

**Bible Study Packet  
Week 10**



**Pastor Marlon McDuffie  
Lead Pastor**

## Ephesians 5:21-33

### Submission

**Submit** (verses 21,22) The command to "subordinate oneself" was a command to a person with free choice to place himself in position not ordained by nature. It meant "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden." It was usually a military term denoting the place in the ranks each division was to take. Greeks and Jews almost never used it to describe marriage.

This passage can best be understood in light of social relations in the Roman Empire. Husbands were the undisputed masters of their wives, parents of children, and owners of slaves. Thus, the command for submission to superiors was directed at people who in secular terms had no real option other than acceptance of their positions. Subordinates were simply to change the attitudes with which they regarded their situations.

On the other hand, Paul meant his command to those in authority to be as binding as the duties of those who had no choice but to obey. Far from simply sanctioning power relationships, he meant to put them in the perspective of the primary relationship that of each person and of the whole church to Christ.

Paul wanted to counter the fear that Christian ethics of equality would destroy the social order. He believed that the order could serve a useful, sanctifying purpose, and he did not want to become embroiled in changing it until the hearts of individuals were transformed. Paul seems to have felt that any

relationship would be abusive if a self-centered person was in it seeking control, whereas any relationship, no matter how outwardly authoritarian, would benefit both persons if each had Christ's lordship and the other person's highest good at heart.

1. Verse 21 describes the general attitude that Christians should have toward one another, regardless of rank. Name that attitude and write down some defining words or phrases to help you think about this concept.

**Reverence** (verse 21). Literally, "fear." It includes trembling in the presence of the Holy and awareness of impending judgment.

2. In your own words, what motive does verse 21 provide for Paul's command?

3. What are some of the practical implications of this motive in verse 21 for:  
those in authority?

those under authority?

**Marriage**

4. In the chart below, record the attitudes that Paul taught each spouse to have toward the other (see verses 21-33)

Wives	Husbands
(21) submit out of reverence for Christ	(21) submit out of reverence for Christ
(22)	(25-27)

(23)	(25-27 cont.)
(24)	(28-29)
(33)	(33)

5. In verses 23-24, Paul sets up an analogy between husband and wife and Christ and the church.

a. In the context of this analogy, what do you think the concept of headship means?

b. What does the concept of a wife's submission mean in the context of this analogy?

6. Read 5:25-30. Why do you think Paul used Christ and His body/church as an illustration of how husbands are to love their wives?

**Ought** (verse 28). Or "owe it [to God and man]."

7.a. How would submission "as to the Lord" and "out of reverence for Christ" have differed from an Ephesian wife's customary submission?

b. How does it differ from your society's advice to wives?

8. Why do you think Paul adds the image of union, in verses 31-32? What does this contribute to the comparison he has been building from verse 23 on?

9. Summarize the attitudes that husband and wife should have toward each other, according to Paul's statement in 5:33.

10.a. What do you think are the most important keys Paul provides to a wife's proper understanding of submission to her husband?

b. To a husband's proper understanding of love for his wife?

11. Has there been any insight or discovery in your study of Ephesians 5:21-33 that you think God may be using to prompt you to change especially in areas such as thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors? If so, write it down here.

12. a. State the main teaching of 5:21-33.

b. How does this passage relate to 4:1-5:20?



13. List any questions you have about 5:21-33.