



Husbands & Wives

The holy union of a husband and wife is a beautiful, sacred, and mysterious thing. But both roles carry considerable responsibility and accountability in the Christian household. Here in [Ephesians 5](#), the beloved apostle segues from instructing believers on how to act in the world to how to act among other believers, and he begins a lengthy discourse on appropriate behavior within families. As we'll see, Biblical principles often stand in blunt contrast to the world's ideology. This may be truer today than at other time in recent history, but God's truths are never changed by societies; they are eternal and always for our benefit ([1 Tim 3:16-17](#)).

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. [Eph 5:22-24](#)

Paul begins talking to families by addressing husbands and wives. He reminds wives to be ***subject to your own husbands***. The Greek word for "be subject" is [hupotassō](#) which, contextually, speaks of rank or the willful submission to another in authority. Interestingly, this word doesn't appear in in verse 22, but is added for context by English translators because it is a carryover from [verse 21](#) where Paul told all believers ***to be subject*** ([hupotassō](#)) ***to one another in the fear of Christ***.

Here, the apostle is reinforcing the biblical family structure going back to creation when God made Eve as a helper for Adam, taking one of his ribs to form the first woman ([Gen 2:18-23](#)). Adam was made from dirt; Eve was made from Adam. This doesn't make the wife a lesser person than her husband, but establishes a healthy order in the family headship, as we can see when Paul writes, ***"for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body."*** The uncoerced submission of one's own will to another is a distinctive and tangible way to demonstrate love, just as Christ submitted His will to the Father in all things ([John 12:49](#), [Phil 2:8](#)).

After this, Paul turns his attention to husbands:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. [Eph 5:25-30](#)



Not surprisingly, we see that the husband's obligation to his wife and family is quite substantial. First, Paul says husbands must **love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her**. This is a sacrificial love (Greek: [agapaō](#)), which is active, emotional, unselfish, giving, gentle, merciful, and kind. Paul went into great depth on what genuine love is in [1 Corinthians 13](#), a famous passage that is similarly placed amid unflinching instruction and correction on behavior in Christian circles.

Paul further expounds on Christ's love for the church when he says, **"so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."** Paul highlights Christ's work in our salvation by associating it to His willingness to submit to the Father in all things. In context, Paul appears to be saying that a husband must be just as diligent and determined in being a Christ-like leader for his wife and family, always seeking to help deepen their love of the Lord. Perhaps another way to look at it is that husbands should live in such a manner that it is though we might even one day present our wives and children before Christ.

We also see the command for husbands **to love their own wives as their own bodies**. This is a tough mandate and requires husbands to be radically unselfish in their behavior and thought life. Paul doesn't stop there, as he further drives this point by saying, **"He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body."** Without room for excuse or argument, husbands are commanded to willingly set aside their own wants and desires for the benefit of their wife, just like Jesus does.

This brings us back to the beginning of our passage. The command for wives to be subject to their husband pairs perfectly with the command for husbands to love their wives. In this scenario a pure family union is sustained. Neither one is seeking their own benefit or gain over the other and both are harmonized in unity because both are ultimately living in submission to the Lord. This also appears to be a physical example of what we see in the relationship between Christ and the Father. Christ submitted to the will of the Father ([John 5:30](#), [6:38](#)), and the Father loves the Son ([John 3:35](#)). Likewise, in a thriving Christian household, this divine instruction promotes peace, joy, and a deep spiritual connection beyond anything the world's system of selfish aspirations could ever hope to achieve.

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