

HER WEDDING PICTURES

EPHESIANS 5:22-24

The book of Ephesians is a primer on Christian living. Chapters 1-3 teach us [how to see ourselves](#).

They shape for us a new identity "*in Christ*."

It's interesting to me that before Paul gives us the first command. Before he says one word about *what we should do*, he encourages us with *who we are*.

"*In Christ*" we've gone from rags to riches. We're God's kid - blessed with all spiritual blessings - we're chosen, forgiven, adopted, redeemed, accepted, and sealed. Together we're a third race - a new man!

It's only after we've been exalted to heavenly heights that Paul begins to tell us how to navigate life on Earth.

That's the theme of the second half of the book, Chapters 4-6. Paul teaches us [how to live our lives](#).

And in Chapter 5:22 the subject matter hits close to home. In fact, it deals with *the home* - the relationships basic to family life - husbands and wives, parents and children. This will be our focus for the next two months.

And let me stress the importance of our passage...

It's easy to be a Christian - to show grace, and stand up for the truth - in the cozy confines of the Church.

It gets more difficult in the workplace, *but there we're trying to be a witness*. We're motivated to be loving, and kind, and patient with the lost people around us.

The real test of our Christianity is how we behave at home - when we let our hair down - where we feel free to be ourselves. Are we tender-hearted, and gracious, and merciful with the people under our own roof?

How does your Christianity work in the hothouse of relationship we call "*a family?*"
Are you holy at home?

I like what author Howard Hendricks use to say, "*If your Christianity doesn't work at home, don't export it.*"

Marriage and family is where life makes up its mind.

It's where we are what we are, and live what we really believe. There's no bluffing the people at home.

For three weeks we're going to talk about marriage, and then for three weeks we'll talk about parenting.

Today, I'll read Paul's entire text for husbands and wives - then we'll focus on the first few verses, 22-24...

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

At a wedding, a professional photographer, will on average, take anywhere from 500 to 1000 photos...

And that's not including the pictures taken by grandma, Uncle Bob, and the *selfies* the bride snaps!

It's been said, "The entire Civil War was covered by fewer photographs than are taken at a wedding today."

Apparently, *nuptials* and *negatives* go hand in hand.

And that's not only true of a husband and wife's wedding, their marriage should also be a photograph.

Marriage is meant to be many things... *a romance, a legal contract, a social arrangement, a working relationship* - but above all else, marriage is a **picture**.

Love shown in a marriage should be an illustration of Jesus and His Church. Paul writes in 5:32, marriage is **"a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."** Marriage is a picture of spiritual realities!

And this is what elevates marriage above all other human relationships. God assigns to marriage a divine significance. He shrouds it in holiness, and makes it sacred. God vows to do His part to insure its stability.

Certainly, God intends for your marriage to be a source of great personal happiness. **But far more is at stake in marriage than just your own happiness.**

Marriage is a picture to a fallen world of spiritual truths. *It's a divine snapshot.* God intends for your marriage to preach the Gospel - to dramatize the relationship that exists between Jesus and His Church.

Examine the elaborate picture that was painted in the Garden of Eden with the first man and woman. God took from Adam's side - *from close to his heart, and from under his arm* - that which He used to fashion for Adam a bride. Then He presented that bride to Adam.

Centuries later, far from the Garden of Eden - on a barren hill in Jerusalem - God worked a similar miracle.

A Roman soldier thrust a spear through Jesus' side. *From close to his heart and from under his arm* out flowed blood and water - the same blood God uses to cleanse and fashion folks to be married to His Son.

What happened in the garden with Adam, happened on the cross with Jesus. Both operations produced a glorious bride. *The Garden is a picture of Golgotha.*

Think for a moment about the power of symbols and pictures... See a *skull and crossbones* and you know not to touch. A *cross*, or *swastika*, or an *olive branch*, or even a *Nike swoosh* - all unleash powerful emotions.

This is why corporations copy-write their slogans and logos. Symbols are of great value in the marketplace.

And symbols or types are vitally important to God.

In Matthew 12:40 Jesus said, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish..." You could say, "Jonah had a whale of a weekend!"

But Jesus continues, "so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Jonah's time in the whale's belly was a picture of the three days and nights that elapsed between the cross and Jesus' resurrection. *Jonah was a type of Jesus!*

Here's another powerful symbol...

God told Abraham to take Isaac to Mount Moriah, and sacrifice His only son, but God never intended for Abraham to go through with the action. His ordeal was meant to be a picture of what God would do years later on Mount Calvary. There the Father offered His only Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

No doubt, Abraham's experience on Mount Moriah was *high* drama - but it portrayed a *higher* reality.

And recall how upset it made God when His messenger, Moses, messed up the NT picture...

When Israelites in the wilderness grew thirsty, God told Moses to strike the rock and out gushed water.

But when the need arose again, God said to Moses, "Speak to the rock... and it will yield its water."

Here's the NT picture God was painting for future generations... People have a spiritual thirst that can only be satisfied by miracle water from Jesus the Rock!

On Calvary, 2000 years ago, God struck the rock.

Now all we have to do is speak to the Rock, and ask Jesus for His living water, and He'll satisfy our thirst.

What a snapshot of salvation! *But Moses marred the picture!* He was agitated with Israel's unbelief. Rather than speak to the rock, he struck it a second time.

And God got angry *with Moses, not Israel!*

Moses not only misrepresented a patient God, he distorted God's symbolism. Jesus was to be struck once - never again. Moses spoiled the NT picture, and was punished. He never entered the Promise Land.

Here's the moral of the story... **God takes spiritual symbols seriously. And this is true with marriage!**

The relationship between a husband and a wife is God's wedding photos. It's intended to be a picture.

Marriage is a depiction of Christ and the Church.

This is why your marriage will never see the Promise Land if you don't live out your part of the picture. Marriage is a voluntary role-play of spiritual realities.

And sadly, this is the aspect of marriage that sails over the heads of most married folk. They're oblivious

They're not biblical enough, or spiritually-minded enough to realize what's at stake in their own marriage.

More is on the line in your marriage than just your own happiness - or mom and dad's opinion - or what other folks think - or even what's best for the kids...

When a marriage gets in trouble, why is it nobody asks, **"What does God think?"**
"What's best for God?"

All too often, we fall victim to the daily grind - the hustle and bustle. Our lives start spinning out of control and a lot of what we do no longer makes sense to us...

Even our marriage. We neglect our own spouse, and forget the significance of marriage in general.

The vows we took no longer ring in our ears. Couples lose sight of the big picture. They nurse little hurts, and forget the larger issues at play in marriage.

Here's an illustration... One of the most exciting spectacles in college football is performed by the Ohio State Buckeye Band. It's a routine called "[Script Ohio](#)."

The performance has been a tradition since 1936.

Before a packed stadium of 105,000 Buckeye fans the marching band spells the word "[Ohio](#)" across the field. The climax comes when one of the sousaphone players dots the "[I](#)." He struts out to a tuft of grass marked by the drum major - then bows to the crowd.

The stadium goes nuts... [Well, see for yourself...](#)

Here's my point, if you're watching the band members from the sidelines - down on ground level - I'm sure their movements look confusing and chaotic.

You can't make out what's being drawn on the field.

It's only when you're high in the bleachers, or in the blimp overhead, that you see what's being spelled out.

And this is true in marriage. We're actors in a divine drama. God has a role for the wife to play - and a role for the husband to play. And by each spouse staying in step they spell out heavy, eternal, spiritual truths.

But these roles are only seen, and understood, and appreciated from a higher vantage point - from God's perspective. You've got to get above the day to day.

On the playing field marriage can look random and chaotic. You don't see the reason for all the movement.

But view a biblical marriage from in the blimp - *from God's perspective*, and you'll see clearly what's going on. Marriage suddenly makes sense. From heaven's perspective it's all being *scripted* according to plan.

It's interesting, one of the Ohio State band members stated, "I'd rather dot the "I" before I die than be president - because dotting the "I" is a bigger honor."

Here's another comment from one of the I-dotters, "I've dreamed of this moment from an early age. This is one of the biggest days of my life. It's probably what a wedding would be like!" *And I couldn't agree more...*

The Buckeye band's performance is exactly like a marriage. Every small movement in a marriage portrays a role in the big picture God wants to paint.

And if the Ohio State band members feel this way about dotting the "I" how much more privileged and honored should we be over our part in a divine drama?

Imagine, God is wanting to use you and your spouse to snap a photograph of salvation for the world to see.

Far more than 105,000 fans... Innumerable saints and angels are observing your marriage from heaven.

You can be sure your kids are watching closely.

Your friends and neighbors are also in the bleachers.
Even strangers observe how your marriage interacts.
As I said before, there's a lot more at stake in your marriage than just your own personal happiness.

German pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrote, "Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God's holy ordinance..."

In your love you see only your two selves in the world... only the heaven of your happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility towards the world and mankind. Your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal – it is a status, an office..."

I would imagine you got married because you loved the person to whom you said "*do*" - that's normally the case. But if you really understand what's at stake in marriage that's no longer your most important concern.

You're now embroiled in something far greater than your own love and happiness. *God has first dibs on the meaning of marriage.* All marriages belong to Him.

And God wants your marriage to bring Him glory. Heaven has its eyes on you and your marriage!

Certainly, God wants a marriage to be full of love, and happy times, but those times will become more frequent when *holiness* - *not happiness* - is our goal. There's a reason we once called it, "*holy matrimony.*"

With the time I have left this AM, I want us to begin to focus on the role-play between a husband and a wife.

How each spouse should march and stay in step...

According to Ephesians 5, a husband needs to act out Jesus' responsibilities to His Church - as the wife portrays the Church's duty and attitude toward Christ.

In short, **husbands should love their wives.**

And **wives should respect their husbands.**

Today, we're going to talk about the wife's role - *for no other reason than that's what comes first in the text.*

Next week we'll speak to the husbands.

Let's read again God's word to wives. Verses 22-24, **“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**

For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

As Christ is to the Church, the husband is the *Head* and *Savior* of his wife. Put the two together and it adds up to *servant leadership*. A Head provides leadership and coordination. A Savior rescues and enhances.

Whereas, the wife is called on to *"submit"* to her husband's leadership. *And the mere sound of that word causes some of you ladies to bristle up.* You'd think I'd just uttered a four-letter word rather than a six.

Wives, we've got some work to do this morning!...

The Greek word translated *"submit"* is *"hupotasso."* It means *"to arrange under."* The wife arranges or orders her life around her husband's. *She plays off his lead.*

It reminds me of Scottie Pippin. He had a successful basketball career for the Chicago Bulls, playing with the greatest player of his era, Michael Jordan. And that worked in Scottie's favor. Jordan drew the double teams, and would pass to a wide open Pippin. Scottie got rebounds when defenders left him to stop Jordan.

Scottie Pippin became a superstar in his own right, by letting Jordan be Jordan, and playing off his lead.

And this is what a submissive wife does. She lets her husband lead and tailors her game to complement him.

The Chicago Bulls won six NBA championships because Scottie Pippin reeled it in, and accepted a subordinate role. *He acted for the good of the team.*

If he'd fought Jordan for control the Bulls would've been a second tier team. Rather he embraced his role in a bigger mission. *This is the attitude of a godly wife.*

For the glory of God and the good of her marriage she *"submits."* *Submission* is living *"sub"* or *"under the mission of God's plan for marriage."* A godly wife sees the big picture. It's God's wedding portrait and both she and her husband have a special role to play.

This is what Paul means in verse 22 by adding the caveat, "*as to the Lord.*" A godly wife sees submission to her husband as part of her obedience to Christ.

Some domineering men misinterpret the phrase "*as to the Lord*" to mean a wife should obey her husband to the same extent she obeys Christ. That's a wrong understanding... The Bible requires total submission to no one but Jesus. A wife's submission has limits.

If following her husband causes her to compromise her faith - she should obey Jesus, not her husband!

In Acts 5, when the Jewish Sanhedrin told Peter to stop preaching Christ, he told them, "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*" There's always limits on our submission to human authority - whether it's *a husband, or an employer, or a pastor, or a government.*

Again the phrase "*as to the Lord,*" means that for a believing wife submission to her husband is part of her Christian discipleship. She follows Jesus, by following her husband. She trusts the Lord to guide her spouse.

I once read a Newsweek article entitled, "*How To Stay Married.*" The reporter interviewed younger couples who were committed to marriage, and wanted to make theirs last. But none of them had agreed on a structure that really worked. One couple was quoted...

"*With both our parents the father is king and the mother is subordinate. We want our relationship to be much more equal.*" But the article added, "*Neither of them has figured out how to translate that into reality.*"

Here's the problem... two heads sounds like a great idea, until you try it in the arena of the day to day. Over time it's unworkable. Two heads are against nature.

Your body has one head, not two. If it had two heads you'd always be arguing with yourself... The same is true in marriage. In marriage *there's discussion - even debate* - but ultimately someone has to cast the deciding vote, and in God's portrait *that's the husband*.

I've heard it put this way, **“Marriage is like riding a horse. Only one person at a time can ride in the front.”**

Certainly, none of this means *a wife can't have a life!*

Of course, she can. She should pursue her own interests and ambitions. But submission means she chooses to arrange her pursuits around her husband.

Once Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, commented, **“The best advice I can give to unmarried girls is to marry someone you don't mind adjusting to. God tailors the wife to fit the husband, not the husband to fit the wife.”**

When it comes to most decisions at the Adams' house I solicit my wife's opinion. *Hey, I'd be dumb not too.* She's a wise woman with the gift of discernment.

But Kathy and I have agreed that we want our marriage to paint a divine picture. Thus, she's cool with me having the ultimate call. I take that responsibility.

At the Adams' house, **“the buck stops with the buck.”**

One day God will hold me - not my wife - responsible for the overall direction of our family. Kathy's role is *to support and submit*. My role is *to love and to lead*.

Let me say, I'm sure you can conjure up other marital arrangements that work for a time. But God's plan is about more than "*what works*." It's about the spiritual truths that He wants to convey through the institution of marriage... Recall marriage is God's idea - not yours or mine - and He can arrange it anyway He pleases.

Actually, "*what works*" may be the last consideration in a marriage. In most marriages God's blueprint is probably the least rational or logical arrangement. For generally speaking, *women are smarter than men*.

I'll never forget a quote from the former mayor of Ottawa, Canada. Charlotte Whitton was giving advice to young girls on what it takes for women to succeed in politics. She observed, "*Whatever women must do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good*." And then she said, "*Luckily, this is not difficult*."

It's often true, the wife is smarter than her husband.

And this is why women struggle so with this concept of submission. They're tempted to take the reins from their husbands, since it's so easy for them to do so.

Usually the man is dense. A wife is quicker to *figure things out* and *size things up*. That's why she has to have patience and trust the Lord to grow her husband.

Recently, I went to the library to do some research. I asked for the book, "*Man, the superior species*." The librarian laughed and pointed to the fiction section.

I've heard it put, "*If you think men and women are equal just watch a man try to wrap a Christmas present*." Women have gifts that men secretly envy.

It reminds me of the time after the fall of man when Adam and Eve got into an argument. Adam shouted at Eve, “How in the world could God have made you so beautiful and yet so dumb at the same time.”

Eve answered, “God made me beautiful so you would marry me. And dumb so I would marry you.”

This is my point, *why should men lead and women follow?* In the end, there’s only one reason - and it’s not as *logical* as it is *biblical*. The reason men need to lead and women should follow is because **God said so!**

This is God’s order for marriage and for the Church. It’s the role-play He wants conducted among us.

Years ago, there was a billboard on Highway 78 that advertised Virginia Slims cigarettes. A pretty woman was blocking the path of a young man. The ad’s caption read, “Who cares who wears the pants?”

Every time I drove passed that billboard I would scream, **God does! God cares who wears the pants!**

If you need more proof than Ephesians 5, read 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Peter 3, etc, etc...

If you’re a Christian, your marriage should be God’s wedding picture! At home and in church God uses gender to portray heavy, spiritual, eternal realities.

We preach the Gospel when **husbands lead** and **wives submit**. *And folks notice.* Ladies, your girlfriends will ask you, “Why do you submit to your husband?”

Suddenly, that becomes a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel and your relationship with Jesus.

I'm not a big fan of all the modern translations of the Bible that are on the market – but recently I read a verse from the Amplified Version that intrigued me.

Ephesians 5:33 in the Amplified tells us, “However, let each man of you [without exception] love his wife as [being in a sense] his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly].” *Wow, did they leave anything out?*

Men, if you want to run to the bookstore and purchase a few copies - that's *The Amplified Bible*. But let me sum up the verse in a single word... **respect**.

Read again verse 33, “*Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband...*” **Wives need love, while husbands need respect.**

Think about it, God knew before time began that He would order the family as He has. Thus, there's no surprise that He would wire the sexes accordingly...

Since husbands are told to love their wives, it's interesting that **wives need their husband's love**.

And since wives are to submit to their husbands, it's no surprise that a **husband's biggest need is his wife's respect**. Paul doesn't even tell the wives to love their husbands. A man feels your love through your respect!

In Dr. Laura Schlessinger's book, "The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands," she makes a big deal about a man's need for respect. She quotes a few callers into her radio show who focus on this point...

A man named "Dan" writes this... "Men need only appreciation, honest love, and respect. This will be repaid by laying the moon and stars at your feet for your pleasure. There is no need to "work" a man to get what you want. We live to take care of a wife, family, and home. Just remember that we are men, and know that our needs are simple, but they're not to be ignored. A good man is hard to find, not hard to keep."

Edgar says this, "There are a few things that men want so bad they would do anything for it. I think a good number of men want respect more than love."

And here are comments from three female callers...

Tammy makes this statement, "My father's advice when I married was, "You are marrying a man. Always treat him like one, and he will always act like one."

A woman named Wendi had this to say, "It is easy for a woman to love; that is the way God made her. It is more difficult for her to show respect."

Finally Janette, "I think men need respect - and the more respect they're shown, the more love they give in return..." All three of these women know about men!

Ladies, please realize the opposite of *submission* is **competition**. God created woman to *complement* her husband - not *compete* with him for control. Trust me, a battle of the sexes is not what your marriage needs.

Here's a truth every woman needs to hear... **When a wife declares war on her husband, he cannot win.**

If a wife wants to fight her husband for the reins of the family, that man is destined to be miserable.

Men are taught from an early age **not to fight with girls**. The outcome is never, ever good for the guy.

If the man hits her back, that's bad - he'll sleep on the couch - or go to jail - or she'll leave with the kids, and stick him with some hefty alimony payments.

Whereas, if the husband caves in, he's not a real man. He feels castrated. He was beat up by a girl.

For a time a husband may try to shout, and scream, and argue with a rebellious wife - but he's not as good with words - or tears - as his wife. He can't compete.

So here's what most guys do... **They withdraw.**

They vacate. They *live in the garage*, or *hang out with their buddies*, or *work a lot of overtime*, or *take up golf*, or *get season tickets*, or they just *go fishing*.

They abandon the headship and leadership of their family. **If a wife wants to lead her husband will let her!**

Proverbs 19:13 states, **"The contentions of a wife are a continual dripping."** Ever had a dripping faucet?

It's not a pleasant sound. It drives you nuts.

Water torture is the way wartime armies interrogate their prisoners, and pry out from them national secrets.

A competitive wife who undermines her husband's leadership is a form of torture. Proverbs 21:19 puts it, *“Better to dwell in the wilderness (total isolation is preferred), than with a contentious and angry woman.”*

Here's my point! Husbands can lovingly lead their wives - just like Jesus leads the Church – but a wife can either undermine or undergird that leadership.

I know Christian men who plaster a smile across their face and mask a deep-down hurt they feel inside.

It's painful to be stripped of your manhood - to be emotionally castrated day after day - to be taken for granted, disrespected, get treated like a boy instead of a man... *And the wife wonders why he's so distant...*

Once, a new group of male applicants arrived in Heaven. Peter looked them over and said, *“Alright, I want all the henpecked husbands on my left, and all those husbands who were bold leaders on my right.”*

The crowd began to shuffle and rearrange. Finally, everyone was on Peter's left, except for one fellow.

Peter looked at him, and demanded to know, *“You mean to tell me you're the only man in heaven who stood up and refused to be dominated by his wife?”*

The man answered him, *“Listen, please don't get mad at me. I'm just where my wife told me to stand.”*

Ladies, men are real simple. Caring for a husband is like operating a broom. We're not real complicated.

Men are different from women. You don't have to throw a lot of switches. Men are predictable. They're not rocket science. *They thrive off their wife's respect.*

God calls the husband to lead - but if he's to be the leader his wife really desires - he needs her respect.

In fact, a wife can say she loves her husband all she wants, but he doesn't acknowledge her love - it doesn't register - until it's shown in the form of her respect.

Wives, the way your husband measures love is not by words, or mushiness, *but do you show him respect?*

Do you appreciate what he does for you and the kids, or do you always complain? He's never enough?

Do you value his efforts, or do you ignore them?

Do you chip at his confidence with biting remarks?

The late, Pastor EV Hill, struggled financially in the early days of his ministry. One night he came home to a dark house. He opened the door, and saw that his wife, Jane, had prepared a candlelight dinner for two.

He thought, "*How nice*", and went into the restroom to wash his hands. But the light wouldn't turn on.

He flipped the switch on and off, but the darkness prevailed. The young pastor walked into the kitchen, and asked his wife why there was no electricity...

She started to cry, "*You work so hard. We're trying, but I didn't have money to pay the bill. I didn't want to discourage you, so I thought we'd eat by candles.*"

Dr. Hill finishes his story, “Jane could’ve said, ‘*I’ve never been in this situation before. I was reared in the home of a father who provided for his family - who never let his lights be cut off.*’ She could’ve demoralized me. Instead she said, ‘*Somehow we’ll get the lights back on. But tonight let’s eat by candles...*’”

Ladies, your part is to submit to your husband and show him respect. *But that’s understating your role...*

Because of how God wires a husband, your respect has a powerful sway over him for better or worse.

You can lift him up with your support - or you can tear him down with your disrespect. “*But my husband doesn’t deserve my respect! He’s made so many mistakes.*” And you’re right. He probably deserves your respect as much as you deserve the love of Jesus...

In the end, a wife submits to her husband, *not when he deserves it, but because God commands it...*

God is painting a picture.

It’s a wedding photo of Christ and His Church - *and He wants you and your spouse to pose for the picture!*

Husband, love your wife like Jesus loves...

And wife, respect and submit to your husband...

Here’s a final question... If little, green Martians landed a flying saucer in your backyard, and approached your kids, “*Take me to your leader?*”

Would your kids take them to Mom or Dad?

If the kids would get it wrong - or draw a blank - it means the picture that's being painted isn't very clear.

Let's make sure the roles we're playing in our marriage are faithful to the picture God wants drawn.

Does anybody see Jesus and the Gospel in your marriage? Remember, we are God's wedding pictures!