

Broomfield



# PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## MINISTRY OF THE WORD

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### The Pattern of Biblical Marriage

#### *Biblical Marriage Part 3*

Scripture contains many passages that we might consider perplexing or confusing. In fact after reading and studying the Bible for years we find passages that are difficult to understand. One of these passages is Ephesians 5:22-33.

- Ephesians 5:22-34, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.  
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.  
24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.  
25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;  
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,  
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.  
28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.  
29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:  
30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.  
31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.  
32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.  
33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”

To the modern ear there is perhaps no more laughable teaching in all of Scripture. Its message seems old and archaic; and to many, it is nothing less than offensive. And yet when we understand this passage in its context, we discover that this text is far from laughable. Rather, it is essential to the man/woman relationship.

God is the author of marriage. And this passage is His commentary on how the marriage relationship works.

One of the reasons that this section of Scripture is so misunderstood today is that Paul made many assumptions when he wrote this text. These assumptions were familiar to his readers, and yet are unfamiliar to us. One of these assumptions is the pattern that lies behind Paul’s teaching regarding marriage.

The pattern while well understood by the Ephesian believers who received this Epistle is quite foreign to our culture. In fact, it lies directly behind the teaching regarding man's role in marriage. This is where the

difficulty arises. This portion of Scripture alludes to this "Pattern" found in verse 23, and this is a section devoted to the woman's role in marriage. This causes the pattern to be frequently overlooked.

## Headship

The pattern that Paul discusses brings us to the issue of "headship."

Ephesians 5:23, "**For the husband is the head<sup>1</sup> of the wife**, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

The word rendered *head* is variously used in Scripture to refer to the physical head (the top of something)<sup>2</sup> or the position of authority.<sup>3</sup>

Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit<sup>4</sup> yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

Now this concept of head follows the woman's call to submit. This term *submit* is a military term referencing the ranking of oneself beneath another. This has led to many corrupt views as to what the marriage relationship ought to look like.

Some of the corrupt views that are seen in our society are these<sup>5</sup>:

- The CEO view. This is the marriage where the husband views himself as responsible for what the family does, not for how the family is doing. Marriages in this category look good on the outside. The wife seems happy. The children obey. The family runs smoothly. However, the real needs of the household have not been met.
- The Drill Sergeant view. This is the marriage where the husband views himself as responsible for everything that his wife does. Thus, he dictates everything. He checks the grocery list. Marriages in this category openly flaunt suppression and oppression!
- The Absent Leader view. This is the opposite of the previous two. Here the husband is not the "leader" of the home. He views his wife as a co-equal, co-laborer in everything. And thus he concerns himself with the obligations to which he and his wife have committed. From this perspective, "head" really means nothing as it relates to the role relationship of the man and woman in marriage. This is the view of marriage that feminists support. They say that the primary idea behind "head" is "source." Thus, this passage is simply saying that the woman came from the man.

Each of these views is wrong because they have a faulty understanding of head. The term *head* is never used as *source*, in fact not only is it not the primary idea but it is never used that way in any Greek text from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC through the Apostolic Age<sup>6</sup>. The very context of Ephesians 5:23 argues against these views.

A fourth view is the *pattern* behind our passage. It is based upon a proper understanding of headship. The concept of headship flows from the Covenantal Community — an institution that not only was familiar to ALL Jews, but also transcended over 3000 years of redemptive history at the writing of this epistle.

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<sup>1</sup> κεφαλη kephale

<sup>2</sup> Compare Matthew 5:36; Mark 6:24; 1 Peter 2:7

<sup>3</sup> Compare Ephesians 1:22; Isaiah 7:9; 1 Kings 8:1

<sup>4</sup> υποτασσω hupotasso

<sup>5</sup> These corrupt ideas of running the home also translate into corrupt views of church organization.

<sup>6</sup> Compare Wayne Grudem's notes on this.

In the context of the Covenant the head of something was the covenantal representative of the community, He was the one who was accountable for all in the group! Headship is about who you are. The covenantal representative was the one through whom God leads. He is the one who will give account for everything done in the community.

This concept can be traced throughout Scripture. It is declared to us in Abraham and the people of God. It is shown to us in the nation of Israel wandering in the desert under Moses. The Theocracy of the Old Testament demonstrates it. The Church in the New Testament is patterned by it.

The elements of the Covenantal Community are always the same: A Redeemed Body served by a "head" that is given the charge of being the prophet, priest, and king of the community. Whose participants work together in submission to the leadership of the head unto the fulfilling of God's purpose for that community?

When we read in this text that the man is the "head" of the wife, we understand this to mean that the husband in a marriage is to assume the responsibility that Covenantal Headship implies. The husband is to be the prophet of his household — the one who brings God's word to bear in all that is done. He is to be the priest of his household — the one who prays for the spiritual welfare of his family, and stands in the position of responsibility for what goes on in his household. He is to be the king of his household — the one who protects, defends, and leads his household unto the glory of God. He is to be the chief servant so that the rest of the home may do and be whom God has called them to do and be! He is to be the one who pours his life out for the benefit and need of the family!

Many men latch onto the concept that head means the one in authority and they use it to justify barking orders. The truth is that the husband is the authority in the home. This simply means that **HE IS CULPABLE BEFORE GOD FOR ALL THAT OCCURS IN THAT FAMILY**. He must see that the family grows in grace. He must see to the spiritual welfare of his wife and children. He must see that they mature in Christ and conformity to Him. That is what headship is all about!

## **Adam and Eve**

Genesis 2:18, "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

When God created the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it (to labor in God's kingdom), God created a "helper suitable/corresponding to him." Now, when Eve was brought out to the man, Adam's response is telling.

Genesis 2:23, "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Now, aside from Adam's awe at God's work, we notice a rather interesting response on the part of Adam. **Adam NAMES THE WOMAN.**

The privilege of naming was a responsibility bestowed upon those who had covenantal authority.<sup>7</sup> Adam exercised this responsibility with Eve reflects the God intended Relationship that HE had with EVE — He was her Head.<sup>8</sup> Having been created first Adam was given headship over the woman with the implication that her welfare was now his responsibility.

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<sup>7</sup> Compare Genesis 1:28, 2:19, and Luke 1:62 That the woman frequently names her child throughout Genesis does not contradict this. The woman held covenantal authority in the Old Testament (Genesis. 2:24 the man leaves his father AND mother). It is that the authority that she possessed was derivative.

<sup>8</sup> Compare also 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 and 1 Timothy 2:11-13

Now recognizing Adam's "headship", notice what we read:

Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Have you ever noticed that the referent in this verse is PRIMARILY the MAN! It is the Man who is to "leave." It is the Man who is to "cleave." And only after this do we read that the man and the woman become one flesh (A Picture of Christ and the Church)!

## Leaving and Cleaving

Most discourses on marriage miss this point. What is denoted by leaving?

In a Jewish context, "for a man to leave his father and mother" meant that he was going to establish another mini-kingdom of God. He was going to start a new group over which he was to rule. This is nothing less than a new covenantal community.

This is why when we read in the Old Testament that most men never physically left their parents (theirs was an agricultural society) we do not see disobedience. Rather, so long as the man assumed the responsibility of being the covenantal head of his household — even though he never physically leaves we understand that the stipulations of Genesis 2:24 had been met. The focus of Genesis 2:24 is covenantal severance. Leaving is the activity of the man! Why? Because the man is to be the covenantal head! Behind this text (and every text in the Bible on the family relationship) lies the covenant community!

## Jephthah

In Judges 11 we find the Biblical concept of headship. Because of his heritage, Jephthah was chased out of Gilead — he was the illegitimate son born of a prostitute. From this we must ask these questions: Why did Jephthah's family do this? What difference would Jephthah's presence have in Gilead? Was his family just mean?

Jephthah's family was concerned about the inheritance that Jephthah — the oldest — would have received. In the Jewish society the inheritance included a portion for his headship over the family<sup>9</sup> — an inheritance that in the Jewish society would have included "headship" over a portion of the family. The thought of having an illegitimate "head" overseeing the Covenant Community was unthinkable.

This is why when Jephthah is approached by the Elders of Gilead; they entice him with the promise of headship.

Judges 11:8, "And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, **and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.**"

In verse nine Jephthah repeats this promise.

Judges 11:9, "And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?"

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<sup>9</sup> Compare Judges 11:1-3

The elders were saying that they were going to make Jephthah the Covenantal Head of our community!

In this context, notice a very important element of headship: “for this reason we have now returned to you, that you may go with us and fight with the sons of Ammon” (Judges 11:8).

Judges 11:11, “Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.”

Headship is intimately associated with protection, preservation, care, and proclamation in the presence of God. Some might argue that the idea behind headship in this text is nothing more than RULE or DICTATORSHIP! Yet notice that the text distances "headship" from "dictatorship" in verse 11.

Judges 11:11, “Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him **head and captain**<sup>10</sup> over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.”

This is the concept of "rule" or "dictator" commonly associated today with "Headship."

## Christ the Head

1 Corinthians 11:3, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.”

Now sadly, so many miss the implications of what headship means from this verse. Women read Ephesians 5:23 and see degradation and thus refuse to "submit." Yet, let it be known that God the Father is the "Head" of Christ. And Christ submits!

Matthew 26:39, “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, **O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**”

"Headship" is not a question of essence, but of function. As God, Christ shares the same essence with the Father. As the Son, Christ submits — functionally — to the Headship of the Father! And likewise that the man is the covenantal head of the woman speaks not of essence, but function!

Scripture is quite clear that essentially the man and woman are the same before God.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is also quite clear that, functionally, man and woman have been given different roles in marriage! Raymond Ortlund (TEDS) put it this way:

"Was Eve Adam's equal? Yes and no. She was his spiritual equal and... 'suitable for him.' But she was not his equal in that she was his 'helper'... A man, just by virtue of his manhood, is called to lead for God. A woman, just by virtue of her womanhood, is called to help for God."<sup>12</sup>

Headship does not speak of one's essential worth before God. Rather, it speaks of one's function! The covenantal head in Scripture is the one through whom God has willed to work. He is the one who is to care for God's people as God cares. He is to take responsibility for God's people.

## The Husband Head

This is the emphasis in Ephesians 5. Nowhere in this passage do you see raw authority! Rather, you read the activities of a shepherd.

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<sup>10</sup> קצין qatsiyn rendered chief

<sup>11</sup> Compare Galatians 3:28

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in John MacArthur's *Different by Design*, pages 19-20

Ephesians 5:23, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”

Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

Christ's headship as it relates to the Body of Christ ALWAYS implies a commitment on the part of Christ to the spiritual welfare of His body. It speaks very little of what Christ gets out of it! It is the position of sacrifice — NOT BEING SERVED.<sup>13</sup>

As the Head of the Church Christ protects His body the Church.<sup>14</sup> Christ prays for His Church.<sup>15</sup> He goes with the Church,<sup>16</sup> upholds it,<sup>17</sup> loves it,<sup>18</sup> purifies it,<sup>19</sup> and dies for it.<sup>20</sup> This is what covenantal headship is all about.

Now brothers and sisters, all of this serves as the background of Eph. 5:23-24.<sup>i</sup> And thus, when we read that the "husband is the head of the wife" and that "wives ought to [submit] to their husbands in everything" we understand these commandments in the light of the covenant community!

When the Scripture teaches that the man is the "head" of the wife as "Christ is the head of the church" is to say that the man is the covenantal head of the family. The man is to be the prophet of the household who is to bring God's word. He is to be the priest of the household who is to diligently pray. He is to be the king of the household who is to lay his life down for the welfare of the body. Essentially, he is God's ordained choice to oversee a portion of God's kingdom — the family.

When the Scripture teaches that the wife is to "submit" it is declaring that she is to follow the Lord as He leads through her mate — God's chosen leader, and thus she is to submit to her husband's headship — his sacrificial love, spiritual oversight, physical care, and guidance and leadership. The woman is the God ordained "helper" when it comes to the call of the kingdom of God placed on the covenantal community- the family.

This is what the Husband/Wife relationship is all about — it is "patterned" after the covenantal community!

It should be obvious, therefore, that much of the burden when it comes to marriage lies on the man. He is the God ordained head! And thus, in light of the headship that every husband has in marriage, let me ask the men some very difficult questions.

If your family were a church, and you visited it what would be the spiritual state of the souls in that church? Would you see a people growing in their love for God? Would you see a people growing in their service of God's Kingdom? Do you see your family becoming what God has called them individually to be? Are they blossoming? Are they excited for the Lord?

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<sup>13</sup> Compare Mark 10:43-45

<sup>14</sup> Compare Hebrews 13:6

<sup>15</sup> Compare Romans 8:34

<sup>16</sup> Compare Matthew 28:20

<sup>17</sup> Compare Revelation 1:11-12

<sup>18</sup> Compare Revelation 1:5-6

<sup>19</sup> Compare Ephesians 5:25-27

<sup>20</sup> Compare Acts 20:28

Or do you see a group of people uncared for? Are they stagnating in their walks? Are they bored with Christ? Now, would you stay at that kind of church? Would you support that kind of church?

**Don't Miss It:** One of the greatest sources of hypocrisy reigning in our churches today resides in the Husband/Wife relationship. We are so quick to shop around for churches and criticize the ones that aren't "Biblical enough, spiritual enough, or loving enough." We criticize them for not having the right ministries, the right focus, or the Biblical vision. Yet we fail to realize that when our marriages lack the very things for which we criticize the church, we indict ourselves!

Men, do not finish reading this without observing a very important point: the man is called to "leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife" (Genesis 2:24). This is nothing less than a call for the married man to establish a covenantal community separate from his parents.

Do you realize the implications of this verse? So many men today have left their parents — "they are their own man" — thinking that they have fulfilled the call of Genesis 2. When in reality, they have just exchanged the governing influence of their parents for something else: Their wives, the TV, their Christian organization, the latest fad, or the latest media thing. The man who "leaves" his parents through marriage and never becomes the covenantal head of his home has not "left" in the Biblical sense of the term!

It is not enough to say that mom and dad don't call the shots in my marriage. To "leave" demands that you establish another covenantal community in which **GOD CALLS THE SHOTS!**

And so I ask every pastor in this congregation — every man charged with the responsibility of Headship — are you fulfilling your call to shepherd your wife? Are you encouraging her? Are you raising her up in the faith? Or in the years that you have been married, has your wife dried up? Is she stagnated? Is she fallen?

### **A Dried-Up Wife**

Many years ago in Saint Louis lived a woman who was just incredible. She had a warm personality. She was liked by all. She was outgoing. She was fervent in her love for the Lord and His people. And yet, in the years after her marriage she shriveled up. Soon she became withdrawn, cold and bitter.

When an inquiry was made it was discovered that it was poor theology that brought about this change. Her husband believed that Ephesians 5 taught that the husband was to be the "drill sergeant" of the home. Thus everything that was done in that house must only be done after permission has been properly granted. He dictated everything. What the woman wore. What she could do at church and in the community. He had to know where she was going. Who she was going to befriend. And so, rather than growing in her walk with God, this woman has shriveled up!

It is hard to find a greater perversion of Paul's teaching on headship than this! Yet forgetting the extremes, what about you and me?

As I gaze upon this text, I am convicted of my utter failure as a shepherd. Is there any hope? Indeed!

Ephesians 5:25 commands "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church [YOU] and gave Himself up for her [YOU]." While indeed I fail miserably as a pastor, nevertheless I have the assurance that Christ has loved me! Thus, my acceptance as a Christian/husband/father is not based on how well I obey this text, but Christ's death in my place. In light of this incredible gift, let us out of gratitude shepherd God's people — our families!

End Notes

<sup>i</sup> Other passages that we could cite demonstrating covenantal headship are these:

- Genesis 12:1-9 this passage occurs after many years and much activity on the part of man and God. By this time, all of mankind had forgotten God and were doing their own thing. And thus, God breaks into salvation history to further establish the kingdom that He had begun with Adam. From this perspective we see that Genesis 12:1-3 contains the call that God placed upon Adam. Just as Adam was to be the spiritual head of his family so Abraham was to do the same — he was to be God's leader in his family as it related to the covenant. Throughout this passage Abraham is the patriarch, Abraham is the prophet, priest, and king of his home, Abraham is the protector, the provider, the nourisher.
- Hebrews 13:17 While Christ is the head of the church, He has nevertheless given "heads" (LOWER CASE "h"- i.e. leaders) to guide his body this is the nuance of Ephesians 4:11-13. Now notice, the charge that Christ gives to these heads. 1 Peter 5:2 (NASB), "Shepherd the flock of God among you." Acts 20:28 (NASB), "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Headship implies a covenantal relationship with those under one's care, such that their welfare, needs, health, and protection becomes the chief desire and labor of the head.
- Matthew 24:43
- Isaiah 4:1

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### **About the Preacher**

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