roles in our marriage in every way. And it's possible for a couple to do that. But for harshness still to surface in the male heart.

And it's possible, even when you have identical roles and say, I'm not going in for this, for lack of respect, it still surfaced in the female heart. Now what is going to fix it? And I want to suggest this. What will begin to fix it, or will at least begin to suck the poison of male harshness, where it matters in our hearts, is understanding who I am in my marriage.

[ 6 : 46 ] And how I'm meant to be who I am. Who I am. Husbands are heads. That is who I am. That is who you are. And I think Paul shows us that headship carries a deadly cross.

That is, if you like, the basic principle of the passage. Remember chapter 5, verse 25. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself a prayer.

Do you see the meaning? Husbands, love your wives in the same way that Christ loved his bride. How did Christ love his bride? By dying for her.

By sacrificing himself for her. Now Christ's death does many things for all his people which we can never imitate and we can never copy, can we?

So, we cannot be forsaken by God for each other. Or we cannot take the punishment for one another in place of each other.

[ 7 : 49 ] We cannot bear God's wrath for sin in place of each other. But, the principle here is we can lay down our lives for each other. And Paul says, if you want to know what a husband's headship looks like, it looks like a man on 30 or 40 or 50 years on death row.

So we went in America and stayed with one of Chuck's friends who was a great character and he got married and after his marriage the first words that his father-in-law said to him we shook his hand and said it's a death sentence.

However long God gives you in your marriage headship carries a deadly cross. Because the head, the husband, is copying the one who carried a deadly cross.

Christian headship in marriage is in the shape of a cross. Now this is why I think nothing, nothing comes close to the beauty and the power of this marriage in any kind of contemporary thought or relationship advice.

I read in a Christian book on marriage this week that marriage is all about 50-50. Each couple has to give 50% to make 100%. Absolute rubbish. What about if each person gives 100%?

[ 9 : 05 ] 100% of themselves. Well surely that is better. It's nonsense to think about that. I have in my life people who I know who would literally die for me.

I know for instance my parents in their late 70s even at my age now they would still give their life for me if they had to. And there is incredible beauty isn't there? And blessing in knowing that you are loved to the point of death by another human being.

So Paul says to Ephesian husbands and he says to IPC husbands your wife needs a husband who dies for her. Now please obviously it's not literal. But it is to the point of constant and willing sacrifice of yourself for her.

And we men need to be told this because we don't really do it. So if you watch a young mum with her children if you watch the young mums in IPC with their children when you watch closely you see the natural self-sacrifice on behalf of their children.

A mother has a kind of built-in mechanism doesn't she of laying down her life. Young mums do that. To allow their children to thrive and fathers well we can do it as well and some do do it but generally it is true that women are much better at surrendering themselves for the sake of another.

[ 10 : 33 ] So here is a very very simple diagnostic question for you of your husband this morning. I ask the children to ask their dancers in Sunday school. What are you going without husbands?

What are you doing with? What are you knowing the loss of so that your wife can flourish? Where are you tasting death for her?

Loss of man cave time? Loss of mate time? Less advancement in your career than you would have hoped on? Less of just me time?

This is C.S. Lewis writing beautifully on the husband's headship. The headship then C.S. Lewis says is most fully embodied not in the husband we sure wish to be but in him whose marriage is the most like a crucifixion.

Whose wife receives most and gives least whose wife is the most unworthy of him whose wife is the least lovable the anointing of this terrible coronation is not to be seen in the joys of any man's marriage but it is in its sorrows in the sickness and sufferings of a good wife or the faults of a bad wife.

[ 11 : 50 ] It is unwearying and never paraded care or in his inexhaustible forgiveness. Lewis says the sternest feminist critic need not grudge my sex the crown off it to it for it is a crown of thorns.

And that is why when I spoke to the children this morning before the sermon I said to them marriage is can someone shout it out? Death. Death.

Marriage is death. And that is how we live Christ's example by dying. And no marriage which does not have death death of itself of death of self at its heart will ever live long or will ever thrive.

And no marriage which does not have the death of the husband as the dominating feature of his head will ever produce a beautiful wife. Now I want to pause for a little bit because I've done quite a bit of reading on this.

In preparation for this I came across the best definition for masculinity I've ever seen. And it goes to the heart of this issue. Masculinity is the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility.

[ 13 : 07 ] Masculinity is the glad assumption of sacrificial responsibility. Now the reason I think that works is because it so closely fits with what Paul is saying here doesn't it? Remember Paul is not saying husbands be the heads.

He's simply saying you are the head. That's what you are. The only question is what kind of head are you going to be? Are you going to dominate your home by abdicating from your responsibility or are you going to dominate your home by gladly assuming your sacrificial responsibility?

Here's the other thing I learnt alongside this definition of masculinity. Authority flows to those who take responsibility. That is genius. authority flows to those who take responsibility.

You see the foundation of Christ's authority in the church is the blood that he shed isn't it?

He took responsibility through sacrificial service and therefore all authority in heaven and earth has been given to him as flow to him. Sacrificial responsibility creates authority.

[ 14 : 21 ] Now you see that in work. Somebody who's in a more senior position and you are meant to respect their authority over you but they clearly take no loving care over you.

There's no sacrificial responsibility for you. How do you feel about your boss when they're like that? How do you feel about submitting to someone like that? I'm in charge but I'm not interested in you. And I'm not interested in serving you.

I'm the boss you do what I say. So there's no responsibility for you or modeled to you or given to you. It's the kind of authorities that we all resent.

None of us like bosses like that. We hate it. And it is a million miles from the authority of God that he has over his people.

The kind of authority that Christ has over his bride. And Paul says that is a million miles away from the kind of authority a husband's head should carry in the home. Here's what he's saying.

[15:20] When a man becomes a husband he is shouldering the responsibility of being masculine in that setting. And so he's called to bleed for others. It's very very sobering isn't it biblical masculinity.

It's very sobering. It is heavy. And biblical masculinity can only be carried by the miracle of a changed heart. And a willingness to die to myself and my dreams and my preferences and my tiredness and my goals and my ambitions and my hobbies and my perfect neat and tidy worlds. That I'm willing to die to it for you. And that is what it means to be a married man. That's what it means to be a husband.

And a head. If she had to, can your wife point to the blood on the walls? If she had to, could your wife point to the blood on the floor?

Can you show her the point where she knows your love for her cost you and led to your own life ebbing away so that she grew and flourished?

[16:38] Because this is point two. The whole point of your love husbands for your wife is to bestow loveliness. The whole point of your love for your wife is to bestow loveliness on her, to her, for her.

See here is what Paul is saying to husbands. Husbands who are sacrificially responsible. Pairs love their wives and they love them in two ways. Look at verse 25. They love them as Christ loved the church.

So to the point of death. And verse 28. They love their wives as they love their own bodies. To the point of maximum care. So two examples for you to copy.

Christ's love for you men. And copy your own love for your own body. This is very corny but it might help you to understand it. Husbands are both to be a beautician and a dietician.

Husbands are to be both a beautician and a dietician. Your role is to make you beautiful and keep her healthy. So look what Christ did to make her bright, beautiful. Look at verse 25. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[17:50] That he might sanctify her, he might set her apart, have him cleansed her by the washing of water, with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

It's a way of saying right now we are in the engagement stage of our marriage to Christ, aren't we? And he died for us in order that he might wash us clean, and he might perfect us in sinless beauty on our wedding day, and at the end of the day when we stand there before him, he'll be radiant, nothing dirty, nothing broken, the law be gone and finished, Christ died to make us beautiful, and husbands died to make their wives beautiful.

And I think it is the idea, isn't it, in the passage, of the husband taking on himself the goal of leading his wife into growth and wholeness, personally and spiritually.

So she develops. So the goal of your marriage is not your own self fulfillment, but her blossoming. And I think we want to know exactly what that means.

Okay, very well, what do I have to do? What do I have to do? But that's going to look different, isn't it? It's going to look different in different marriages. I don't think it's particularly helpful to me to tell you the specifics.

[19:11] I was at a minister's conference this week and the guy said, he sings to his wife while making breakfast every morning, he makes up songs. And husbands need to have nicknames for their work, I can't think of anything worse.

It wouldn't do any good to my marriage through that. So the things that specifically apply to me, they don't apply in your marriage. But notice some of the general principles, okay?

This love is particular and it's exclusive. Do you see that? Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her. One bride for him, one woman for your husbands.

I've come across men and particularly preachers who seem to be fantastic experts in women generally have you met them? women do this women do that well praise the Lord we're never

called to be experts in womankind generally are we?

just one woman in particular if your husband it's just one woman it's a particular love but it's an initiating love do you see that? verse 25 Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her the presence of that word himself is significant it was his own initiative father didn't kick Jesus out of heaven it was Jesus' own initiative no one told him he had to do it it is unconditional love Christ takes a bride of ugliness and he transforms her into something beautiful that is the picture isn't it? [ 20 : 38 ] verse 27 the idea is that the bride the church had those things that we see the stains on the church and the wrinkles and the blemishes and Christ took them away she had those things until he took responsibility for it and he began to erase them it's a purposeful love it's a particular love it's an initiating love it's an unconditional love now you husbands decide what it will mean to love with that example it will mean something won't it?

it will take concrete form possibly something that you are not doing already but notice too verse 28 the husband is a dietician look at verse 28 in the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies he who loves his wife loves himself for no one ever hates his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes just as Christ does the church nourishing and tenderly caring as he cherishes his own body nourishing and cherishing it's a brilliant picture isn't it?

what it's saying is that Jesus cares for you he cares for his body he cares for the church in that way he nourishes Jesus cherishes you and so the husband must show his wife all the same love and care that he daily devotes to his own body let's think for a moment let's have a slightly strange scenario let's imagine that your body Mr. Husband could come up here alright I won't use one here as an example but let's have generic husband Bob I don't think we've got a Bob in the church I don't think we have we got a Bob so let's imagine Bob's body Mr. Marry if Bob's body could come up here and speak it would say something like this wouldn't it?

his body would say Bob is fantastic he is wonderful he always thinks of my needs and when I'm hungry Bob feeds me when I'm not hungry sometimes Bob feeds me when I'm tired he's so understanding he puts me to bed in fact he lets me fall asleep pretty much anywhere Bob puts designer labels on me every day he combs my hair he sheaves me in fact he looks at me every day in the mirror and tells me I'm the best body in the world isn't it true if your body could speak it would tell us you are wonderful you see husbands imagine if we swapped roles and it's your wife that comes up here and she tells the world what she thinks of her husband what would a wife say about you?

your wife if she was honest we know what a new bride would say on her wedding day don't we? but what about what would the wife say in 5 years 15 years 30 years 50 years and I think the challenge of this passage to husbands is what will your wife say about you what your wife will say about you depends on how you love her so we know how the caricature of Mrs. Married turns out there's Mrs. Married in the office with her colleagues she's at the school gates with the children and she's complaining about her husband he's hopeless with the kids you know what he's like he doesn't know what they're doing from one day to the next he never does anything around the house he's always late home from work he never surprises me anymore I know what's coming all the time our bodies would never say that our bodies would never say that about ourselves imagine instead a wife who's full of respect and support for you imagine a wife who tells everybody how glad she is to be married to you because of how you love her I think Paul says if you want a wife who says that then husbands you learn at the foot of the cross you learn at the foot of the cross that Christ laid down his life for you not counting the cross he laid down you lay down your life for your wife by nourishing her and giving yourself up for her not counting the cross ask her what it means to nourish and cherish her

[ 24 : 40 ] I'm embarrassed about this but I can't confess to you that I had I had to ask my wife what does that mean because I didn't know what does it mean to nourish and cherish you those words to nourish and cherish it may well be that a husband is sitting here and somebody and he hasn't got a clue what that means it's not standard male vocabulary is it well ask her ask what it means well to wives what does this passage say to wives from verse 22 wives submit to your own husbands and ask to the Lord verse 33 however let each one of you love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband it's really vital that we don't let the world mislead us into what the word submission means so you can imagine Cosmopolitan runs an article 27 ways to submit to your husband number one always do what he says number two never disagree with his opinions when he wants your opinion he'll give it to you number three always do the cooking the cleaning

and have his dinner on time that is a gross distortion of what submission is it's what people understand when they hear the word but it's not what it means submission is a

Christian term with a Christian meaning which is this voluntary submission to the will of another it is not forced submission to the will of another not when it's used in the context of marriage both types of submission both forced submission and voluntary submission exist in the Bible both of their place but voluntary submission is what the wife's is it's not a forced kind of submission her submission is exactly like Christ's own kind of submission and Cathy Caller's chapter in that book on marriage helped me enormously so come with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 15 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and let me just show you that alright 1 Corinthians 15 come on page 961 and let me read you verses 24 to 27 1 Corinthians 15 page 961 then comes the end when

Jesus delivers the kingdom of God the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority in power that's forced submission for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet forced submission again the last enemy to be destroyed is death for God has put all things in subjection under his feet but when it says all things are put in subjection it is plain that he is accepted who put all things in subjection under him when all things are subjected him for submission then the Son of Man will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him that God may be all in all now those are difficult places I wish I had more time but Paul is saying at the end of time God the Father will make the world submit to Christ there will be a forced submission every evil vow every temple confess of all things at the end but then in verse 28 when he's done this when he's done this in verse 28 when all things are subjected to him then the Son himself will also be subjected to him and it looks like Christ is being made to submit doesn't it that's what it looks like but look at that look at verse 24!

when Jesus hands over the world to God Christ's submission to the Father is not forced it is voluntary it is voluntary and willing he who was equal with God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing it is voluntary and willing he's not forced to submit he wants to submit he takes the kingdom that belongs to him and gives it to his father it's the idea you see of voluntary submission creating perfect unity so the Father Son and Holy Spirit they all agree and they all want and they will the same thing in this perfect fellowship Christ's will and the Father's will are perfectly aligned so that there is a new creation and a perfect new world and we're going to see that aren't we in Ephesians that the goal of everything where the world is heading is everything under Christ that is God's master plan of how to align everything in creation under Christ beneath his eternal throne and God is doing that now in the church Jew and

[ 29 : 13 ] Gentile all the nations of the world coming together and he's doing it in marriage by husband and wife together how by the husband dying for his wife and by the wife aligning her will with his sort of function as one as a unit as a team as one flesh and I think what this passage does for us wonderfully is it lays out for us a picture of a husband who lays his wife who lays his life down down his life for his wife and it says to his wife will you live for your husband by learning to trust him by submitting to him and his love and care and will you gladly submit to his efforts to take initiative and lead you and take responsibility even though he gets it wrong lots of times and I think when a husband does not love his wife when he stops laying down his life and making a sacrifice for his wife then in their own marriage he's blaspheming Christ that's not too strong because he's saying Jesus really is a husband who doesn't love his people and when a wife says actually I cannot submit to my husband it is degrading for me as a woman well that woman is saying that submitting to

Christ is an insult something I shouldn't have to do I suspect we husbands we tend to express our own form of selfishness by shrinking from initiative and responsibility and we tend to hide behind providing for our wives I provide for them that's enough I'm afraid to be loving and I think wives can tend to express their selfishness by wanting to dominate their husbands maybe to manipulate and control mocking belittling criticizing his efforts so for wives what will a husband say about you in 15 20 30 40 years even the caricature of Mrs Married let's get Mr Married up the front well let's take him to the pub he's in the pub he's been working late just to get out of the house and you know how Mr Married speaks about his wife no you don't because he never does he's probably not complaining about his wife at all but if he is he complains how she always likes him how she criticizes him but imagine that a husband in 15 20 40 60 years time with his friends tells how much he loves his wife how much he depends on her for so much of who he is and what he does and I think we need to read this passage

Ephesians 5 you're back there with me with the kind of operating assumption that the commands to each of the husbands and wives are specific let me try and tell you what I mean I know I'm late but let me try and teach you this before I finish they are not exclusive to each of them but they are specific so in other words wives are told to respect their husbands and husbands are told to love their wives it doesn't mean that wives are not to love their husbands of course they are or their husbands need to respect their wives of course they do but when a command like this is given I think there's an underlying rationale for it alright when Jesus told Peter feed my sheep he doesn't mean that Peter himself will never need to be fed does he he means the particular quality of a sheep is that it needs feeding and I think it works this way here too the particular quality of a woman of a wife is that she needs to be loved and the particular quality of a man or a husband is that he needs to be respected do you get that just listen to this

I've been quoting loads in the last couple of weeks and I'm going to stop it listen to this the commands are given to the respective weaknesses of our duties men need to do their duty with regard to their wives they need to love women need to do their duty in the same way they need to respect women are fully capable of loving a man and sacrificing for him while believing the entire time that he is a true and unvarnished jerk women are good at this kind of love but the central requirement given to wives is that they respect their husbands as Christian women gather together maybe for prayer or Bible study they frequently speak about their husbands in the most disrespectful way then they hurry home to cook clean and care for his kids why? because they love him it is not wrong for the wives to love their husbands but it is wrong to substitute love for the respect God requires so often we are like the man who gave his wife a shotgun for Christmas because he wanted one when a wife is trying to work on a troubled marriage she gives her husband what she would like and not what God commanded and not what he needs she loves him but does she respect him?

[ 34 : 21 ] and tell him she respects him we have difficulties because we do not follow the Bible's instructions when a man is communicating his love for his wife both verbally and non-verbally he should be seeking to communicate to her the security provided by his covenantal commitment he will provide her he will nourish her and cherish her he will sacrifice her her need is to be secure in his love for her her need is to receive love from him but when a wife is honouring and respecting her husband the transaction is quite different instead of concentrating on the security of the relationship respect is directed to his abilities and achievements how hard he works how faithfully he comes home how patient he is with the kids and so forth there's a long quotation I know that but I wonder what you make of it different needs I've not seen it before studying this in the last few months love and respect different means of meeting those needs and whether you agree or disagree with the way those specific works

I simply want to end by saying for both of those things to be given love and respect for both of them to be given and received marriage means death death to myself death to my own ways and my desires and death because I have learned at the foot of the cross to submit myself to the will of another who gave himself for me to make me spotless copy the divine marriage between Christ and the bride copy it and live it and your marriage will be beautiful Amen