

### **Ephesians 5:22-6:4 (DHT)**

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.*

*Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to himself in glory, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands are to 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 cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, since we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself and the wife is to respect her husband.*

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is righteous. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may be well with you and your life may be long on the earth.” And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but nourish them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

### **Husband and Wife**

Our passage today in Ephesians is the grand reveal of one of the oldest mysteries of time. Paul tells us that marriage is a metaphor for the oneness God desires to have with his people through the Gospel. Marriage is a metaphor for the oneness achieved by the Gospel. We see the beginnings of this in the first marriage in Genesis 2-3.

The LORD God formed an ‘*adam* from the *adamah*—he formed a man from the earth. There’s a little wordplay here. This is a creature of the earth; an earthling. The LORD God planted a garden *in* Eden and placed this earthling in it. And there was one river that flowed out of the garden and became four rivers. Gen. 2:10 uses this Hebrew word *rosh*—this is the word for head; the one river in the garden has headship of the four rivers that go out to the ends of the earth. And so, the concept of headship involves a singular head whose influence or source of nourishment extends out to others. The LORD God gave the earthling commands to serve and guard, and to obey one prohibition, and then for the first time God declared something not good:

man’s aloneness. So the LORD God fashioned for the man a helper like him for him, so that he could serve, guard, and obey, which he could not do alone. This English word “helper” has been poorly used to perpetuate the invalid view that women are inferior to men. Elsewhere, such as in the Psalms, this word is used to describe God as our helper or God as the source of our help, so a conclusion of female-inferiority on account of Eve’s status as helper just will not do. Additionally Adam’s response when he sees her conveys no such inferiority; what he sees is rather glorious. His first impression; his opening pickup line is a poem: *At last, this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called ishah because she was taken out of ish.* He sees both sameness and differentness in her and communicates it with a beautiful word play. Her obvious, visual differences do not take away his recognition of her fundamental sameness; a helper like him whose source was God so that together they could serve and guard this sacred space and obey the one prohibition together.

Genesis 2 ends by saying *therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* This story is the foundational principle for all marriages. A man’s aloneness is not good; God provides for him a wife who he is to cherish with all the expressions of his heart, a wife who prompts him to worship God. He is to leave his old family and cleave to his wife to start a new family; and they are to experience oneness in a unique way; in physical, emotional, and every other aspect of what it means to be human, in their and your covenant union there is to be a total, unashamed oneness with one another.

We unfortunately know what happens next. The serpent entered the scene and deceived Eve: *she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate* (Gen. 3:6). Eve disobeyed the command first, but when the LORD God reentered the scene, he went first to Adam. Then the LORD God issued curses against the serpent and the ground and punishments against Adam and Eve in the opposite order they first appeared. And so after they disobeyed his command, the LORD God began and ended his discussion with his people by speaking to the man. Even though she disobeyed first, the LORD God held Adam responsible, *because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat.* These events do not speak to an inherent weakness in Eve; but rather a dismal failure on the part of Adam to properly exercise his headship for his wife, and for his passivity, *he* is held responsible. As a result of the Fall, the harmonious, functional differences between a husband and his wife are disturbed on both ends, with husbands more

prone to exert patriarchal dominance and wives more prone to grasp for the specific responsibility reserved for husbands.

The Fall tarnished the creation-design for the oneness of marriage. After the punishments were handed out, Adam named his wife Eve because she would be the mother of life, a reference to the seed the LORD God prophesied would come from her to defeat the serpent. They remain married, they faced their consequences together, they shared the same hope in the messianic seed that would come from her, and then they obeyed the command to be fruitful and multiply.

Several times, Paul speaks of male-headship in marriage as a good design of creation. In 1 Cor. 11(:3, 8-12), Paul writes “I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God... For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman but woman for man... Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is neither independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.” Paul frames male-headship *specifically in marriage* in terms of Adam and Eve’s prototype union.

And in 1 Timothy 2(:12-15), Paul writes “I do not permit a wife to teach or usurp authority from her husband... For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived... Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if *they* continue in faith and...self control.” Paul, again, frames male-headship *specifically in marriage* in terms of Adam and Eve’s prototype union, where Paul readily admits the fact that Eve was the one who disobeyed first, yet Adam was held responsible. When the serpent stepped in, Adam should have stepped up; his passivity when it came to his wife’s interactions with the Word of God resulted in a failure on his part to protect his wife from spiritual harm. Paul’s commentary on the Eden narrative hits three of the big movements of Scripture: creation of man then woman, the fall through their disobedience, and redemption through faith in the promise of a messianic seed who would save them from the headship of the serpent.

In our Ephesians passage, Paul says that Christian husbands ought to model their headship in marriage after Christ’s headship of the church. How does Paul describe Christ’s headship? In our passage, he gives us seven ways that define Christ’s headship. Our passage says 1) Christ loved the church, even though we don’t deserve it. 2) Christ was willing to give up his own life for the sake of the church and in fact *did* give up his life for the church. 3) Christ is the source of the church’s sanctification—a big Christianese word that simply means to make holy

or to cleanse—and Christ did this by teaching and conveying the Word to the church. 4) Christ’s motivation for doing these things was to make the church gloriously beautiful; a delight for him. 5) Christ understood that to have oneness, he was unable to love himself without first loving the church. 6) Christ spiritually nourishes and cares for the church ahead of himself. And 7) Just as the church lives vicariously through Christ, so also Christ lives vicariously through the church, again speaking of oneness.

To those of you who are husbands, are you doing these things to and for your wife? 1) Do you love your wife, even when she doesn’t deserve it? 2) Are you willing to put yourself in harm’s way; even give up your own life to protect your wife? 3) Are you actively participating in your wife’s sanctification journey by discussing God’s word together regularly? 4) Do you have eyes for just your wife, finding her to be the standard of beauty none else can distract you from? 5) Do you recognize that what you think of yourself is truly reflected in how you treat your wife? 6) Is the regular spiritual nourishment of your wife a primary concern to you? And 7) are you modeling for your wife the gracious behavior of one who believes in the death and resurrection of Christ, namely by leading in offering forgiveness?

There are a lot of misconceptions about what biblical headship is. Notice, then, what Christ-like headship is *not*. 1) Christ-like headship is not domineering leadership in which husbands micromanage and have the final say on every little decision. 2) Christ-like headship does not require a wife to be a stay-at-home-mom or to make less money than her husband if she does work. 3) Christ-like headship does not mean a wife is unable to engage or dialogue with her husband about matters of the Word. 4) Christ-like headship does not mean that husbands must always be stoic and wives must always be emotional. 5) Christ-like headship does not mean that husbands must always be physically strong and wives must always be physically weak. 6) Christ-like headship does not mean women are inferior or subordinate to men. And 7) Christ-like headship does not protect the male gender from the effects of equality, but rather promotes the protection and well-being of wives.

You can see how all of these misconceptions of Christ-like headship distort the Gospel in some way. Two of the most frequent descriptions of Jesus in the Bible are compassion and gentleness. Even the areas of our western culture that still see distinctions between men and women get this wrong, for the image of masculinity they portray is anything but compassionate or gentle. Their definition of masculinity is macho physical strength and becoming a sexual

conqueror. One social media influencer on the topic of masculinity recently contributed nothing to the conversation when he said, “I have yet to meet a man I’d rather be.” Or in other words, it’s all about me; it’s the competitive edge; more man than the next guy—but any Christian conception of masculinity should be fixed on Christ, and Christ’s example was others-oriented rather than self-oriented. And the first “other” toward which a husband ought to be oriented is his wife. Headship in marriage means that a husband is held responsible by God as the spiritual nourisher and protector of his wife.

Marriage is a big deal in the Bible. Israel’s covenant with God at Mount Sinai is treated as a marriage. He is their God alone and they would be his people. For them to worship idols or to chase other gods violates their exclusive covenant with God. The prophets frequently target Israel’s idolatry in terms of spiritual adultery. Consider the prophet Hosea. He was commanded by God to marry a prostitute, knowing she would be unfaithful to him but he was to be faithful to her as a symbol of what God does with his people. He became their husband and they became his wife but then they went after other gods. The most sexually graphic chapter of the Bible is Ezekiel 16, followed closely by Ezekiel 23, both of which describe the adultery of God’s bride through their idolatrous practices. Paul says the same thing in 2 Corinthians 11(:1-4), “I wish you would bear with me... For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus...you put up with it.” Paul is making the same argument: worshipping other gods; bowing down to idols; chasing after false gospels that tickle your ears are forms of spiritual adultery, because as Christians we take up that mantle of being the Bride of Christ.

Marriage is a big deal in the Bible because in marriage the two become one. In marriage two individuals experience oneness; this oneness is what God desires to have with his people. God wants to be one with us. Is it any wonder the first miracle of Jesus took place at a wedding (John 2)? Is it any wonder Jesus compared the Kingdom of God with a wedding feast (Matt. 22)? And is it any wonder Jesus called himself the groom (Matt. 9:15; Mark 2:19; Luke 5:34)? The Bible begins with a wedding and the Bible ends with a wedding. Rev. 19 speaks of marriage as a metaphor for oneness in this way: “Then I heard [in heaven] what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude...crying out, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty Reigns. Let us

rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his Bride has made herself ready; [clothed with]...the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage of the Lamb.’” And right after this marriage in Rev. 20, the serpent, who is the devil and Satan, was bound, defeated, and thrown into eternal judgment never to return again. And in Rev. 21, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth...and I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, and I heard a loud voice from the throne” announcing that oneness had finally been consummated and achieved. Marriage is a big deal in the Bible because the mystery of marriage reveals the oneness God desires with his people, which is accomplished for us by God through the Gospel.

### **Parents and Children**

Immediately after his most extensive teaching on marriage, Paul goes right into the topic of children. To Paul the biblical family is defined primarily as a husband and wife, and then this family unit frequently extends also to children. This is where Paul directly quotes from the fifth commandment. “You shall honor your father and mother...” The Ten Commandments were given primarily to adult males who were independent from their father and mother.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the command extended to all the People of God (Lev. 19:3; Deut. 4:10; 6:2), but the initial audience were independent, adult males. This command is not just for children. You do not graduate or age out of the fifth commandment. The Bible has strong feelings about the sanctity of family, because the family unit is the first layer of authority God delegates over us, which in turn is the first layer of our practice of submission (Eph. 6:1-4). And in our passage, Paul points out that this is the first of the Ten Commandments with a promise attached.

What is he referring to? In Deuteronomy 6, the chapter immediately following the Ten Commandments, the most influential family plan of history is provided.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk about them when you sit in your house, walk by the way, lay down, and when you rise. [You shall bind

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<sup>1</sup> Sailhamer, 286.

them on your wrist, your forehead, and around your house]... When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, statutes, and rules the LORD our God has commanded you?’ then you shall tell your son [God’s story of covenant-redemption]. And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes...*always for our good*, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us [my son].”

The Bible places the task of teaching the way and story of God’s covenant-redemption not on synagogue leaders once a week but on parents every day, with an emphasis on fathers.

What are children to do? Solomon writes much about how to honor one’s father and mother in the Book of Proverbs. Here are a few examples:

6:20-22 – Keep your father’s commandment, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.

13:1 – A wise son hears his father’s instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to a rebuke.

15:5 – A fool despises his father’s instruction, but whoever heeds a rebuke is wise.

19:26-27 – He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach. Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.

23:22-25 – Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old... the father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.

And 31:26-29 – [The excellent wife] opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of stillness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.

There is a pattern here for how Proverbs works out what it means to honor father and mother, and it is primarily by listening, obeying, and holding onto their teaching of Scripture and their leading in the way of the Lord.

I’m not entirely sure how young I was, definitely early elementary aged, but for whatever reason I had it in me that I was going to make my own translation of the Bible. What I was doing was taking the NIV and just rewriting it in my own words. She caught wind of this when I had

made it to Genesis 3 and told me that on the *last page* of the Bible it says not to add or take away any of the words of Scripture and that I should be careful. Her gentle words prompted me to go look at the last page and sure enough there it was and it had some pretty horrible things to say about those who do such a thing, and so I stopped. Fast-forward to now and when I do Bible translation for sermons, Sunday School, or seminary papers (from the Hebrew and Greek, not the NIV), I can’t shake the heaviness that comes with the task and I hope I never do. Proverbs tells us that by listening to, obeying, and holding onto our parents teaching of Scripture and their leading in the way of the Lord is what it means to honor our father and mother; resulting in the father and mother of such a child being filled with gladness later in their lives that prompts them to rejoice and praise God.

This means that parents do not sit back and insist on being honored by their children; rather they actively participate in teaching and leading their children in the instruction of the Lord, which is exactly what the family plan of Deut. 6 says. Parents are commanded to instruct their children and children are commanded to listen and act upon that instruction even in their adulthood. Paul picks up on this two-way street in our passage when he pairs honoring father and mother with the teaching and leadership role of fathers specifically. Children are commanded to obey their parents, and fathers are commanded to *nourish* their children without stirring up negative emotions—this same word is used earlier in our passage to describe his headship of his wife—fathers are to *nourish* their children in the way of the Lord and in the instruction of Scripture. Just as with their wives, the regular spiritual *nourishment* of their children ought to be of primary concern to Godly fathers.

The fifth commandment speaks specifically to children honoring father and mother; and yet the way all of Scripture works this out reflects the enduring value of the *entire* family unit. Paul summarizes all of these things in Col. 3:18-21: “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may become discouraged.”

At some point, the larger-church culture placed the task of raising the children squarely on mothers. In Prov. 31 it is the excellent wife, yet in Eph. 6 and Col. 3, it is the excellent husband who raises his children in the way of the Lord through the teaching of the Word. This is not something reserved for church leaders one morning a week. This is something that happens

regularly—daily—in the home by *both* father and mother who later in life are filled with joy when their children recognize the goodness in what they were taught and follow their parents as their parents follow Christ.

### **Conclusion and Gospel Presentation**

The sanctity of family begins with marriage; when the two become one; when a man leaves his old family to form a new family with his wife, in which he exercises a Christ-like headship setting the vision for discipleship in their home. The sanctity of family extends also to the raising of children who are to be taught by parents to love the LORD our God with all their heart, soul, and might, and children who are to honor their parents by listening, obeying, and holding onto their parents’ spiritual leadership, example, and teaching. Just like the first headship in the Bible refers to the River of the Garden of Eden extending nourishment to others, so also are men who step into the role of husband and father to extend nourishment to their wife and children by regularly reading the Word with them, and telling them the story of God’s covenant-redemption in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ, the promised seed of Eve, was born in the likeness of men and took the form of a servant. He anointed others with his compassionate and gentle presence. He spoke the truth in love and with grace, especially when it came to acknowledging the sinfulness of our world. He lived a life of perfect obedience, humbly submitting himself to the will of his Father, who would vindicate his vicarious death on the cross to pay for the sins of our sinful world when, after death, he would see and be satisfied that his death had made many to be righteous. Jesus lived the life we fail to live. He died in our place the death our sins deserve. And he was raised from the dead as the victorious, conquering king over the last enemy, death. Though the serpent had injured the Messianic seed on the cross, the Messiah delivered the head-crushing blow that first Easter morning when the women first preached the greatest news the world has ever known: He is not here; Christ is risen; Jesus is alive!

And all who believe in his resurrection, which one can only do by faith—all who believe will be forgiven of their sins, given a new heart, indwelt by the Holy Spirit who empowers you right now to die daily to the self-centeredness of our culture; the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God comes to live in you, giving you a foretaste of what oneness with God will be like in the age to come. And those who believe in Christ’s victorious resurrection are given the promise that

they will enter that age to come, to live in the New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ where we will live with Christ our Husband, wearing the wedding gown of our sanctification, and with whom we will enjoy totally unashamed oneness from everlasting to everlasting.

Let’s pray.