

Refresh

Ephesians 5:22-27

Paul Cannings, D.Phil.

A. Blind Faith (vs. 22-24):

1. Submit – The word submit is not mentioned in this particular verse. This is because when the woman reflects on how to relate to her “own” husband it is based on how long in her spiritual development, she has been living under the authority of the Lord.
2. Submit – It will come after Paul talks about the headship of the husband which is defined based on how the church (which he is a part of) relates to Christ. The husband must bring his life under the headship of Christ (1:22-23) which he is empowered to do under the ministry of the Holy Spirit (3:16-19) and his service in the church (4:12-13).
3. As to the Lord – The wife is called to live her life under the authority of Christ who has become the master of her soul. Since this could make her vulnerable, she willfully must continually decide to trust the Lord to powerfully move, as in the case of Sarai and Pharaoh (Genesis 12:10-20), to protect her and fight for her when or if necessary. How a wife gets to this level of maturity is first a surrender to the work of God in her life.
 - a) Commitment to your call -- 1:4; 4:1-2
 - b) Commit, to serve (4:12-13, 26).
 - c) Commit to get rid of the old man (4:17-24).
 - d) Love Christ which is worship to God (5:1-2)
 - e) Full of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18 -- submit to one another -- (vs. 21) -- in the flesh you get into strife (Gal. 5:20).

f) Spiritual maturity (Phil. 2:3-11; 1 Tim. 5:9-10)

4. Headship – Headship of the husband in the home is permitted when the husband allows Christ to rule his life (1 Corinthians 11:3).

a) Above all the husband's leadership is governed by a self-sacrificial love. This admonition to the men flew in the face of many heavy-handed and demeaning attitudes of men toward their wives in antiquity—both in the Judaism and in the Greco-Roman culture (see “Josephus and Philo on Marriage” and “Aemilius Paulus and Papiria”).^[1]

b) Headship as defined in Ephesians:

- The Church receives God's gift of Christ as head over all on its behalf (1:22).
- In the building imagery of 2:20, 21 the Church looks to Christ as the crowning stone of its structure and the one who holds it all together.
- It opens itself to His constant presence (3:17) and comes to know His all-encompassing love (3:19).
- The Church receives His gift of grace (4:7) and His gifts of ministers for its own upbuilding (4:11, 12).
- It grows toward its head and receives from Him all that is necessary for such growth (4:15, 16), including teaching about Him (4:20, 21).
- The Church imitates Christ's love (5:2) and tries to learn what is pleasing to Him (5:10) and to understand His will (5:17).
- It sings praises to Him (5:19) and lives in fear of Him (5:21).

5. Headship – The word ‘headship’ is the main subject of this verb which means the wife’s role is shaped by her husband’s commitment to bring his life under the authority of Christ, the Word of God.

a) Some understand the term “head” to refer primarily to the concept of honor (vs. 4-5). Thus, as Christ honored God, man is to honor Christ, and the woman is to honor her husband. Others see the word “head” as the idea of authority (which would also include the concept of honor). They point out that Paul clearly uses the term in the sense of authority in Eph. 1:21-22 (“under his feet”; “head over everything”), in Eph. 5:22-33 (where headship is seen in a context of submission) and in Col. 1:18; 2:10. Thus as Christ is in authority over man and is there to be honored by man, so the husband is in a position of authority and is therefore to be honored by his wife.

6. Headship – Headship means that the husband is the most responsible person in charge of managing his home, which includes keeping his children under control (1 Timothy 3:3-5), while treating his wife respectfully (1 Peter 3:7). In the case of Adam, he is the cultivator of the garden (Genesis 2:15-17).

7. Headship – God took the rib from Adam because headship also means ‘source of life’ (notice there is no Biblical record that God breathes into the woman like He breathes into Adam). The woman being the rib protects the breath of God in the home (Proverbs 31:30). This is why a woman can tear a house down with her own hands (Proverbs 14:1).

8. Headship – When a husband functions in his Biblical role in a godly manner and does the same, this couple ‘receives favor from the Lord.’ (Proverbs 18:22)

9. Christ is the head of the church - Leadership in the home is defined by a manner in which the anointed leader, high priest of the church exercises His leadership under the authority of God (1 Corinthians 11:3) thus providing life, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-19) to the church.

- a) Christ endured pain, died in obedience to God and became head.
- b) Christ fills all in all as head of the church (1:22-23).

- c) Christ as head seeks to create peace and unity (2:14-18; 4:1-7).
- d) As head we are His workmanship.
- e) We do all of this as heads because we are imitators of God (5:1).

10. Christ is the head of the church - Christ is committed only to the church so much as a husband is committed only to his wife and family to spiritually mature them to the fullness of God (6:1-4).

11. He Himself being Savior of the body (vs. 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16) – God gave to Christ the primary responsibility to lead the church (1:22-23), deliver the church from the clutches of Satan (2:1-10), empower the church (3:14-19), and guide the church to become just like God the Father (4:12-13) while protecting it from false doctrine (4:14) becoming drunk in the Spirit (5:15-18) so that genuine worship of God is established. This is Christ continually delivering the body from Satan and itself (4:17-24).

12. He Himself being Savior of the body – When a man leads His home he delivers the home from false doctrine (wash his wife with the word; 5:26); he is responsible for presenting her before God as a mature believer (5:27); his children focused on submitting their lives to God (6:1-4) and sustains his wife body in the same manner he does himself (5:28-29) this is why and how the man loves his wife is like Christ and the church.

13. He Himself being Savior of the body – This is one of the main reasons a wife submits to her husband so he can be a leader in the manner that Christ leads the church.

14. As the church is subject to Christ – In order for the church to mature into the ‘fullness of God’ (the husband is responsible to present his wife blameless to God; 5:25-27), the members of the church must be saved (2:8-10), must commit to apply the word of God to their lives (3:16-19), use their spiritual gift to fulfill God’s agenda for the church (4:12-13) so that being full of the Holy Spirit (5:15-18), they honor God (5:19-20) becoming a united body (5:21) that brings God to glory.

- a) The grammar indicates that this mutual submission is associated with the filling of the Spirit in v. 18. The command “be filled” (vs. 18) is followed by a series of participles in the Greek: speaking (vs. 19), singing (vs. 19), making music (vs. 19), giving thanks (vs. 20) and submitting (vs. 21).

b) There is to be no limit to the submission expected of wives, just as there is no limit to the Church's obedient service of Christ. In this ideal picture of Christian marriage, the possibility is not even considered that wives' submission to their husbands might conflict with their submission to Christ. On the other hand, it must be said that in Ephesians the Church's submission to Christ is for the Church's benefit, enabling its growth, unity, and maturity, so that the wife's subordination to her husband also presupposes that it is part of a relationship in which the husband has her welfare constantly in view.^[2]

15. So wives ought to be to their husbands in everything – Just like the church (saved as a gift from God when no one was seeking to; 2:8-10; Romans 3:11-12) is obligated to Christ, so that Christ achieves the agenda God sent for Him (1:3-14), in the same manner in order for the husband to achieve the agenda Christ provided him, the wife is obligated (since her commitment is first to the Lord; 5:22), to her husband for the purpose of fulfilling Christ agenda for the family He created. "*Ought to be*" is not written in the Greek text so it was not spoken by Christ, but it is the responsible attitude to display since the husband is obligated as head of the wife to fulfill God's agenda. Since the wife is defined as the church, there should be a sense of obligation to assist her husband in carrying out his God ordained role.

a) The submission of the wife to her husband does not suggest inequality, for Christ was in submission to the Father but was also His equal (John 14:9; 17:22; 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 2:6–8). The relationship between the husband and wife is one governed by unselfish love, where both meet the needs of each other.^[3] (Equality - Genesis 1:26-28; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Peter 3:7).

b) To submit means to yield one's own rights. If the relationship called for it, as in the military, the term could connote obedience, but that meaning is not called for here. In fact, the word "obey" does not appear in Scripture with respect to wives, though it does with respect to children (6:1) and slaves (6:5).

16. So wives ought to be to their husbands in everything – It is not what each person wants for themselves first. It is focusing on becoming like Christ and the church first that both persons must commit to fulfill (Philippians 2:1-5).

a) Submission should also occur because of the respect of the woman for God's authority, which places Christ as the head of the church and the man as the head of the woman (1 Cor. 11:3).

"Submission for the sake of God's order, so that God can carry out His plans, purposes and will."

B. Sacrificial Love (vs. 25-27):

1. Husbands, love your wives – Husbands are commanded to continuously be self-sacrificially, from the heart, based on the influence of the Holy Spirit to be compassionate towards their wives.

a) The love referred to here is Christian love and not primarily romantic love; most marriages in the ancient world were arranged and not the result of erotic attraction. The reference to the husband's love follows surprisingly on AE's instruction to the wife to subordinate herself to her husband; in accordance with the contemporary patriarchal nature of society, the husband might have been expected to be told to instruct, advise and control his wife, and if he were told to love her it would be sexual love that would have been in view. Husbands are rarely enjoined in Jewish literature to love their wives (in *Ps-Phoc* 195–7 *στέργω* is used and not *ἀγαπάω*; see also *b Yeb* 62b). *ἀγάπη* is not used in Hellenistic literature in relation to households.^[4]

b) The obligations are not merely one-sided. The husband's responsibility is just as binding as that of the wife. This is not a reference to normal marital love, which would not need to be commanded, but to that volitional love which stems from

God and resembles his own love. In contrast to normal sexual desire, which by its nature is self-seeking, this love is unselfish. [5]

c) The word “love” (*agapaō*) means seeking the highest good for another person (cf. 2:4). This is an unselfish love as seen in Christ’s sacrificial death in which He gave Himself up for the church (cf. 5:2; John 10:11, 15, 17–18; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 9:14). A wife’s submission in no way hints that a husband may lord it over his spouse, as a despot commanding a slave. The “submit-love” relationship is a beautiful mixture of a harmonious partnership in marriage. [6]

d) So in terms of contemporary instructions on marriage, this writer’s exhortation to husbands is by no means conventional or matter of course. In any case, he makes it distinctive by radicalizing the love for which he calls, as he models it on that of Christ for the Church. Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*, 269–70) can, therefore, rightly assert, “the patriarchal-societal code is theologically modified in the exhortation to the husband.... Patriarchal domination is thus radically questioned with reference to the paradigmatic love relationship of Christ to the church.” [7]

2. Husbands, love your wives – As a husband leads with a deep commitment to execute God’s agenda he must do so in a compassionate, self-sacrificial manner for his wife and his family.

a) As also Christ loved the church. While human husbands can never attain the degree of love Christ manifested, yet they are exhorted to have the same kind of love, which is demonstrated in the clause that follows, and gave himself for it. [8]

b) The word for “love” here is *agapoō* (ἀγαπῶ), referring to the love that God is (I John 4:8), that God showed at Calvary (John 3:16), and the love that the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the yielded believer (Gal. 5:22). This is a self-sacrificial love, a love that impels the one loving to give himself in self-sacrifice for the well-being of the one who is loved. The husband has three other kinds of love for his wife, a love of passion (*erōs* (ἔρως)), a love of complacency and satisfaction (*stergō* (στεργῶ)), and a fondness or affection (*phileō* (φιλεῶ)). All these are saturated with the *agapaō*

(ἀγαπάω) love of the Spirit-filled husband, purified and made heavenly in character.^[9]

3. Just as Christ loved the church - “Just as” defines the structure by which a husband should compassionately and affectionately care for his wife.

a) The word “love” (*agapaō*) means seeking the highest good for another person (cf. 2:4). This is an unselfish love as seen in Christ’s sacrificial death in which He gave Himself up for the church (cf. 5:2; John 10:11, 15, 17–18; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 9:14). A wife’s submission in no way hints that a husband may lord it over his spouse, as a despot commanding a slave. The “submit-love” relationship is a beautiful mixture of harmonious partnership in marriage.^[10]

b) The kind of leadership the husband should exert is not defined by the prevailing cultural trends, but by the example of Christ himself. Above all the husband’s leadership is governed by a self-sacrificial love. This admonition to the men flew in the face of many heavy-handed and demeaning attitudes of men toward their wives in antiquity—both in Judaism and in Greco-Roman culture (see “Josephus and Philo on Marriage” and “Aemilius Paulus and Papiria”).^[11]

c) Elsewhere in the letter, love has been seen as an essential quality in Christian living (cf. 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15, 16). Significantly, the call to all to loving sacrifice for one another in 5:1, 2 takes a similar form to that directed to husbands here in 5:25, since in both places the analogy with Christ’s own self-sacrificing love provides the warrant for the appeal. The exhortation to sacrifice one’s own interests for the welfare of others, which is so necessary for the harmony of the community, now finds a more specific application in the husband’s role in contributing to marital harmony. Husbands are asked to exercise the self-giving love that has as its goal only their wives’ good and that will care for their wives without the expectation of reward. Lincoln, A. T. (1990). *Ephesians* (Vol. 42, p. 374). Word, Incorporated.^[12]

4. Just as Christ loved the church - Just as how Christ defines how a husband leads his wife, in the same manner Christ defines how a husband decisively, on his own initiative, whether the wife loves him back or not, he must demonstrate Holy Spirit inspired care and compassion, as defined in verses 28-29, towards his wife.

a) Husbands are to have a Christ-like passion to bring their wives into deeper purity and holiness before God. Christ's sacrificial love for the church is set forth as the pattern for the husband's love for his wife. Husbands ought to consider whether they are loving their wives according to this pattern. Paul quoted Genesis 2:24, the scriptural basis for marriage (5:31). There is a symbolic purpose in marriage (5:32). The union is designed to be a reflection of the relationship between Christ and His church. [13]

5. Gave, delivered - In the manner as Christ willingly surrendered to His Father's will so must the husband relinquish all of his rights to accomplish God's will as a husband. This is a challenge for any man. This is why Christ instructs the wife to be a helper and to surrender her will to Christ as her Lord.

a) This is not only the expression of our Lord's love, but also an example of how the husband ought to devote himself to his wife's good. To give oneself up to death for the beloved is a more extreme expression of devotion than the wife is called on to make.

6. Sanctify – We must consecrate (set aside from reacting the way the world will – to be the opposite than the common) ourselves to Christ in our hearts as true believers due to our commitment of our faith in the face of the world - To venerate and adore Christ, thus dispelling all fear of man.

a) One thing is clear: the Lord Jesus died not only to bring forgiveness, but also to effect a new life of holiness in the church, which is His "bride." A study of the concepts of washing, of water and of the word should include reference to Jn. 3:5; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pe. 1:23.

7. Washing with water – When the husband is committed to speak the truth in love (4:15), protect his family from false doctrine (4:14), preserve the family from using common sense (4:17), speak truth not falsehood (4:25), and walk wise based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (5:15-18) the husband, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, preserves God’s holiness in his home and therefore purifies his wife as he continues to mature like Christ (1 John 1:5-7). This process keeps the filth out of the marriage as described in chapter 5:3-14. Conversations are healthier and problem-solving are growing experiences of learning God’s wisdom which blesses the children.

a) Just as water washes the body, so the Word of God washes the heart (cf. Ezk 36:27).^[14]

b) This “washing” probably alludes figuratively to the bride’s prenuptial washing (of course, washing was natural before any occasion on which one wished to impress another positively). After this washing the bride was perfumed, anointed and arrayed in wedding clothes. The betrothal ceremony in Judaism also came to be called “the sanctification of the bride,” setting her apart for her husband. The “word” naturally refers to the saving gospel of Christ (1:13).^[15]

c) The Lord told His people, “ ‘I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you’, declares the Sovereign Lord, ‘and you became mine. I bathed you with water and washed the blood from you ... you became very beautiful and rose to be a queen’ ” (Ezek. 16:8–13). The church is not cleansed by literal water (although there may be an allusion to baptism here); rather, the effective factor for salvation is the Word of God, the gospel, rooted in the blood of Christ that cleanses believers from all sin.^[16]

d) Indeed, the language of “the washing with water” is likely to have as a secondary connotation, the notion of the bridal bath. This would reflect both Jewish marital customs with their prenuptial bath and the marital imagery of Ezek 16:8–14 which stands behind this passage. In Ezek 16:9 Yahweh, in entering His marriage covenant with Jerusalem, is said to have bathed her with water and washed off the blood from her. (Among those who support an allusion to the bridal bath here are Meyer, 295, 298; Abbott, 168–69; O. Casel, “Die Taufe als Brautbad der Kirche,” *Jahrbuch für*

Liturgie und Wissenschaft 5 [1925] 144–47; Dunn, *Baptism*, 162–63; Bruce, *Epistles*, 387; Halter, *Taufe*, 282.)^[17]

8. Word - Denoting the operative or all-powerful word or command of God - the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," <Eph. 6:17>; here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need (John 14:26), a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture - That which has been stated or said, with primary focus upon the content of the communication - A minimal unit of discourse, often a single word - "word," saying.

9. He might present – When a husband comes before God he needs to prove that which God called him to be as a husband was achieved; his wife "holy faultless in God's presence," (Colossians 1:22). This is done in this manner:

a) In all her glory – God would view wives whose husbands were faithful to their roles as splendid; in the fullest expression Christ intended for them.

b) Having no spot or wrinkle – These wives who are splendid have no stains and are flawless in Christ sight.

· The presentation in view, which is given here as the *final* object of Christ's surrendering of Himself to death, and (by use of the aorist) as a single definite act, cannot be anything done in the world that now is, but must be referred to the future consummation, the event of the Parousia (the Rapture)." The words. "not having spot or wrinkle," are an explanation on the negative side of what is meant in the word "glorious." The bride is to be without moral blemish.^[18]

c) She should be holy and blameless - The goal for every husband, who chooses to become Christ in his home is no different than for Christ. He is to present his wife as consecrated to God, grown into all the church needs to be no longer controlled by evil desires, drunk with the Spirit (5:15-18), faultless in character before God.

d) She should be holy and blameless - Most men would view this verse as a steep climb. This would probably take place because they view who their wives are first, rather than what Christ is calling them to be. Because we all are provided a free will, no husband can make his wife become the church. The goal is set for Christ as well. The results are first based on who we choose to become for Christ sake and our families, not first how we can best present our wives.

10. What the husband is charged to do occurs when with his commitment to be Christ he serves his wife as Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit serves her spiritual growth. Here is what Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is doing to build both people up:

- a) Paul has told us that we are called to be holy and blameless (1:4).
- b) We have been chosen in accordance with His plan, purpose and will (1:11).
- c) We are no longer to live in disobedience (2:1-8) because we have been saved by grace (2:8), and we are Christ's workmanship (2:10).
- d) We are provided an inheritance as a result of Christ's death and resurrection, which is the Holy Spirit (1:13-14) who dwells in our inner being (3:16). As a result, we should be drunk with the Spirit (5:18), who helps us to submit to one another (5:21).
- e) We are being built into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21-22).
- f) Because we marry a Christian we have unity in Christ because we are tied to one Spirit, one hope (2:18; 4:3-6), and have one peace (2:15-17).
- g) Through the pastors' teaching and our service to God and our edifying of one another, we grow into the fullness of Christ (4:12-16).
- h) We can experience love that surpasses all knowledge because the Holy Spirit and Christ dwells in us (3:16-19).
- i) We are to put off the old man and put on "the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (3:17-24). As a result we need to watch how long we stay angry (4:26), and our conversation (4:29-3; 5:3-7)

- j) We must **walk according to our calling** (4:1-2), and **imitate God** (5:1-2).
- k) A couple is not in the flesh living based on the old man (4:17-24) so that arguments with abusive language are taking place (5:3-5). They are now in the Spirit walking worthy (4:1-3; 5:1-2).

11. This is how unity is achieved for the home – one mind because it is one faith, one God, one Spirit, one Lord (4:1-7). *"So this is because submission for the sake of spiritual growth and fulfilling God's agenda through the family to the world" (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25).*

[1] Arnold, C. E. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*. (Vol. 3, p. 333). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

[2] Lincoln, A. T. (1990). *Ephesians* (Vol. 42, p. 373). Word, Incorporated.

[3] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 596). Tyndale House Publishers.

[4] Best, E. (1998). *A critical and exegetical commentary on Ephesians* (p. 540). Edinburgh: T&T Clark International.

[5] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Eph 5:25). Chicago: Moody Press.

[6] Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 641). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

[7] Lincoln, A. T. (1990). *Ephesians* (Vol. 42, p. 374). Word, Incorporated.

[8] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F. (Eds.). (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Eph 5:25). Chicago: Moody Press.

[9] Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 4, p. 131). Eerdmans.

[10] Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 641). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

[11] Arnold, C. E. (2002). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#). (Vol. 3, p. 333). Zondervan.

[12] Lincoln, A. T. (1990). [Ephesians](#) (Vol. 42, p. 374). Word, Incorporated.

[13] Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). *Tyndale concise Bible commentary* (p. 596). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

[14] Pfeiffer, C. F., & Harrison, E. F., eds. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: New Testament](#) (Eph 5:26). Moody Press.

[15] Keener, C. S. (1993). [The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament](#) (Eph 5:26). InterVarsity Press.

[16] Arnold, C. E. (2002). [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#). (Vol. 3, pp. 333–334). Zondervan.

[17] Lincoln, A. T. (1990). [Ephesians](#) (Vol. 42, pp. 375–376). Word, Incorporated.

[18] Wuest, K. S. (1997). [Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader](#) (Vol. 4, pp. 132–133). Eerdmans.