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Read Ephesians 5:22–33 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as also Christ is the head of the church (he himself being the savior of the body). 24 But as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, 27 so that he may present the church to himself as glorious—not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one has ever hated his own body, but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great—but I am actually speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each one of you must also love his own wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

COMMENTS:

I was amazed at the number of commentators who tried to figure out why Paul moved from general admonitions on moral life and corporate worship to specific instructions regarding household relationships? First, you cannot determine why a dead author does something unless he tells you. You are simply guessing. I consider that a waste of time.

I look at v. 21 which says, “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” and consider that as Paul’s introduction to our readings for today and tomorrow. He is simply giving us some very simple practical illustrations on how submitting to one another looks in real life. He gives 3 examples: 1) husbands and wife; 2) children and parents; and then slaves and masters.

Paul is consistent in always offering something to both parties in his examples. Submitting to one another is always to be a two–way street. There are not just some who need to submit. All are called to submit to one another for the sake of Christ, for his reputation and his work.

Now please remember. If God says something and I repeat it and you do not agree with it, your quarrel is with God, not me. When God call the wife to submit to her husband, he says it is because the male is the head of the family like Christ is the head of the church and in fact has given his life for its sake.

God is primarily against fighting. Many women are frightened of submitting to a man for fear they will be abused. God tell the husbands to care for the wife like Christ cared for the church! Do we fear a loving Savior? No, never!

I do not fear Jesus and any man who is a Christian should not cause a woman to fear either. They sometimes do because no human being acts like Jesus all the time. Men fail, women fail. Then we also have men with the twisted mind who believe it is okay to kill someone who won’t let them have their way.

One reason you are encouraged to marry a fellow Christian is so they may share your values and not have misshapen attitudes and morals. You have a right to fear a controlling male, but not all

of them are such people. I always encourage people to pick their mates carefully. Living with the wrong person can be worse than living alone.

Go back to vs. 25–26 and see how Christ demonstrated his love for his bride, the church. In v. 25 Christ is described as self-giving. He even gave his very life for us. His purpose was to make his bride holy (sanctified) by cleansing her of her sin. Note the reference to Holy Baptism: “the washing of the water by the word.”

All this so she might be holy and righteous in his sight and in the sight of our heavenly Father. Now she is a glorious bride: “not having a strain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless” (v. 27).

In v. 28 Jesus rewrites the second table of the law just to apply to husbands and wives. The man is to love the woman as he loves himself. (The original version says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22:39). How much more so should we love our wives as our self. No one in his right mind hates his body, but he feeds it, cares for it.

That is what Christ did for the church, and so husbands should care for their wives. Why is the husband to leave his parents and be united with his wife? In those days, the two generations frequently shared a house. It was common for the bride to move into the home of her husband’s parents. Since the husband did not move, he had to prioritize the relationship with his bride.

The conclusion in vs. 31–33 is that this primarily is about Christ and the church, but it applies also to husband and wife. This is shown by living in a respectful relationship with our mate. We don’t call each other dumb or stupid. That is disrespect. I like the motto: Fight in private. Defend each other in public. Keep your family stuff off Facebook!

REFLECTION QUESTION: The word in v. 31 translated in many translations as “respect” is the word “fear.” Luther borrowed the concept in his explanations of the commandments, “We should fear and love God...” We know this word “fear” means to have such awe or respect for a person so as “to involve a measure of fear so we show great reverence for, to show great respect for...” In a number of languages there are serious problems involved in speaking of ‘fearing God,’ for this might imply merely ‘to be scared of God’ as though God were some kind of bogeyman. If there is a term with the meaning of ‘awe’ (perhaps in a phrase such as ‘to stand in awe of’), this may be a better translation and an adequate equivalent. In some cases awe is expressed idiomatically as “to stand with one’s heart in one’s throat” or “to be in someone’s presence with one’s heart beating fast.” How do you show proper “fear” of God or for God?