

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

In Ephesians 5:21, Paul says that all Spirit-filled people will submit to one another – they will consider the best interest of others and sacrificially serve one another. Having given this universal application of mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21, Paul now turns to address specific applications of submission within the household, starting with the relationship between the husband and the wife.

The Voluntary Submission of the Wife (v. 22-24)

To “submit” is to yield to the wishes of another person, or to demonstrate an inclination toward that behavior. And “head” here refers to authority. Remember, Paul is telling wives to submit to their husbands in everything, but he is *not* requiring wives to blindly and silently obey. He’s *not* inferring that their husbands will be their saviors. And he’s *not* encouraging them to tolerate manipulation, coercion, or abuse.

- What is your “gut level” response to Paul’s instruction here? Why?
- How do Paul’s instructions stand in contrast to predominant cultural messages about men, woman, and authority today?
- Do you struggle to believe that men or marriage are redeemable? What would it look like to move toward faith, not cynicism?
- Is submitting to others difficult for you? Do you think it would be difficult to submit to a husband? Explain.

The Loving Leadership of the Husband (v. 25-30)

- If you want to be married, how should your understanding of the roles of husband and wife give you sobriety as you think about the kind of man you want to marry?
- What does it look like to have healthy expectations of men – not expecting perfection, but expecting clear direction?
- What would it look like to encourage and affirm your brothers in Christ toward their call to loving leadership in normal, everyday life?

The Mysterious Reflection of the Gospel (v. 31-33)

Adam and Eve’s marriage was a shadow of a far greater and more beautiful marriage: the marriage of Christ to His church, which is a mystery hidden for ages but now revealed in Christ. We are now to understand human marriage in light of Christ and His church, with the husband as the head who exercises *loving leadership* on behalf of his wife and the wife as the body who exercises *voluntary submission* on behalf of her husband. *Together*, the husband and the wife mimic *a beautiful, transcendent reality that far exceeds them both*: the

eternal, redemptive marriage of Christ to His Church. Sin didn't *create* headship and submission, sin *broke* headship and submission. And *now* Christ is redeeming them.

- How does this truth shape your perspective on marriage and on the role of the husband and the wife in marriage?
- Are you tempted to make marriage a “first thing” in life? How can you fight to keep God as the “first thing” in life and to keep marriage in its proper place as a “second thing”?