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C0515 -- Apr. 13, 2005 – Ephesians 5:22-24 – Wives, Submit to Husbands

Last week I introduced the three Divine Institutions given at creation: Labor, Marriage, and Family in that order. Paul was not giving application to being filled by the Spirit in a vacuum. He was a Jewish theologian and he well knew these absolute structures in society. Further, it is significant that Paul didn't apply the filling of the Spirit to some flashy experience in the Christian life. He applies it where it counts, where we all live every day. He applies it to the meager aspects of our existence; labor, marriage, and family.

What is a Divine Institution? It is an absolute social structure instituted by God for the entire human race—believers and unbelievers. Whenever a society or individual tampers with one of these three absolute structures, the results are poverty, crime, disease, and death. These are absolute structures not just social conventions. God has given us a form and there is freedom within this form, but whenever a society or individual tries to break free from this form there are terrible effects. God wants mankind to operate within the form so that we can have freedom. This means we have to pay special attention to the divine institutions and uphold them at all costs. As I said last week these are under attack. By way of review, Divine Institution #1: Labor or Responsible Dominion is the basis of both marriage and family. Biblically, marriage and family are defined in terms of labor. God created man to “rule” “to subdue” the earth.

Genesis 2:5 Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground.

Before day 6 God had already planned to create a man to cultivate the ground (be a laborer). Then God creates this man in v. 7

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Now, man at this point was androgynous. This means he embodied both sexes. Woman has not been created yet. Jump down to v. 18.

Genesis 2:18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

It was not good for androgynous man to be alone so God created a woman out of man to be his helper (*ezer*). This surgical procedure is described in vv 21-23. Woman was not made the same way man was made. Where did the woman's DNA come from? (wait for answer). It came from Adam. Adam's genome was split in this process and the woman was formed into her specific shape by God. She was designed to be a "helper suitable" for the man in his calling to cultivate the garden. Then the man names her "woman" in v. 23 for she was made out of man (man = *ish* and woman = *ishshah*). Their original names were not Adam and Eve but *ish* and *ishshah*. Lastly we have v. 24 where the man is supposed to leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, and the two become one flesh. It is when a man and wife are united that the image of God finds its fullest expression and the DI of Labor can be accomplished (Gen 1:27). Man needs the woman. It is not good for him to be alone because he's incomplete and needs her in order to fulfill his calling.

So, we have this sequence and then we'll make some application to marriage.

- 1) Man was created first (2:7)
- 2) Man was given Responsible Labor (1:26-28; 2:5, 8)
- 3) God providentially brings a wife to a man (2:22)
- 3) Man's Labor shapes his recognition of his divinely chosen wife (2:23)
- 4) The wife is his needful helper (Gen 2:18) and his glory (1 Cor 11:7)
- 5) Man and wife are to separate from their own families and build a new Family (Gen 1:26-28; 2:24)
- 6) Only in a new separate Family (in contrast to an extended family) does a young man have to face full leadership responsibility under God (Gen 2:24)

Now, let's make some application to these principles. This is the ideal picture. If you are a young person you should strive for this ideal, trusting that God will be faithful. Don't rush into a relationship. Let the Lord providentially work it out. You just be sensitive to discovering God's will.

Here's the application, turn over to Eph 5:18.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled by the Spirit,

Now, as a young or unmarried man you want to discover what God's will is for your life don't you. You want to find out God's calling for your life. What Labor or job does God want you to do? You can't do anything...you have to discover what God wants you to do. Whatever that is it's your "calling". Now, if your getting drunk and enjoying the party scene you can't understand God's will for your life. You have to be controlled or filled by the Spirit to understand God's will for your life. That's why Paul threw v. 17 in there.

Ephesians 5:17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Understanding the will of the Lord for your life is contingent on you not being a drunk, messing around on the party scene. When you get out of that and you yield your will to the Lord's will then you'll begin to understand the will of the Lord for your life. Then you can discover your right wife. But you've got to first know your calling so you, like Adam, can recognize God's choice of wife for you.

Second principle. Men and women do not have two separate callings in life. They together have one calling in life and only when together are they able to fulfill that calling (Gen 1:27). The man is the one who has a calling given from the Lord to him and the Lord's will is for the wife to help the man complete that calling (Gen 2:18). This is a very important principle here that has been ignored by our culture. The two become "one flesh" with "one calling". This creates dependence on one another rather than two people going in opposite directions which is often the case. "You do your thing and I'll do mine." You become two independent people living under the same roof top and after awhile you don't even know who the other person is anymore. This has become an almost inescapable problem in America because of the rising number of working wives. The rise in the number of working wives reflected the impact of birth control which enabled women to complete their families at younger ages. It also reflected the post-WWII growth of the middle class. As Americans became more mobile, the desire to maintain a middle-class lifestyle began to legitimize the two-income family. This set the stage for the revival of the feminist movement in the 1960's. Now almost every American family has to have two incomes in order to just get by. So, largely, the feminist culture of America has fueled the destruction of the idea that the man has a calling and the woman is designed to help the man fulfill that calling.

Third principle. Man is the head of the woman by creation. Man was created first and given a calling and woman was created out of man to help him complete his calling. The headship of the man is not a result of the Fall. Although we know that there are huge impediments

to this structure now because of the Fall. Even so, the goal is the same. Male headship, female completer and helper. Now turn to **Ephesians 2:4-6**

“But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,”

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ where are you now? Where are you positionally located right now? (wait for an answer). *In the heavenly places*. Where is your marriage supposed to be right now? (wait for an answer). *In the heavenly places*. Positionally you and your spouse are “one flesh” seated *in the heavenly places* right now. But where is your marriage in reality right now? Are you looking down from the *heavenly places* or are you looking up to the *heavenly places*? See, Ephesians is the loftiest epistle in the Bible. Marriage is placed on the highest level possible. Marriage is a lofty and extremely important thing to God. Indeed husband and wife is an OT type of Christ and the Church. This, of course, was a great mystery until revealed in Eph 5:32.

Today let’s look at the Divine Institution of Marriage, in particular this week the wife’s responsibility to her husband. Next week we’ll look at the husband’s responsibilities to the wife. The key idea of this section is being filled by the Spirit. For biblical marriage to work the wife and husband must learn to be filled by the Spirit. That is, they must learn to yield their will to the Lord’s will which will enable them to take their roles and fill them beautifully. Role confusion never helped anyone, it only causes disruption, animosity, chaos, evil speaking, hatred, etc... You will never learn to fulfill your role as wife or husband so long as you try to create it on your own steam, forcing your will upon your mate.

In the last 50 years, the concept of traditional marriage was idealized in such TV shows as *Leave it to Beaver* and *Ozzie and Harriet*. These TV either captured what American’s thought about marriage roles or conceptualized to many what marriage was supposed to look like. The marriage of *Ozzie and Harriet* didn’t work in reality. Most families operated more like the Archie Bunker family where the man took control but didn’t know how to live it out and the woman submitted but didn’t really have anything to submit to! This caused people to reject traditional marriage, and rightly so, because this model distorted biblical reality.

The substitute for traditional marriage among Christians was the 50-50 model where the husband and wife are equal spiritually—which is true but then it also says that they are

equal in role—which is not true. Women went into the workplace on a substantially new level creating an economy that almost requires two-incomes. In the process Americans have turned extremely materialistic, having to have every new gadget, the newest slickest vehicles, etc...Now we don't even know how to get out of it. The 50-50 model has ramifications for our children who are put in day care so they get raised by other people who have other values and then we wonder why our kids rebel against Christ even though they are supposedly "Christians". As Bible believing Christians we can't accept either one of these models. We're going to have to look at the biblical model of marriage which exalts biblical femininity and headship. Biblical femininity is a beautiful thing. When a woman fulfills her role she becomes who God designed her to be. There is nothing more beautiful than biblical femininity.

In vv. 22-33 notice what Paul presupposes. Paul presupposes that the wife and husband are both believers. Since the condition for fulfilling our roles is being filled by the Spirit and unbelievers can't be filled by the Spirit then you shouldn't marry an unbeliever. However, let's suppose your mate is not a believer. What are your responsibilities then? They are the same, nothing changes, you are still required to follow the responsibilities given here in Eph 5; wives submit to your husbands whether they are a believer or not. Husbands, love your wives whether they are a believer or not. That's your witness to lead them to Christ. 1 Pt 3:1-7 gives further instructions for a woman married to a carnal believer or an unbeliever. But don't expect an unbelieving spouse to submit to you or love you. They don't even have the Spirit so it's an impossibility. This is one reason it is so crucial to marry a Christian. Marriage works wonderfully when the wife and husband are believers filled by the Spirit.

Now, before we jump into v 22 let's make another observation. Who is giving us this instruction? (wait for an answer). Who is the author of Ephesians? Was Paul a married man? (wait for an answer). No (cf. 1 Cor 7:7). How do you feel about taking marriage advice from a man that wasn't married? What does this say about marriage advice? (wait for an answer) It says that an unmarried believer who understands the biblical teaching on marriage is perfectly qualified to give marriage advice. Way to often marriage advice is given on the basis of personal experience. "This is what worked for us..." "we tried spanking our children and it didn't work..." "I don't know but this is what we did when..." If personal experience is where we find the answers to our marital problems then the Bible is not sufficient. Is the Bible sufficient for every marital problem? (wait for an answer) You better believe it. Some retort, "but there are a myriad of marital problems or issues that I can't find in the Bible." "Yes, there are a myriad of marital problems (1,000's and 1,000's) that vary in the details but these can all be boiled down to basic scriptural categories.

Similar problems that differ in the details are handled the same way. And every marital problem or issue is dealt with as a basic category in scripture.” Now, maybe you’re not wise enough to apply the principles. Maybe you’re ignorant of the scriptural principles. That’s a problem, because if you don’t have DVP wisdom to deal with marital problems then you will resort to HVP wisdom. And that’s too bad because that won’t work at all or it’s just a temporary fix (putting a band-aid on a broken elbow). So, you’re about to receive marriage advice from the unmarried man, Paul. Paul never gave marital advice or parenting advice on the basis of experience because he didn’t have a wife or children. He based his marital advice on doctrine that comes from Scripture. Pleas such as “you don’t know because you haven’t experienced it yet” don’t fly with Paul. Paul could care less how much experience you have. Paul is concerned with how much doctrine you have. Some of the most experienced couples have some of the worst marriages.

NPF PMImp adjDPM DPM conjsubord DSM

Greek Text 5:22 *ai gunaikes [upotassesthe] tois idiois andrasin os to kurio,*
Translation 5:22 **Wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord,**

Though absent from some manuscripts the majority of the manuscripts contain the word **submit**. The word **submit** comes from the Greek word *hupotasso* which was a military term meaning to “rank under” “to line up under”. It is a present middle imperative. Very important. First, it is an *imperative* meaning it is a command to follow. Wives, you are commanded by the Lord through the apostle Paul to **submit to your own husbands as to the Lord**. You may not want to but that’s the whole point of being filled by the Spirit. When you’re filled by the Spirit you give up what you want to do and you do what the Lord wants you to do. You say, like Christ did, Lord, not my will but your will and you trust the Lord for the results. Second, this word is *middle voice*. The middle voice means that you are going to choose to submit to your husband by being controlled by the Holy Spirit. Lastly, it is present tense. The *present tense* means continual action. You are commanded to continually and willingly **submit to your own husband**. Notice it says, **submit to your own husband**. Many women have been confused and thought that they should submit to all men or husbands. This is not the case. The word **your own** is *idios* and has the idea of a private or personal possession. Wives, your husband is your possession. Husbands, your wife is your possession.

1 Corinthians 7:2-4 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ³ The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴ The wife does not have

authority over her own body, but the husband *does*; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.

Paul does not teach that all females are to submit to all males. Now, what if your husband is being a bad boy? What if your husband is having an 'Ichabod'? What if he's not loving you? The command stands as is. Submission is not contingent upon how your husband is treating you. The command is not based on whether he loves you or not. The command is based on man's headship by creation design. No matter what he's doing you **submit to him as to the Lord**.

Let's talk a little about submission. It's the word *hupotasso*. It means "to rank under" "to line up under". Now, there's another similar word used of the wife's responsibility to her husband known as *hupakouo* in **1 Peter 3:1-6**.

In the same way, you wives, be submissive [*hupotasso*] to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. ³ Your adornment must not be *merely* external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; ⁴ but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

Now, when I think of the word "submit" it carries a negative connotation, almost a degrading connotation. But notice in v. 3-4 the biblical connotation that goes along with the idea of biblical submission; *adornment...in the inner person*. The Bible sees submission as a very beautiful thing. When a woman submits her true imperishable quality shows forth. Biblical submission is a very beautiful thing. Verses 5-6 are the application of the teaching.

⁵ For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive [*hupotasso*] to their own husbands; ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed [*hupakouo*] Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

Sarah was apparently a very beautiful woman physically, Pharaoh almost jumped out the window to get to Sarah when she was 90 years old. But notice the Bible says nothing about her physical beauty. It says something about her inner beauty. This illustration of submission by Sarah's obeying Abraham shows that obedience is a part of submission. Many wives say to their husband, "I don't have to obey you" and it is true that you don't

have to obey him. You may harden your heart against the Lord's command, you may walk carnally, but the command to submit certainly includes the command to "obey" your own husband. And when you do obey him you are adorning yourself. You are fixing yourself up. The word **obeyed** here is *hupakouo* and literally means "to listen under". Wives are to listen to their husbands and obey them as Sarah obeyed Abraham. This is a part of submission.

In Paul's day there were several views of a woman's place. Hellenistic Judaism considered women inferior and therefore they were supposed to submit. The Peripatetics' view was that the wife was superior to the husband in certain activities at home and that both shared equally in raising children. What was Paul's view? Did Paul buy into the secular teachings of his day? Paul clearly considered wives and husbands to be partners as in 1 Cor 7:2-4 when he says man and wife have equal conjugal rights. The wife is not to withhold sexual rights. According to Paul, both man and woman gave up sexual rights when they got married. Now the wife's body belongs to the man and the man's body belongs to the woman. Interestingly, that was a teaching that was unheard of in Paul's day. So, Paul viewed wives as equal to husbands as persons but subordinate in function or role. Why did Paul hold to this teaching? Paul gives the wives a motivation or reason next. He says...

as to the Lord. **Lord** here refers to Christ. The wife is to submit to her own husband **as to** Christ. This is a comparison of the wife's submission to Christ and her submission to her husband. Doubtless a wife should ALWAYS be submissive to Christ. Since this is a particle of comparison doubtless a wife should ALWAYS be submissive to her husband. Therefore, "subordination to Christ and subordination to the husband are...as...inseparable as the love of God and the love of man..."ⁱ Bluntly put, when you submit to your husband you are submitting to Christ. When you submit to Christ you are submitting to your husband. This is the same as the relationship of loving others and loving God. Turn to

1 John 4:20 ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Notice the connection. Loving God and loving others are inseparable. If you love one you love the other if you hate one you hate the other. Submission is the same way. Submit to Christ and you will be submitting to your husband. Submit to your husband and you are submitting to Christ.



**Submissio
n to Christ**

Submission to husband

conj subord NSM 3SPAI NSF GSF conjsubord adv
Greek Text 5:23 hoti aner estin kephale tes gunaikos os kai
NSM NSF GSF 3SPro NSM GSM

ho Christos kephale tes ekklesias, autos soter tou somatos

Translation 5:23 because the husband is the head of the wife just as also Christ is the head of the Church, He Himself is the savior of the body.

Verse 23 **for the husband** should be translated **because the husband**. This is a causal *hoti*. Paul is giving the reason why the wife is to **submit to her own husband** as to the Lord. The reason is **because the husband is the head of the wife**. This headship is like Christ's headship of the Church. Therefore, it is very important to understand the headship of Christ in relationship to the Church in order to understand the implications of the husband as head of the wife.

The word **head** is *kephale* and refers here to "leader/ruler" and "authority". Christ is called the **head of the Church** in Eph 1:22. He is the "leader/ruler" of the church. He has "authority" over the church. He is the "preeminent" One in the church. Therefore, the husband is the "leader/ruler" and has "authority" over his wife so Christ is the leader and authority over the Church. In what sense is the husband the **head of the wife**? The husband's rule over the wife is a power he has by virtue of his position. Turn to Col 1:18. Notice, Christ's headship over the Church is related to His being the firstborn from the dead. Therefore, both logically and chronologically Christ is the head of the Church. In the same way, man was created first. His headship over the woman is his by being the first created. So, both logically and chronologically the man is the head of the woman. This is a positional headship. Nothing in experience can change the fact that the husband is the head. He is the head by original creation no matter how childish he acts. Why did God make the husband the head and the wife the submitter? In order to maintain harmony.

The wife's submission to her husband was totally at odds with the early Roman Empire of Paul's day. Let's say we had a man and a woman that were going to get married. In the family structure of that day, the father had absolute power over all his family (*patria potestas*). He had so much power he could legally put his own children to death. This power continued even after his children were married. What this meant was that a bride in Paul's day would be under the authority of her father as long as he lived, and not under the authority of her husband (*sine manus*). She would be legally independent of her husband; she could seek a divorce from him with her father. In fact, her father could initiate the divorce. So, now you can see that Paul's instructions for a wife to submit to her husband were "politically incorrect". Paul says that the husband has authority over his wife and that he is the new head of the new family in line with Gen 2:24.

He Himself is the savior of the body. Unlike the husband, Christ is the savior of his own body." This is an additional statement to reinforce Christ as the head, the One who rescued the church from being eternally separated from God. What about the husband? Is there any application of this statement to the husband's role? Perhaps. He is certainly not the savior of his wife. Only Christ can save. At best the husband is the protector of his wife whenever she comes into danger either physically or spiritually. In the garden, Adam failed to protect his wife against the lie of the serpent and he paid the consequences (Gen 3:17).

cc cc NSF 3SPMI DSM adv adv

NPF

Greek Text 5:24 alla os he ekklesia upotassetai to Christo, outos kai ai gunaikes tois

DPM prep adjDSN

andrasin en panti.

Translation 5:24 But as the church submits to Christ, in the same way the wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

In the same way that **the church submits to Christ...wives should submit to their husbands.** How does the **church submit to Christ.** Ephesians 1:22-23 explained this ahead of time. Christ was given to the church as its head so that as God filled Christ with His moral excellence and power Christ could fill the church with His moral excellence and power. As this takes place the church willingly **submits to Christ.** The church benefits greatly by submitting to Christ. **in the same way wives** benefit greatly when they submit to their own husbands. A submissive wife enhances her femininity and her marriage.

This last phrase **in everything** could be confusing. It is difficult to know just how far **in everything** goes. Certainly the wife should not disobey commandments of God in order to

submit to her husband. One must obey God before men (Acts 5:29). In other words, the wife should submit to her husband in everything that is not sinful, including abuse. The wife should submit to her husband fully. This is full submission not partial just as the church is to submit to Christ in everything. Submission benefits the woman and her marriage just as it benefits the church and her marriage to Christ.

Two words of caution. First, the wife is not supposed to submit to her husband IF HE DESERVES IT. For example, many women say they don't have to submit to their husbands because their husbands are not loving them. Just remember, when you refuse to submit to your husband you are refusing to submit to Christ. Your husband holds the position of headship by creation and nothing can change that no matter how he acts. The text even says the Christian wife is to submit to her husband no matter what and no matter whether he is a believer or not (barring sinful actions). Many Christian wives have even started using sex as a reward for their husbands to make them act the way they want them to act. This is a terribly manipulative device that undermines the headship of the husband. If a woman uses sex to gain a position of power, she is usurping the husband's authority. This is nothing different than calling the Pope "the vicar of Christ". It is a treacherous act that denies creation and Christ's headship over the church. This technique is a strategy of the old sin nature and was the judgment on the woman for eating the fruit in Gen 3:16.

Genesis 3:16 Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you."

Susan Foh has argued persuasively that this curse is every woman's "urge for independence...a desire to dominate her husband" which is the opposite of submission. I think she is dead on in her evaluation of the word "desire" which is used in Gen 4:7 of Cain's struggle with sin. "Sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it." While the woman's curse is her urge for independence and domination, the husband is given the sanction to master her. The man must learn to master his wife like Cain had to learn to master sin. When this is done the benefits for both parties is immeasurable.

Second note of caution; the wife's submission to her husband is not supposed to be based on his demands but on obedience to the Lord. Husbands, you can't beat your wife up with these verses. You are not to beat them into submission. Being submissive to your husband is a command of God. It can only be done if you are filled by the Spirit. As a lady you must teach yourself to yield your will to the Lord's will. When you decide to do this you're going to see your husband blossom, yourself blossom, the joy in your life will increase as you fill the role God designed you to fulfill. Women should stop trying to fill the man's

role which they were never meant to fill and start being who God designed women to be. Then we will have a true picture of biblical femininity and healthy marriages.

Next week we will look at the husband's responsibilities which are even greater in 5:25-32). In marriage husband and wife combine to form one perfect human being; the one is the complement of the other.

ⁱ Barth, Markus, 612.

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