

# Indicatives & Imperatives in Marriage: the Husband,

## Part 3

*Ephesians*

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 5:21-33  
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Ephesians 5 as we continue with our study through this letter of Paul to the church at Ephesus. As you may be aware, we are working our way through, really, a series as we walk through chapter 5, verses 21 through 23 concerning marriage. This is technically the seventh sermon dealing with this subject matter and as each Lord's Day evening, I encourage you that if you have missed any of our sermons in this section of Ephesians, I would encourage you to go back and listen to them as each of these sermons are interconnected and are very closely related to one another.

We're going to read the entire text again tonight, Ephesians 5:21-33. People of God, this is the word of our God. Let's begin with verse 22.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Thus ends the reading of God's word from Ephesians 5. Let us pray for the Holy Spirit's illumination tonight.

*Our Father, we're so grateful for Your word, that You do not leave us as orphans to ourselves to fend for ourselves, You don't leave us to ourselves to reason up to You in order to think thoughts after You, but You have come down and revealed to us Your will. We thank You, Father, especially for revealing to us these truths concerning marriage. We are grateful that You have given us such insight into this glorious institution. Father, we acknowledge tonight our dependence upon You to apply this word to each of our hearts. We pray that You would illumine our minds and hearts this evening to this text of Scripture that we might love You all the more and follow You all the more nearly and especially in the estate of marriage, to do that which please You for that is our heart's desire is to do that which is pleasing in Your sight, our Lord. We pray all of these things with dependence upon the Spirit through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

You may be seated.

Well, tonight we humbly approach God's word seeking to hear once again from the Lord, the Creator and the Designer of marriage, how we ought to order our understanding concerning marriage such that it aligns with his thinking concerning marriage. We've been considering the indicatives and the imperatives of each of the parties in the marriage union. We have explored the indicatives or what we've called roles of the wife in the marriage relationship. We also have explored the imperatives which we have called duties of the wife in the marriage relationship. We have also considered the indicatives or the roles of the husband and our last message in Ephesians 5 began the first of a series of messages really pertaining to his chief duty, his chief imperative. After having established the husband's role as head and as Christ mirror, Paul clearly states his chief duty in verse 25 and it's four words, "Husbands, love your wives." And the remaining verses really only serve to further elucidate those four words, that chief imperative given to the husband that he is to love his wife.

Now there are six ingredients that we're really considering that constitute this command to love one's wife. They are its definition; its aim; its manner; its scope; its condition; and its effect. We're just working our way through each of these ingredients. In our last message, we considered the first two, love's definition and love's aim. Tonight we're just going to consider one and that is its manner. What manner ought the husband to love his wife.

Well, over these past weeks, we have made it a point to carefully distinguish between indicatives and imperatives. We saw from the outset in verses 22 and 23 that these are categories in which Paul is operating in relation to marriage. We saw that the wife was called to do something, an imperative, because her husband is something, an indicative. Paul called the wife to submit to her husband and then the Scripture says "for," for this reason, the husband is head. This headship that he possesses places him in a position of leadership, it places him in a position of authority, a position of rule in the relationship, and as we spent a great deal of time considering also, a responsibility for that relationship and its health.

Now using such terms as authority and rule, especially in our day, the natural mind would be tempted to conclude that when we use such language, that headship must be a position of power for the purpose of lording himself over his wife. It seems to the natural mind that it would really invite her to be exploited and used as a doormat, as it were, by the husband. She could be used and abused at his whim as he exercises domineering control over her. That is what a lot of people think of when they hear these words of rule and authority and headship but the Scripture doesn't say that the husband is head of the wife as an earthly king is head of his slaves, no, the Scripture says, "For the husband is head of his wife as also Christ is head of the church," and that's how we're to understand this headship.

Our last message focused upon that ingredient of the aim of love, that was our last message, and the aim of that love was found in one thing and that is her good. That's the aim. To love her is to always be aiming at her good, her good, her good, and never one moment for her ill. It's with every word. It's with every action in every circumstance, aiming at her good.

Let me ask you this question: what is your morning routine? We probably all in this room have one. When you wake up in the morning, what do you do? Perhaps some of us the first thing we do is grab a cup of coffee. We may or may not read the Scriptures. We may or may not engage in prayer. We may or may not do a number of things in our morning routine but I want you to consider this, that our God is one that never sleeps, he never slumbers, he never is taking time to wake up and come to his senses and he never ceases thinking about one thing and that is you. He never ceases thinking about his bride. He never ceases thinking about his treasure, the church. And that's not even the best part, the best part is that he only thinks about your good and never your ill. He's always thinking about his bride, always thinking about her good, and what did he deem that was the greatest greatest good for her? Well, that was to lay down his life for her. That was what he deemed to be, her greatest good.

How did Jesus love in such a way as to aim at her good? Our text tells us tonight, what does it say? It says he gave himself for her. There it is. Far from exercising oppressive authority, far from exercising authority that exploits her weakness, far from exercising some tyrannical power and control, Jesus as head of his bride did not abuse but used his authority for this one that he so treasured. He loved her by way of sacrifice.

What has the Scripture taught us? Jesus himself has taught us the great among you shall be the greatest servant of all. That's the greatest one among you. What else did we read in Scripture? Where Mark says, "For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give," there it is, "to give his life as a ransom for many." God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, what? Christ gave himself. He died for us. Philippians 2, "Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself by taking the form of a," what? "A servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And the verses compound. The verses pile up.

The purpose of the Savior coming and the way that he loved and pursued his bride and the way he aimed for her good was all found in what he did as a servant, as a sacrifice for her.

As we've already considered, Paul is really graciously providing us the very imperatives that we need. This goes for wives and husbands alike. What will be the greatest tendency and the greatest temptation of a wife? Well, the temptation to rise up and not exercise proper submission to her head. So what imperative does Paul give the wife? Submit yourselves to your husbands and respect them. But what would be the greatest tendency and temptation of the husband? Well, as his role as head, his temptation will be to do what we were speaking about a moment ago, exploit her weaknesses; our tendency would be to abuse the authority that is ours and exercise some type of oppressive authority over her, lording it over her. So what imperative does Paul give the husband? He gives us that very appropriate imperative, love her. Love her.

You see, the imperatives that he gives to the wife and the husband correspond to their chief temptations. Isn't that beautiful? But what does Peter remind us husbands of in his letter in 1 Peter 5? Peter writes, "Live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as a weaker vessel." Notice that she is not called a weak vessel. That's very important in that verse. She's not called a weak vessel, as if the husband were the strong vessel and she was a weak vessel. No, the husband and the wife in Peter's mind are in the same boat, they're both weak.

They're both vessels and they're both weak but nevertheless, he does describe her as weaker. Now why? Why is that? It's not because she has a weaker mind or is morally inferior in some way to the husband. No, rather it's because of her position as a wife called to submit to a husband. She's the submitting party and he is not. She is weaker in ways that make her more vulnerable to the abuse of authority, you see. So Paul in our text tonight says, "Love her as Christ loved the church. Love this weaker vessel. Show her honor."

Did you know that the Greek for "honor" is used to describe a great treasure? I intentionally used that word earlier. In other words, to honor our wife is to treat her as a precious treasure. Think of a precious vase, not a wash bucket, you see, but as a precious precious vase. Jesus loved his treasure, he loves his treasure, you and I, and the manner in which he loved us was sacrificial.

We've seen that the husband's indicative is not only head but what was the other indicative that we saw? He is also Christ mirror. He cannot escape being Christ mirror any more than he can escape being head. They both are indicatives for him. We are always, as husbands, preaching Christ. Just as the wife possesses this inescapable indicative as church mirror, preaching either a true sermon or a false sermon, a poor sermon or a weak sermon or a strong sermon as to how the church submits to Christ, so also the husband possesses this inescapable indicative as Christ mirror preaching either a good sermon or a poor sermon, a true sermon or a false sermon about how Jesus loves his church.

We're always preaching. We can't escape it. You see, when we speak those harsh words that tear her down, we're saying, "This is how Christ loves his bride, honey. This is how he speaks to her. Not with tenderness. No, he doesn't speak to her with care, seeking not to build her up but seeking to tear her down. That's how Christ loves his bride." When we treat her not as a precious treasure, we're saying to her, "This is how Christ loves his bride. He undermines her. He whimsically tosses her aside as one that's not so precious to him." When we act towards our wives in a domineering way, we say, in effect, "Christ came not to serve his bride but he came to be served."

Let me put this very straightforward for all of us brothers, particularly husbands, and this is really the heart of our message tonight: we look most like Christ and we preach a sound sermon of him when our lives as heads take the shape of a crucifix. That's when we're preaching the most sound sermon about how Christ loves his bride, it's when our lives take the shape of a crucifix. That's what Paul is getting at here. We must die to self and any Christian man who has been a husband more than two minutes knows that it is the marriage institution itself that is an instrument in the Lord's hand by which he operates on the pride of the husband, exposing how prideful and how self-loving and self-serving he really is.

So when Paul writes, "Love your wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her," he simply means that the manner of love that we are called to exercise towards our wives is sacrificial love as his manner. Jesus saw no conflict between his authority as head and his exercising sacrificial love towards his bride. Jesus saw no compromise of his rule as head by exercising sacrificial love towards his bride and neither should we. We should see no conflict or compromise.

You see, the whole subject of headship calls out, screams out for the response of humility not pride, crucifixion not oppression, service not self-seeking. So when we hear Paul write in 1 Corinthians, "Man was not made for woman but woman for man, neither was man created for woman but woman for man," this should not cause a man's heart to rear up in this self-induced pride, this word should induce fear and awe in his heart. Again, brothers, it should offend us and it should offend us deeply when we hear someone making ungodly jokes about some slavish submission of the wife to the husband. Such joking actually only reveals that one doesn't have the slightest understanding of what headship is all about.

Our conduct as heads should so resemble Christ Jesus that our wives' response will be that of a grateful church. Does Christ's sacrifice cause the church to despise his authority? Does Christ's sacrifice and his sacrificial love cause the church to despise his rule? No, it's just the opposite, isn't it? Does Christ's sacrifice cause the church to detest his exercise of headship in their life? No, it's the opposite. Rather it brings delighted submission from the bride. It yields admiration and respect of the bride all the more because of the manner of his love, being sacrificial.

Husbands should be someone their wives love to serve, not despise to serve. That's a red flag when she does. Husbands should be someone their wives admire because of his loving sacrificial leadership. Husbands should be someone their wives hold in high regard because of his sacrificial love for her. The husband that sees the manner of his love to be that of sacrifice becomes a man whose leadership his wife gladly follows, a headship and an authority to which she joyfully, joyfully submits.

Is that not the case of the church? We admire our Lord Jesus and we love our Lord Jesus, we find joy in our submission to our Lord Jesus precisely because his love is sacrificial and that's what Paul is applying here now to the husband. "Love your wife even as Christ has loved his bride."

You say, "Pastor, you don't understand. She is not always that lovely. She doesn't always make herself very easy to love." Well, let me just say point-blank, dear brother, neither were you. Neither were you. Neither were you. Therein lies the Gospel. You see, that brings all of us, once again, back with all of our attention just fixed upon the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one that loved his bride especially when she was unlovely, not because she was lovely; who sacrificed himself for her not because she was so grand and so submissive and so on, but precisely the opposite. That's the kind of sacrificial love we find in our Lord Jesus. That's not just love, do you know what that is? That's amazing love. That's why we sing those words, "Amazing love, how can it be? How can it be, that thou, my God, should die for me?"

Let's pray.

*Our Father in heaven, oh we are so grateful for the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, love that is unmatched, love that is so foreign to us that we need You to illumine our hearts and minds to even understand it, yet Father, we, especially husbands, are in great need of gazing and contemplating and truly considering with great depth in our souls that kind of love that Jesus had for his bride. Lord, we celebrate on this day the sacrificial love of Christ Jesus, our Lord. Oh what a good husband, what a perfect husband is He. Lord, even we men in this room who feel the failure of our own hearts and our own lives and our own actions, Lord, we especially are in need of remembering the Gospel this night, that we do have One that is our great Husband, who has loved us so sacrificially that He even forgives our sins as husbands. Oh, how can it be? What amazing love. Lord, we pray that this kind of love, this love of our Savior for His bride, would be the very motivation to us to love our wives with sacrificial love like Him. We pray all of these things in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*