

**CAPITAL BIBLE CHURCH
SERMON NOTES**

**June 10, 2018
PASTOR AJ MILLER**

**Series: What's the church?
"Biblical Marriage"
Ephesians 5:22-33**

Headship and submission. Two words in today's culture that bring much negativity, scrutiny and a quick dismissal. In today's world, all men want to hear is that they are the head of their household; all women do not want to hear that they must be submissive. Trouble is already brewing in your minds. I would imagine that most of you are feeling uneasy at this moment. Everyone in here has an opinion or belief on what Paul is saying or at the very least, an interpretation that we have molded to fit our own personal beliefs. This passage is a puzzling passage. What is Paul trying to say in this passage?

In this passage, Paul is establishing the nature of the church in both its macro and micro components. If what he says here about a fundamental building block of the human society, marriage, is false for our times today, in the 21st century, then we really have no reason to think that anything else he speaks about can be true. For something to be true, for the book of Ephesians to be true, for the Bible to be true, ALL of it must be true. If any part of it is false, all of it is false. The uncertainty to which such a conclusion subjects us to is clear when we remember that Paul says that "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). The present force of these two comparative statements, "the husband is the head of the wife" AND "Christ is the head of the church", signifies that if the husband is no longer head of the wife, then the headship of Christ over his church is also now uncertain. The significance of this uncertainty cautions us against cavalier dismissal of this text. Therefore, my primary task this morning is not to defend the presence or significance of the term "head" in this text, but to define its meaning. To this day, the husband is the head of the wife, just as, still to this day, Christ is the head of the church. But what does it mean to be the head?

Now, as I go through this passage this morning, what you need to understand is that the reason why this passage this morning is so important is because Paul directly links it to, the **GOSPEL**. I'm actually going to give you the main point right away, *the reason that men need to be the head of the home and the reason why women need to submit to their husband's headship is because this union is a direct picture of the Gospel.* So what does it mean to be the head and what does it mean to submit. We will understand both by understanding the Gospel.

What headship does not mean

First, to be the "head" cannot mean nothing. When Paul says that Christ is "head" of the church, we know this term is important – it is not nothing. Because Jesus gave himself out of love for his church to make it holy, radiant and blameless, we know that headship conveys the sense of taking responsibility for that which God commits to your care. The reason why I wanted to start here this morning is because I wanted to set the tone for this message. Many people look at this passage and only harp on the woman's responsibilities, not me. Out of these 11 verses, 3 verses tell the wife what they should do, but 10 verses tell the husband what they need to do. There is actually a greater amount of instruction to husbands than to wives. So men, listen up.

Second, husbands, do not use your headship as an excuse for passivity in your marriage. In the world today, there are husbands who will not expend the effort to do anything responsible in their homes and claim that they are exercising the prerogatives of biblical headship. But in reality, they are abandoning their biblical role. Abdication of responsibility is more common than domination. Being indifferent to the needs of your family is not biblical headship. Simply put, a husband's passivity equals avoidance of responsibility and his abdication of authority is as unbiblical as his abuse of it. Biblical headship does not mean nothing.

Headship **also does not mean** spiritual or personal superiority. Nowhere does the Bible define love as taking advantage of others for personal gain, as found in verse 25 when it says “love, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Think about it, Jesus gave up heavenly glory, lived in poverty, washed feet, suffered upon a cross, all for his bride, the church. Headship is not lording one’s position or power over another for personal gain.

What headship does mean

Headship clearly means an expression of authority. This conclusion is unavoidable when you see that Paul indicates that just as the church submits to Christ as its head, so the headship of a husband becomes the reasoning for the wife’s submission. Verse 24 breaks it down for us. The expectation is that the husband is the head of the wife. Then Paul gives us an example, as the church submits to Christ, and finally extends the expectation as broadly as possible by saying “in everything”. Paul is clearly wanting to express a concept of wide-ranging authority. But while “headship” signifies authority, it is also an expression of service.

There is a reason why only 3 verses talk to the wife and 10 verses talk to the husband, because these weighty words are directed more so at those in authority because they are the ones with the most to learn and adjust to this biblical social order. Paul is not removing authority but redefining it in terms of Christ’s sacrifice. Here is the radical nature of the church, slicing away the traditional notions of authority to establish the concept of a servant/leader, one whose authority is dedicated and directed toward the service of other’s wellbeing.

What is the reason for a Christian husband’s **servant/leader** role?

We must learn the purposes that God intends for those in this servant/leader role to clarify the definition of biblical headship. Not until we understand God’s reasons for the husband’s servant/leadership will we truly understand their biblical responsibilities. By seeing husband’s responsibilities through the lens of the Gospel, we learn that the role of Christian husbands is redemptive. Husbands are to be Christ to their wives. Husbands cannot understand their daily responsibilities in a marriage without understanding that their primary purpose as heads of their homes is to help all persons in the home fully understand the Gospel in their lives.

First role of servant/leadership: to glorify his wife

The exercise of biblical headship should enable a wife to know the fullness of God’s grace in her life. Husbands should follow the example of Christ who gave of himself to glorify the church. The radiant beauty that God desired for his spiritual spouse, he purchased with the price of his own blood. Our Lord submitted his life to glorifying his bride. Headship modeled on Christ’s redeeming work should instill in his wife the sense of divine value that God purposes for all his people. Men, your wives should feel extremely valuable to you, in the same way that God values her. Headship that does not confirm this value is actually a form of robbery because it takes from a person the knowledge that God values them beyond comprehension. One aspect of your role husbands, is to build up your wife, enable her to know fully and deeply her infinite worth to both you and to her Savior.

What are some ways that Scripture tells husbands to glorify, sanctify, present their wife without spot, wrinkle or blemish?

First, Jesus cleansed his bride by the washing with water through the Word of God. The first way we glorify our wives is to talk to them about God’s Word and consistently speak the truths found within the pages. It is the husband’s responsibility to aid his wife in sanctification (remember what that means, becoming more like Christ everyday) by making sure that the Word of God is present in the home. Living and reading Scripture in the home, as well as making sure the family regularly worships where Scripture is honored, are way that you help glorify your wife. Husbands, it is your responsibility to ensure that inside your home there is a steady diet of the

Word of God taught and witnessed by your actions. Again, put this in perspective of Jesus and the church. Jesus taught the church and sanctified the church. Men, you need to be doing the same.

Secondly, husbands need to follow the example of Christ who made his bride (the church) radiant to himself. The word splendor in verse 27 literally means glorious and radiant. This is the opposite of being dishonored. In this verse, Paul is showing us Christ's appreciation for the beauty of his bride. The obvious application is that husbands are to express their appreciation for the beauty, both internally and externally, of their wives. Men, tell your wife how much you appreciate them for who they are inside, and what they do and look like outside because if you don't, you diminish your wife and your marriage. God intends for a husband and wife to be attracted to one another, and one way to affirm this blessing of God is to tell them how much you love them internally and externally.

Third, verse 31 speaks of a husband's willingness to make his union with his wife take precedence over other family relationships, including his parents. This doesn't mean that we are not to honor our father and mother, but it does mean that his wife's needs take a higher priority.

Fourth, verse 29 speaks of feeding and caring for your wife as one feeds and cares for himself. To love your wife biblically, your physical resources should not be used selfishly. Money and stuff are to be used for the nurture of your wife. See, when a husband communicates Christlike, unconditional appreciation and love to his wife, she truly understands how precious she truly is.

Second role as servant/leader:

According to Scripture, neither men nor women (except those gifted with celibacy, look up 1 Cor. 7) will be all that God intends without their spouses. What this means is that biblical headship not only is designed for glorifying the wife, but it also has the purpose of sanctifying the husband and the wife. God intends for us to be complete, as mature in personal and spiritual development as we can be, before we meet him in heaven. The wife was made to complement and complete the husband. Eve was made to complement and complete Adam. Now don't think this is demeaning to the wife because think of it the other way, what does that say about the man. Unless the man is gifted for celibacy, he is incomplete without a wife. Because the two are to be one, if one side is damaged, demoralized or degraded by the other, neither will be complete or whole. My sanctification, my wholeness before God, cannot be complete without glorifying my wife. That's why Paul says the man who loves his wife loves himself.

So we learned the reasons for a Christian husband's servant/leader role, but what does a servant/leader look like?

First, is self-sacrifice. An essential part of being a servant/leader husband is using their headship selflessly. **EXAMPLE J.** Robertson McQuilkin was the president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary. He resigned prematurely because his wife, Muriel, developed Alzheimer's and her health was decreasing quickly. When Muriel was with him, she was content, but in his absence, she became panic-stricken and distressed. She would often walk from their house on campus to see him during the day many times, in fact, she would do it so frequently that at the end of the night, Robertson would take her shoes off and find her feet bloody from all the walking she did. He would then wash her feet, and this was a true act of selflessness. He left his position for the sole reason of taking care of his wife because he understood what being Christ to your spouse was really all about.

This is the leadership of humility, the headship of service, husbanding by service. A Christian husband leads by service. He heads his family through selfless love. Far from encouraging a husband to exercise his authority for personal privilege, the Bible takes care to direct a Christian husband to use his authority for the benefit of his wife and family. Therefore, biblical headship shifts the focus of the husband from taking charge to taking responsibility. Men, if your wife hates that you want to move the family to a distant town, doesn't want a

particular home, thinks that your child doesn't need another after school activity, doesn't want a certain kind of love-making, disagrees with your form of discipline of the children, believes an investment is unwise, don't pull your headship and authority card and say "too bad, that's what I have decided." Yes, biblical headship gives the man the final word however, without an understanding of biblical priorities, this definition of having the final say can be terribly misused. Instead of asserting your authority because "that's what you want and my family will have to deal with it," think about the good of your family and sacrifice for the good of the other. But here's the thing, the Bible in its infinite wisdom doesn't mandate a particular style, manner or set of behaviors. Biblical headship is simply the exercise of God-given authority whereby a man does all that is within his power to see that love, justice, and mercy rule in his home even when fostering such qualities requires his own personal sacrifice.

The **second** way to view being a servant/leader is that of Christ's sacrifice. The church is the bride of Christ. The church is both Christ's body, as we saw in Ephesians 4, and Christ's bride and therefore shows us that the two become one. This is what a Christian marriage should look like. For the husband, this ultimately means that a husband's love for his wife is intimately tied to his knowledge of Christ's love for us. If a husband or a wife is not secure in Christ's love, if we need control over another to have some confidence in ourselves, then we cannot love as Christ requires. Without a sure relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, we simply do not have the security or strength necessary to sacrifice for the good of another. Only when we rest in Christ's love can we reflect it. Husbands, we lead most clearly, most effectively, most authoritatively, and most like Christ when we live most sacrificially. God calls us to believe that to become a leader in our families, we need to exercise our gifts, abilities, talents, and rights in the service of our loved ones.

WOMEN don't think I wasn't going to get to you this morning.

The simplest question that we have to ask ourselves this morning is "what is a Christian wife to be?" The inescapable answer here for all who believe that the Bible is the authority and final word in all matters, is this, a Christian wife is to be submissive. However, we must carefully define using Scripture, what submission truly means and its biblical requirements and goals.

What submission does not mean:

Clearly submission does not mean nothing, just like we discovered earlier that "headship" does not mean nothing. The most obvious reason that we know that it doesn't mean nothing is the fact that Paul uses a comparative analogy by saying "wives submit to your husbands, as to the Lord." As all persons should arrange their lives under the righteous purposes of Jesus, so also wives should prioritize their lives relative to their husband's purposes in God's kingdom. Paul reiterates this by saying that as the church submits to Christ, her head, so also wives ought to submit to their husband's headship. As the church could never fulfill its purposes without submission to Christ, Paul reminds women that they can not fulfill their divine purposes without submission to their husband. And Paul goes one step further to make sure that his words are not misunderstood. Paul says that a wife is to submit to her husband, in everything. He doesn't leave room for misinterpretation.

But you might say, what if my husband is not a Christian, am I supposed to submit to him? Look at 1 Peter 3:1 "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives." If you husband is not a Christian, your conduct as a Christian wife could win him to the Lord. The instruction for wives to submit to their husbands is not a unique thing in the Bible. Paul writes about this in Ephesians, 1 Corinthians and Peter writes about it in 1 Peter. Clearly, submission does not mean nothing.

Ok, what does submission mean?

First, submission fulfills the purpose of completing another. Look at verses 31-32. A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. These words tell us that submission is

pouring yourself into the completion of another. It is the sacrificing of self to make a marriage and those in it whole. To the husband God gives authority for biblical headship that is designed to lead a family in paths of sacrificial service to God. To the wife God commits a willingness to honor and support the husband's leadership so that he can carry out these responsibilities. Each has the responsibility for the other to the end that the family unit is whole and healthy before God.

The goal of wholeness is so much more than a specific set of behaviors, meaning each couple has different personalities, gifts and experiences. We are not obligated to a simplistic set of rules that determines who takes the garbage out, who washes the dishes, who vacuums, or who runs the errands outside the house, just to name a few. The wife is not the only one who can cook. What if the husband enjoys cooking as a hobby and is good at it, can he not cook to serve his wife. Of course. The Bible wisely does not give specific examples within a household that the husband must do, or the wife must do. Each couple is different and will make their marriage work based on their gifts and talents. What the husband must ask himself is "Is my leadership self-serving or sacrificial?" and the wife must ask herself, "Have I truly, in everything, submitted my life to my husband's headship?"

The **second meaning** of the word submission also fulfills the purpose of glorifying another. We cannot give a definition of submission by arbitrary, cultural or merely traditional role assignments like who talks first, who writes the checks, or who gets to drive. Of course, a marriage goes awry if the husband abdicates responsibility in all areas or if a wife assumes authority by arranging and controlling the family in all areas. We cannot impose cultural or arbitrary rules on a Christian marriage because when we understand that biblical submission means the exercising of gifts for the glory of another, there is not one way to have a marriage. The infinitely rich and varied ways God dispenses gifts to bless his people should alert us to the futility and wrongness of trying to make all spouses glorify one another in the same way. I guarantee you, Stephanie and I's marriage is not like your marriage because Stephanie and I have different gifts and talents than you do in your marriage. That's why God gifts us general rules that all can follow and tailor to your specific marriage to make your marriage all that it can be.

Remember, husbands must never abuse their authority so that they do not rob her of your radiance. And at the same time wives are told not to disregard submission so that they rob their husbands of respect, as seen in verse 33. Submission necessarily honors and teaches others in the family to honor the husband's headship, otherwise respect is an empty word. We need to look at this respect part in light of the church and Christ. The church obeys the godly standards of the Savior, as a wife should honor the godly authority of her husband. But we need to remember that the church never loses the gifts and graces God provides. The church does not submit to Christ by singing a little softer, exercising intelligence a little less, or seeking to be of little influence in the world. That's not submission, that passivity, very different. Rather the church is called to arrange all her energies and abilities under the grand purpose of glorifying the Savior. To do less would not be submission, it would be disobedience. Biblical submission does not call women to suppress their gifts any more than the church is called to suppress her gifts. The gifts of the church are to fully exercised for the glory of another, In the same way a wife should fully express, not suppress, their gifts for the good of another.

Proper submission of gifts to the good of another may actually involve challenging another with the insights or righteousness that God has provided. A wife who suppresses all comment or action while a husband abuses a child or destroys himself with unwise choices is not exercising biblical submission. Simply abandoning another to his or her faults is not God's purpose for one he places in a marriage to make the other whole and glorious to God. Challenge must be expressed with love and respect. Here is the bottom line, although Paul clearly assigns differing purposes to husbands and wives, he just as clearly exempts no one from the requirement of having the attitude that was also in Christ Jesus who made himself nothing and became obedient to God's call for selfless sacrifice. In Christ's kingdom submission does not lessen believers' standing, it confirms their place. Christians' responsibilities vary, their value does not.

By submitting in a biblical manner to her husband, she receives the dignity, value, and glory of fulfilling what God commands wives to be. See, by acting in biblical submission, she completes her husband and enables him to fulfill God's purpose for himself and the family. I would not be where I am today without the support, strength, help and encouragement that Stephanie has given to me. And in the future, I won't become all that God needs me to be if she is not in the picture. Stephanie completes me, she makes me whole, she builds me up and encourages me. I forget where I heard this but this man said "if everything in my life were to turn against me, and the only thing I had was the love, respect and encouragement of my wife, I'd be good." Wives, I'm not sure you realize how much your husband needs your respect, encouragement and support. And husbands, I'm not sure we realize how much our wives need our love, gratitude and appreciation.

Now for the church as a whole.

Our church simply cannot expect to be heard in this society without trumpeting the glory and value of the biblical purposes women serve. If we do not teach what the Bible says, no one will. We cannot expect Christian wives to desire the role God has designed for them if the church does not vigorously defend the dignity of that responsibility and give honor to those who assume it. When Christian women know they are respected for honoring their biblical responsibilities, then they are fulfilled and dignified by the expression of their gifts in behalf of another. Wives, hear me this morning, you are vital, extremely vital to the effectiveness of ministry within this church. If I didn't have Stephanie in my corner, I wouldn't be able to do what God has made me to do. And the same is true for each and every single one of you in here.

And I will leave you with this story

In a local church, there was a couple who had been married for more than 60 years. The husband's Bible was worn and used from decades of notes, cross-indexed pages and wisdom from his life. It was a Bible masterpiece of love and knowledge. However, the husband faced health challenges with his increasing age that sometimes challenged his memory. On one Sunday morning, he could not find the book of Esther when the pastor announced the passage of the sermon. He flipped through the pages, look confused and then flipped through more pages with desperation growing on his face. His frantic motions caught the eye of his wife sitting next to him. And with a movement of her hand as subtle as a whispered kiss, she reached over and turned his Bible to the appropriate page. Then, without looking at him she smiled and patted his knee in reassurance.

The gestures were so simple and subtle but greatly demonstrated a love that had matured in the Lord for more than 60 years. She used her gifts to support him in his worship and she showed respect for him even in his limitations. She didn't make a scene, cause disrespect or dishonor to come to him because of his limitations. She simply helped him and brought dignity to herself and pleasure to God.

Men, love you wives like Christ loves the church. And women, submit to your husbands just as the church submits to Christ. This is the picture of the Gospel, that's why husbands need to love their wives and wives need to submit to their husband. IT'S ABOUT THE GOSPEL! Its about the relationship the church has with Jesus. That is why biblical marriage is so important.