

# ALIVE IN CHRIST

## A STUDY OF EPHESIANS

### HUSBANDS AND WIVES | EPHESIANS 5:15-33

- b. In what ways is the biblical ideal radically different?
2. Christ radically redefines the roll of leadership in both his life and teaching.

*MARK 10:42–45 Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

*JOHN 14:3-5 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

How should Christ’s pattern of leadership with his disciples be on display in a husband’s pattern of leadership in the home?

3. What does mutual submission look like on the part of the husband in the marriage relationship?
4. How should our marriages portray the beauty of the gospel to the world around us?

### **A FITING SUMMARY: LOVE AND REPECT (v. 33)**

*<sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

How do the ideas of “love and “respect” sum up Paul’s instructions for husbands and wives?

Nothing is more beautiful or demanding than a Christ-honoring marriage. More often than not we pattern our marriages after our parents. The problem is that she had one set of parents and you had another, so you come into marriage with mixed expectations. In your house, dad did all the outside work, was handy with tools, and kept up with cars. Mom did the inside work and kept the house. In her home mom and dad hired someone else to do the yard work and take care of the house. They dropped the car off at the mechanics and threw themselves into high demand jobs. They lived for the weekends, and were pretty adventurous with what little, if any time off they decided to take.

Our friends and neighbors won’t help very much either. Some of them live in a kind of 50/50 arrangement. They divide the household duties down the middle so that no one has to do all the jobs no one wants to do. They take turns running the kids back and forth to soccer games and dance recitals, and steal away whatever quiet moments they can find for themselves. Other marriages seem to be little more than financial arrangements. Two people share a house, drive nice cars, split the cost down the middle, and put off having children for as long as possible. She has her friends. He has his. For the most part they live separate lives.

What would happen if you allowed Christ to invade your marriage? It wouldn’t look anything like your parents or your neighbors. It would look a whole lot like Christ. It would offer a vivid portrait of Christ and his gospel to your kids, the rest of your family and your friends and neighbors.

In Ephesians 5 and 6, Paul surprises us by adopting a somewhat traditional Graeco Roman pattern of marriage and introduces Christ and the gospel into the picture in a way that completely transforms the home. The model Paul has in mind is neither traditional or modern. It is something altogether different—far more beautiful and satisfying for everyone involved.

## THE FOUNDATION: MUTUAL SUBMISSION (v. 21)

*<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

A Christian household is built on the foundation of “mutually giving oneself to the other for the sake of Christ.” This is not only true for husbands and wives, it is also true for children and parents, and surprisingly, for slaves and masters as well.

Biblical mutuality is first and foremost seen in the nature of the triune God. The Father glorifies the Son, the Son glorifies the Father, and the Spirit glorifies the Father and the Son—each member of the trinity selfless giving themselves to the other for the sake of the other and the common good.

We also see the pattern of mutual submission in the instructions of Scripture.

*PHILIPPIANS 2:3–4 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*ROMANS 12 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*

It is also important to remember that Paul’s exhortation to “submit to one another” flows out of his command to “be filled with the Spirit.” The flow of the text is “be filled with the Spirit... speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit... singing and making music from your heart to the Lord... always giving thanks to God the Father... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

1. How do each of these ideas shape our understanding of mutuality or mutual submission?
2. How does the phrase “out of reverence for Christ” shape our understanding or mutual submission?

## THE WIFE’S ROLE: RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT (vv. 22-24)

*<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

1. While Scripture tells us that men and women each bear the image of God, and share equally in the gifts and privileges of redemption, the Bible reserves as special place of leadership for men in both the home and the church. The wife’s role is to recognize the position of leadership God has called her husband to, and support him in every way she can.

- a. How does Paul describe the husbands leadership role in the home?
  - b. What is the pattern for his leadership?
  - c. How should the wife respond to his leadership?
2. While children are told to “obey” their parents and slaves to “obey” their masters, the wife is told to submit herself to her husband. It is voluntary not compulsory (the verb is in the middle voice, and best translated “submit yourselves”). She is to respond to her husband by lovingly giving herself fully to him, as the church is called to lovingly give themselves fully to Christ. How does recognizing and supporting your husbands leadership differ from the pattern of domination and subservience some might envision?

## THE HUSBANDS ROLE: LAY DOWN HIS LIFE (vv. 24-31)

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.*

*<sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body.*

*<sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

1. Paul has built his instructions for Christian household on ancient Graeco Roman household codes—a series of ideas based on a tragically flawed view of humanity. You get the basic idea from the writings of Aristotle: Of household management we have seen that there are three parts: one is the rule of a master over slaves, ... another of a father, and the third of a husband. A husband and father rules over wife and children, both free, but the rule differs, the rule over children being a royal rule, over his wife a constitutional rule. For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the older and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature... The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying (Aristotle, Politics 1258a37-b17, 1260a24).
  - a. In what way does Paul’s interactions to Christian households resemble Aristotles’ description of the Roman household?