



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 5:22-24

Ephesians

"Christian Marriage - Wives"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are continuing our study in the book of Ephesians, in Ephesians chapter 5, and this morning we begin Paul's section of this book on the Christian home and specifically Christian marriage. That begins with Ephesians 5:22, and so if you have your Bibles opened, follow along with me as I read. I think a good place to begin, though, is in verse 21 because verse 21 is something of a transition verse between what we have studied in verses 15 and following to what we will study. Paul says, "And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

In verse 22: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands." Now, you'll notice that that express, "be subject," is in italics. It means it's not in the original text, and so it is indicated in that way, but it is proper to translate it that way. Verse 22 doesn't have a verb, it takes the verb from the participle in verse 21, which is "be subject," and so it's governed by that verse. That really begins the whole section. It introduces us, verse 21 does, to what follows.

And so in light of that, he says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege we have to come together as your people and to gather around your Word and to study it together. What a privilege that is. You have given us the Word of God, and at times it is not an easy subject to read, easy issues to deal with, and yet, Father, we recognize this is your inerrant Word, and so we thank you for the gift of it and pray you would minister to us this morning as we seek to understand it and live in light of it.

We thank you most of all for the gift of Christ, the death that He died, a subject that is really at the heart of so much of what we study in these passages that we will look at this morning and in the weeks to come, a subject that is really at the center of all of the book of Ephesians – in fact, all of the Scriptures. Man is sinful, so you sent a Savior, and not just a savior, you sent your only begotten Son, the eternal Son of God, into this world in order to die for sinners, and so He took humanity on Himself. He became a man, He suffered in our place, that we might have life and have it eternally.

Father, we thank you so much for that, and help us to keep that in mind as we study this morning. Keep Christ before us and remember what He expects of us. And we pray that we would be moved by that, Father, and motivated to obedience and to devotion.

Father, we pray not only for ourselves and our spiritual needs, we have many, and we pray that some will be met this morning as we study the Scriptures, but we pray also, Lord, for our material needs, our physical needs. We think of the sick, we pray for them, those whose names have been placed on our prayer request list. We ask that you would intervene in their lives and in their situations. We think of Elizabeth Dean and the condition of her heart. We pray you'd bless and give healing. And Doris Perry, we pray that you might give her healing and comfort and encouragement, and those who are facing surgery this week and others.

We pray that you would prepare them and bless them and commend them into your blessings and your grace, Father. We know it's unlimited. And we know that all things work together for good for them that love you and are called according to your purpose. What a blessing that is and what a comfort that is to know. We pray, Father, for those who are grieving because of the loss of a loved one. Give them encouragement. Bless those who are without employment. Pray that you might open doors for them of opportunity.

Father, we thank you that you have given so many blessings. We can go over the trials that we face and the difficulties and yet they really do not compare to the blessings that you have given. You give us life physically, you give us life spiritually. Every believer in Jesus Christ has that great assurance that we have eternal life and that all things do work together for good. You are managing the affairs of this world and the affairs of our life to that end, to our good and to your glory. Thank you, Father, and may our time together this morning be an encouragement as well and be a call to vigilance in our responsibilities as Christians, that we might be good and faithful witnesses in the midst of this world.

A troubled world, Father, a very troubled world, and we pray that we might be lights in it. In light of the trouble that we have been shocked by this weekend in the Middle East, we pray for your people, for the believers in Jesus Christ who are living in the Middle East, may they be a witness. And you tell us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and we do pray for that, Father, in light of the assassination of Mr. Rabin. We pray that you might give peace in that land. And yet we know, Father, that ultimately peace will only come to that part of the world and to that city – in fact, to the world as a whole – when your Son, the Prince of Peace, returns.

So we look forward to that day and we pray that it would come soon. We echo the words of John, who in response to our Lord's words saying, "I am coming quickly," said, "Amen, Lord Jesus, come

quickly." We pray that, Father, and we pray that we would live in the meantime in light of it, in light of the fact that He is coming again, and may that be an encouragement to us. May it be an encouragement now and move us to be obedient in our responsibilities. May it be an encouragement to us again this evening as we come back and remember His first coming and what He accomplished for us on the cross.

Bless us now as we sing our final hymn. Bless us as we study together. May it be a profitable and enjoyable time. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] One of the most frequently repeated phrases that we hear today is family values. It has become a political buzzword and the reason is the American family is in a crisis. Marriages are falling apart, families are breaking up, and so now there is a frantic call for family values from both the right and the left. Everyone sees the problem, and it would be nice if the church could now step forward with the answers and Christian families could be the model of family values. Unfortunately, evangelical families are falling apart as well. I'm sure there are a variety of reasons for that and not all Christians involved in a family crisis have failed in their responsibilities.

There are many victims. But overall, you can't help but get the feeling that the church is weak today, that the world has a strong influence on it, and that worldliness has infiltrated the church and that Christians have lost their center. And when the center is lost, there's no stability. So to correct the problem and to guard against the problem, we have to go back to the Bible. The only way out of the crisis is through a knowledge of what the Word of God has to say to all of these issues, and in Ephesians 5, Paul takes up this particular issue of marriage and the family and the center of all family relationships.

From chapter 5 verse 22 through chapter 6 verse 4, Paul's subject is the Christian home, a very timely subject, a timely subject for every age, but it seems particularly so in ours. And in this section

of Scripture, Paul gives to us the duty of every member of the family, and he makes it very clear that at the center of the home is Jesus Christ. Each of our responsibilities revolve around Him. Wives are to be subject to their husbands as to the Lord. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. Parents are to raise up their children in the instruction of the Lord.

The Lord is at the center of the home, and so if a Christian home is to be a successful Christian home – and not just a Christian home that stays together and survives, we hope for something better than that, but if the Christian home is to truly be successful as a home and as a family, then Christ has to be the center of it. We must be looking to Him continually for our strength, for our wisdom, for our ability. Well, this is Paul's subject, and he begins with instruction to wives. Their particular responsibility is to be subject to their husbands, verse 22, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." That is our subject this morning, and it is a hot-button issue.

There may not be a more inflammatory word today in our discussion on marriage and this word "submission." In the minds of many, it equates to servility and evokes images of Edith and Archie Bunker. The husband sits in his chair as the wife brings him his beer and paper and prepares his dinner. She's nothing more than a domestic servant with no life of her own. She's rushing about just trying to keep Archie happy. Paul's instruction, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands" is a subject that's greatly misunderstood today.

I was reminded of that last spring when I did the wedding of a Christian couple. In the audience, there was a mixed group of friends. Some were acquainted with Christian principles and others were not, and it is my custom in doing the wedding ceremony to read Ephesians 5:22-33 instructing the couple on their responsibilities as husband and wife, and in the course of that, I say to the bride, "As an equal in person, you are to submit yourself in obedience to your husband as the

church submits herself in obedience to her head, the Lord Jesus Christ." It's something of a summation of what Paul instructs the wife on here in Ephesians 5, and so I make the point of submission and I make the point of obedience.

Well, after I did that, one of the ladies came up to me. She is a friend of mine and she was kind of chuckling and told me when you said "submit" the girl in front of me turned to her date and said, "Submit?" and what she was saying in that was, "He doesn't really mean submit, does he? Doesn't he know these are the '90s? No one holds to those antiquated ideas anymore." And to many, it does sound a little Neanderthal, and it sounds very much demeaning, women are to submit to their husbands, and I suppose there's some reason for that. Men have not always proved to be the best husbands even in Christian homes. All too often, they are dominating and abusive, and so I don't enter into this subject lightly, I can assure you of that.

You might have thought, "Well, Duncan can't wait to get to get to the subject where he can tell those women to submit." Well, that's not the case. I have two daughters, and the only male in my house is a five-month-old Scottish terrier, and in a few weeks he'll undergo a little procedure that will make female companionship totally irrelevant to him. So the only ones in my family that really matter are females and, God willing, they will marry someday, and so I do have a deep interest in their side of the issue.

So Paul speaks very plainly to it, and he says to my daughters, wake up, daughters - you can't believe they'd fall asleep during their father's sermons, can you? But he says very plainly to all of us, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands." And for the person who believes that this is God's Word, this statement has absolute authority. Wives are to be submissive, and yet since this is God's Word, we know that submission cannot mean servility. It cannot be demeaning. Rightly understood, it is good and right. It must be - it is God's Word and it is

God's design for the wife, for the woman, and so it must be good, it must be right, and so this morning we want to try to understand it rightly.

To begin, I think we need to realize that submission is not something that wives alone do. Women aren't the only class of people that are to be subject. In 1 Peter 2:13, Peter instructs all of us to submit ourselves to the king. We have political authorities over us and we're to be in submission to them. In 1 Peter 5:5, he states that young men are to be subject to the older men, be respectful, they are to defer to them. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 13:17 instructs the whole congregation of the church to be in submission to the elders. So submission in one way or another is a part of all of our lives.

Paul has stated that already in Ephesians 5:21, the verse that we concluded our study in last week, and there he says that all Christians, male and female, should be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Now, that concludes Paul's list of things that should characterize Spirit-filled living and worship, should characterize a Spirit-filled church. At the same time, that verse serves as a transition from the previous verses about church life to the next verses about family life. In fact, it has been called a summary preview. Gives us a glimpse of what's to come. It prepares our thinking for that about submission.

And submission can be defined – in fact, has been defined by the standard Greek and English lexicon of Arndt and Gingrich as voluntary yielding in love. Now, we'll come back to that point of voluntary yielding in love, but I think that's a good definition to begin with and understood that way, Paul's instruction here is basically the same as the instruction that he has given in other places, particularly in Philippians 2:3 where he writes, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself." Don't live a selfish life. Don't put yourself first. Defer to others, submit to others.

That's the attitude, this attitude of selflessness, of being concerned more for the other person than for oneself, that's the attitude that leads to

submission, and it finds its greatest example in Christ, who, Paul goes on to say, although He existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant. Now, our submission, Paul says, is to be in reverence to Christ. That's what he said in verse 21, be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. That does not mean in dread. That does not mean in cringing fear. There is not that fear in the Christian life.

John tells us in 1 John chapter 4 that perfect love casts out fear; that is, it casts out this sense of anguish, this sense of dread, this cringing fear that we normally associate with that word, but in its place is the fear of God, the fear of Christ, which is a sense of awe, a sense of reverence and devotion. Devotion to Christ for what He has done for us. He is the eternal, the infinite, the almighty, the all-glorious Son of God who became a servant and a sacrifice for me, for the sinner, and that should move me to want to be like Him and to want to please Him and to want to do what He has instructed me to do through His apostle, be subject to one another.

This one who Himself became subject, this one who humbled Himself, who became obedient, obedient to the point of death, and even death on a cross of all things. A shameful and painful death of the cross. He has asked me, He has asked you, every believer in Jesus Christ, to follow His example and be a humble, obedient, servant, to be subject to one another in the fear of Him.

Well, that statement in verse 21 prepares us for what Paul will say in the next verses, particularly in verse 22: Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. As to the Lord does not mean that a wife is to treat her husband like he is the Lord, but her submission rather is to be undertaken as a duty to the Lord. It's what He asks of her and it's what she should give as a duty and a duty that is undertaken as in a loving way, something she desires to do. But you'll notice it is submission to your own husbands, and it may go without saying but I'll say it anyway, Paul is not instructing women to be subject to every man.

He is not suggesting that every relationship between a woman and a man is one of submission. It's not women, be subject to men, but wives, to your own husbands. That is where this is restricted, within the marriage relationship, to the one husband. And then he gives the reason for this instruction on submission in verse 23. "For," he explains, "the husband is the head of the wife" – meaning the husband has authority over the wife, he has authority over the household, the wife and the children, authority over.

Now, there are some who disagree with that interpretation of saying that this idea of the husband being the head of the wife means having authority over her. In fact, they have called that chauvinistic and claim that it reflects more the concept of a pagan, male-dominated society than it does the Bible, and so some have tried to reinterpret the meaning of this verse by arguing that "head" has the idea of "source" rather than the idea of "authority over." According to this interpretation, Paul is not teaching that husbands have authority over their wives but that the man is the source or the origin of the woman since the woman was taken out of Adam's side and so the husband is to be the nourisher and the enabler of the wife.

The idea of this interpretation is that the husband, as the head of the wife, stresses the oneness that the two have and that there is to be mutual submission within the marriage, not special submission of the wife to the husband's authority since according to this view, the word "head" has no thought of "authority over." Now, there's something to be said for that interpretation in the sense that certainly Paul would agree that as the head of the wife, the husband should be the nourisher and the enabler of her, but as to the idea that the word "head" means "source," that is a distinctly minority view among scholars and an argument that cannot be sustained from either the use of the word "head" or the context of this passage.

Dr. Wayne Grudem, professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, a friend and former

colleague of Dr. Johnson's, did a thorough study on the Greek word *kephalé*, which is the word for "head," the word that's used here, and his study has been published in the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. We have, I think, at least one copy of that in the library, and in that is the latest edition of his work on this particular word.

In it, he studied 2,336 uses of the word *kephalé*, the word "head," from classical Greek literature, from the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it was the Bible of the first century. It's been compared to the King James Version for us. He studied the works of Philo, the Jewish philosopher; the works of Josephus, the Jewish historian; he studied the apostolic fathers and many other sources and concluded that no instances were discovered in which *kephalé* had the meaning of "source" or "origin." But the use of "head" with the meaning of "authority over" was found in a significant number of places and times.

In the Old Testament, this word is used, the word "head" is used of a chief or a leader. We have this a number of times in the book of Judges, for example, and that meaning, the meaning of leader, the meaning of authority over, is borne out by the context of our passage. Paul writes, "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church." So the husband's the head as Christ is the head, and it's clear that Christ is the head of the church as the authority over it because in the next verse, he speaks of the church submitting to Him. And so the headship of Christ explains the headship of the husband, and it is a headship of authority.

Back in chapter 1, we have another example of this same use of the word "head." There, Paul explains in verses 20 through 22 that God raised up Christ and seated Him in the heavenly places - verse 21 - far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come, and he put all things in subjection under His feet and gave

Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. He is the head over all things, meaning He has absolute authority over all things or all powers, whether they be in the heavens or on earth. He is the head, He is the authority over.

That's what "head" means. That's what it means here and this position of authority is an authority that God has given to the husband. Now, Paul doesn't state that explicitly. He doesn't give the origin of the husband's headship. It seems to be assumed. He does elaborate on it in 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 and in 1 Timothy 2:11-13 where he explains from Genesis chapter 2 that man's headship is based on the order of creation, man was created first, based on the mode of creation, the woman was taken from the man, taken from his side, and also from the purpose of creation, she was created to be helper suitable for him. He doesn't say that here, but that does stand behind the instruction that he gives.

So male headship is not culturally conditioned. Some want to argue that. In fact, the critics of this view, which I alluded to or cited earlier, maintain that that view that headship refers to authority over is a view that is conditioned by a pagan and a male-dominated society, but that's not the case. You go back to Genesis chapter 2 before the fall. From the very beginning, that is the origin of this. So headship has its origin in creation and as a result, it applies to all creatures. It applies to all cultures. It applies at all times. It is a universal truth and so, too, is the wife's duty of submission. It is grounded in creation and God's design for marriage.

But what is the nature of this submission? If it's not servility, if it's not something demeaning, what is it? Well, we've already given a definition of a voluntary yielding in love, and I think that has support from the original design of marriage, which Paul does refer to in verse 31 where he quotes Genesis 2:24. Paul writes in verse 31: "For this cause, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." The two became one,

and that was necessary because without Eve, Adam was incomplete. He was inadequate. He was alone. He sensed that immediately.

He names the animals, you'll remember, and this was sort of God's design in the scenario, and He sees the two of them and yet he's alone. He knew there was something incomplete about him. He knew that he wasn't right, and so God made Eve. He gave man the woman so that he would be complete, and that's the purpose of submission. It is the completion of the man and the completion of the marriage. Submission is the sacrifice of the self for the completion of marital oneness. It is, as someone has said, the pouring of oneself into the completion of another. It is, as we have said, voluntary yielding to a person in love.

Well, to what kind of person is the wife to yield? What kind of husband is the wife to be in submission to? What is biblical headship? We will get into that in detail next week, but Paul does give the answer to that already here in verse 23 where he says that he is to be the head as Christ also is the head. In other words, he is to be a head like Christ is the head, and Christ is the head in the sense of a servant leader. You look at His life, you see that, and that's not only what's apparent in His example but we see it in His words as well. In Mark 10:45, He said, "For even the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many."

Christ is the servant leader and that's the attitude that this husband is to have. Male headship is no license to dominate and demean the wife and to act like the grand sultan of Morocco, as one writer has put it. Carries with it the responsibility to serve, and in his role as head, he is to lead his wife and lead his family in the ways of righteousness. He is to give the members of his family direction in this life in both his instruction and in his conduct, his example. He is to reflect Christ to the family.

None of us do that. We all fail. I can give you examples from my own life when I fail. I failed last night, as a matter of fact. But that's what we're to strive for, that is the ideal, and that is what the

father and the husband is to be, a servant leader. And it is this servant leadership that promotes godly submission in the wife and cultivates her gifts so that she can function fully, so that she can function well for the success of the marriage and the stability of the family.

It is important to realize that submission concerns function or role, it does not have to do with essence and value. "Wives, be subject" does not mean wives are inferior. It has been said that equality of worth is not identity of role. The two don't equate. The two aren't the same. A person's value, whether the person be male or female, is not measured by his or her role or job. I can give a number of examples of that. Let me give two, and the first is the instruction that Peter gives in 1 Peter 2, that we're to be subject to the king. Inferior kings have ruled over superior subjects - that's always the case - and we have a number of examples of that.

One example is Ahaz, wicked king of Judah. Terrible king. An idolater, an immoral man, and yet he ruled over Isaiah but he was inferior. Inferior spiritually, he was inferior intellectually, he was inferior morally to the prophet, and yet he had authority over him, political authority. But he wasn't a superior spiritually or morally or in essence to Isaiah. The office says nothing about the inherent worth of a person, only about authority and responsibility. Best example, however, that one can cite is the example of Christ Himself. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes: "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."

Now, since God the Father is the head of Christ, does that mean that Christ is inferior to the Father in His essence? Well, not if you believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, of which we sang this morning, because Christ is very God of very God, He is equal in all things pertaining to deity. He says in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one" - one in essence - but in His function as Savior, He had to become a man, and in becoming a man, He put Himself under the

authority of the Father during the time of His incarnation and during the time of His mediatorial ministry. He did that in order to successfully carry out His mission, but that submission has nothing to do with His essence, it has to do with His function, it has to do with His role as Savior and mediator.

So the woman is not inferior to the man. Women are just as intelligent as men, just as spiritual and moral and courageous as men; in fact, very often they are superior in all of those ways. That's not being patronizing, that's true, and probably goes without saying, but it brings up the point that it is not a matter of essence. This is a matter of economy, it is a matter of organization of the family. The function of our different parts of the family are different, and the wife is to function as the helper of the husband. That is her role. That means in her role as helper, she has much to contribute to the husband's leadership in the use of her gifts, in the use of her wisdom, in the use of her knowledge.

Very often women know more than men. Let me give an example of that. Pontius Pilate would have been a happier man if he had listened to his wife. You remember the scene where it's during the trial of our Lord and Pontius Pilate is seated on the judgment seat, the trial is going on, when his wife sends word to him. She's very disturbed. She'd had a dream that night about Christ and it troubled her greatly, and so she sent a message to him in the midst of the trial saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man."

But Pilate did not listen to his wife, and men who do not listen to their wives and do not seek their counsel before making a decision or who are not prepared to change their minds and accept their counsel are foolish men. Leadership doesn't mean dominating and controlling. It doesn't mean shutting out the wife. That's not good for the wife and that's not good for the husband.

In a recent issue of the magazine *Modern Reformation*, there is an article entitled "The Submissive Wife," written by Dr. Bryan Chapell, who is the president of Covenant Theological Seminary in St.

Louis. In the article, he tells of a man on a church council who interviews new pastoral candidates and the question that he routinely asks is, "Does your wife submit to you?" meaning, "Do you control your family?" It's not a bad question, it's a valid question, but Dr. Chapell says it would be tragic if candidates actually did satisfy this official.

Then he goes on to explain that, "Over the years this man's friends have watched as his intelligent, once glowing and buoyant wife has become increasingly silent, sullen, and dowdy under his headship. Sadly, the more withdrawn she has become the more obnoxious, belligerent, and accusing he has become with everyone in his path. The more she retreats from her own gifts the more his faults assert themselves." He points out that both spouses think that they are complying with biblical submission because she only talks when he allows, only leaves the home when he permits, only wears what he approves. And the result of it all is their testimony is tarnished and their marriage is unfulfilling.

Submission does not mean slavish obedience, and a wise husband won't want that. Iron sharpens iron, so one man another. We can add so one man's wife sharpens him. That's a good relationship, a sharpening relationship. A man doesn't want this slavish obedience from his wife if he's wise and if he wants the best for himself and for her and for his family, and so he will promote his wife's gifts, he will promote her personality, and the result will be she will respect his leadership and she will want to be submissive.

Well, that's her responsibility and the choice that she must make. Submission is voluntary. We have suggested that from the definition that we began with in our lesson on this submission, but that's also clear from the grammar here because the verb "submit" in verse 21 is in the middle voice. Now, that may mean nothing to you if you don't know anything about Greek grammar, but what that means is the middle voice gives that verb the idea of subjecting oneself. In

other words, it's for her to subject herself. It is her choice. A wife can't be forced to be submissive.

Now, that shows her equality with the husband on the one hand. She is to choose to do this, she is to act, it is voluntary. She is to voluntarily submit. But on the other hand, and principally here, it shows her responsibility, it's what she is to do. The fact is wives don't always choose to do that, which is sometimes the reason for problems in a marriage. It's not always chauvinistic men. Men and women are equal in many ways, and one way in which they are equal is they are equally fallen, and wives can be just as headstrong and selfish as husbands.

Usually they don't become physically abusive as men sometimes do. Sometimes they do, but generally what happens is they become verbally abusive. As one writer puts it, "A woman's temptation is to use the power of words and emotions to diminish a husband's influence so that she has control of the home." She can wear down her husband by sulking, by nagging or complaining, making the home an uncomfortable place to be until he finally, just to have peace in the home, he gives in to what she wants. We speak of such men as henpecked.

Well, Solomon evidently knew something about that because he writes about it in Proverbs. In Proverbs 19:13, he says the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping. You know what that's like if you've got a faucet that's constantly dripping, you're trying to get to sleep at night, it'll drive you nuts. Sometimes wives can be like that. And he says it's better to live in a corner of a roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman. Now, that's coming from a man who had 700 wives and 300 concubines, so Solomon must have known something about domestic conflict. In fact, his foreign wives turned his heart away from the Lord.

The wisest man who ever lived, at least until our Lord, was drawn away from following the Lord by his wives, so that tells us something about the influence of a wife in the home. Her influence is

great for good or for evil. Her role in the family is as significant as the husband's role, it's just a different role. The fact of the matter is there are power plays made by both husbands and wives, but if the marriage is to succeed and the family to be strong, the wife must carry out her responsibilities earnestly – and the Scriptures are clear that the wife's principal responsibility is to be submissive to her husband.

That's the wife's role, and the value of that role and the importance of her submission is seen in verse 24. The wife is the model of the church to the world. Verse 24: But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. So the wife takes her cue from the church. The husband takes his cue from the Lord Himself, but the wife takes her cue, her lead, from the church, and the church is to submit to Christ, submit to His authority. It is to honor Him, it is to obey Him, and so the wife – reflecting the church – is to have the attitude and the inclination to yield to her husband's authority, and Paul says she is to do that in everything, meaning in every area of life.

Paul doesn't mean everything without exception but everything without distinction. He means in everything consistent with God's Will. The husband does not replace Christ as the woman's supreme authority. She can never allow the husband to lead her into sin. She can never follow him into sin. Peter and the apostles make that plain in another context but with a principle that applies here when they stood before the Jewish authorities in Acts chapter 5 and responded to the authorities' prohibition against them preaching the gospel. They responded, "We must obey God rather than men," and that principle applies here.

Now, the apostles in that scene were not belligerent, they were not antagonistic, they were humble. They recognized the authority that the Sanhedrin had over them in civil matters. But they were firm. They could not violate the Will of God. They were men under orders. The King had given them instructions to go and make disciples of all

the nations, baptizing and teaching in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and so they had to give the gospel. We must obey God rather than men.

Likewise, the wife cannot submit to her husband if he should try to lead her into sin, but she can refuse respectfully with a spirit of submission and show by her attitude that she does not like resisting his will and that her desire is for him to turn away from sin and to be a righteous leader.

There are many wives who are in hard places, who are married to difficult men, married to men who are not Christians, and they carry a huge burden. Every day they carry a huge burden and face lots of tension and hard decisions, and so they need our sympathy and they need our prayers. They are in difficult situations, and so we need to bear their burdens with them, but that is the place that God has put them, and it can be a place of great ministry. Peter makes that clear in 1 Peter 3:1-6 when he gives instruction to that very situation. It can be a place of great ministry, as hard and as difficult as it is, but it can be a place of ministry only in the power of Christ, by looking to Him every day.

And really, that is true for all of us. Being submissive even in a good situation is never easy. It goes against our natural inclination, which is to do what we want to do, and yet the instruction is no, you're not to do that, you're to be submissive. It's difficult for the man as well to be a godly head of the home. That's never easy. There's always the temptation to let it slide and to abdicate the responsibility. Both parties, both roles are difficult, even in the best of circumstances, and so we need to be constantly looking to the Lord for guidance and strength in order that we will be what God has intended us to be. In order for a Christian home to be not simply a home that stays together but a home that thrives and succeeds, Jesus Christ must be at the very center of it.

The church is a city on a hill and the world should see us and see us shining as a model society with model marriages and families,

particularly at this time of crisis in the home. That's what God has called us to be, and it is our privilege to be a model of God's grace and of God's truth. It is not only a privilege to be that and it is not only something that we should be but we can actually be that. It's what God has called us to be and the one who has called us and who has given us instruction can supply the power to do the very things He commands us to do.

It takes commitment to biblical principles, it takes commitment to Christ, who, as I say, must be the center of our marriage and the center of our family – the center of our personal lives, first of all. He is the one from whom we gain our strength. I can, as Paul says, do all things through Him who strengthens me – even be a submissive wife to a dominant, calloused husband. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, and so we're to look to Him, look to Christ. Pray that God will give us His desires and give us His strength and cause us to seek to live lives that please Him, the one who became submissive for us and died for us that we might have His life.

And if you're here this morning without Christ, then look to Him for salvation. There is a greater crisis than the social crisis of the family, and that is the spiritual crisis of the soul. It is an ancient crisis. Man has sinned and rebelled against God, and as a result has come under condemnation and is headed for judgment, but there is a way of escape and that way of escape is in Christ, God's Son, who loved sinners and died in their place. That death paid the penalty of the broken law, and through faith alone in Christ alone, that payment becomes yours. Through faith you receive the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and truth, takes up residence in your heart to guide you and strengthen you in the way of life.

If you've never believed in Christ, if you're here this morning without Him, realize that you are in need of a Savior and Christ is that

Savior. Look to Him, trust in Him, and may all of us look to Him and trust in Him, that we might be men and women who have families that honor Him, are model families, in the midst of a day that needs to see that. May God help us to do that.

Shall we stand now for the benediction?

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege that you have given to each of us to sit under your Word, to simply read it, listen to the instruction that is given to us, instruction that is to lead to behavior that brings honor to you, that reflects your grace and truth. That is a privilege, Father, but the greatest privilege of all, the greatest blessing of all, is to know your Son in a personal way, to know that He died for us, that He took away our sins and that we have forgiveness in Him.

Father, if there by any in attendance this morning who does not know Him as Savior, may you bring them to a knowledge of their sin and bring them to the knowledge of Him as Savior, that they might trust in Him, and may we all seek to live lives that please you. May we be good husbands, good wives, good sons and daughters. May we make it our ambition to present to the world model marriages and model families, that Christ be glorified. We pray these things in His name. Amen.