

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 10 March 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

God's Plan for Marriage

Ephesians 5:21-33

One hundred years ago, an incredibly evil man named **Aleister Crowley** walked this earth. Crowley is now burning in hell; but in his lifetime, he had a devastating impact upon Western society. Not only did Crowley proudly worship Satan: but in his book *Magick*, he bragged that he had sacrificed hundreds of children to Satan (a claim which I do not doubt). In his book entitled *The Book of the Law* (published in 1904), He made this opening statement: **“Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.”** He insisted that this statement *must* become the accepted credo of the new age. In his writings, he openly called for disorder, murder, rape, mayhem, and everything evil. He called for a new “aeon,” which he called the Age of Horus, or the “New World Order.” Crowley asserted that this coming “New World Order” would be under the control of Lord Thelema (his name for the Antichrist), and that it would, ultimately, be ruled by Master Therion (his name for Satan). Crowley called for a drug revolution and a sexual revolution in order to destroy every last fabric of morality. He also called for a satanically-inspired *music* genre to indoctrinate the youth with satanic precepts. Rock music, which was already in its early stages of development before Crowley’s death in 1947, was the answer to his satanic dream. To this day, many Rock bands declare, in the lyrics of their songs, their adoration of Aleister Crowley, and their allegiance to Satan. To this day, Crowley is called “The wickedest man on earth,” “The Father of Modern Satanism,” “The Father of the New Age Movement,” and “The Patron Saint of Rock and Roll.”

Now, what am I driving at? Simply this. This vile man named Aleister Crowley, who hated God so vehemently, made this statement about the family: **“The family is public enemy number one.”** That is a telling statement, is it not? Without question, this statement came straight from the mind of Satan!

My friends, we are living in a day in which the institution of marriage is under brutal attack. Satan hates everything that God established; and he *especially* hates marriage. Marriage is the very first institution that God ever ordained; and it is the foundation of human society. God established it for the purpose of bringing glory to Himself. If Satan can destroy a family, he is delighted; but if he can destroy a *Christian* family, he is especially delighted. Whenever Satan destroys a Christian family, he destroys that which could have been a strong spiritual fortress, to be used against *him* and *his* kingdom.

Those of us who are married *must* continually strengthen and guard our marriages. If you happen to be single, you need to know how to strengthen and guard your *future* marriage. *How* do you go about guarding your marriage? It’s simple. You must know *God’s* instructions for marriage: and you must *obey* His instructions. In today’s message, we will learn some of these principles for marriage, as found in **Ephesians 5**. The title of this message is ***God’s Plan for Marriage***.

Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

I. The wife's role

In this passage, Paul likens the relationship between Christ and His church to the relationship between a husband and his wife. Every true church is the Bride of Christ; and *because* the church is Christ's bride, it is her duty to submit herself to her Lord. So it is in marriage.

Now, I don't think any true child of God would question that Christ is the Head of His church, and that the church is to be subject to Him. Yet, for some reason, many Christians today question what the Bible says about the roles of husbands and wives. Sadly, the roles of husband and wife are *reversed* in many Christian homes; and as the result, many families are struggling and suffering. Why? Because they are not doing things God's way! It is vital that Christian husbands and wives understand and follow their God-given roles.

Let's begin by examining the wife's role in the home. (**Read verses 22-24 again.**) The role of the wife is that she is to follow the leadership of her husband, who is her head. Now, in case you haven't noticed, this is *not* a popular thing to believe these days! If you *practice* this precept in your own marriage, you will, quite possibly, be criticised by others; but if you dare to *declare* this biblical precept *out loud*, you make yourself the object of scorn. You may be called a "fundamentalist," "patriarchal," "sexist," or "misogynist." However, as Christians, we should not be concerned about what the world thinks: we should be obedient to the Lord.

Now, I want to make one thing very clear: the woman is *not* intellectually or morally inferior to the man. Nor is she of any less worth than the man. Paul (the very one who wrote these words in **Ephesians 5**), wrote in **Galatians 3:28** that "***There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.***" That is a strong statement! Men and women are of equal worth in God's eyes.

Yet, if men and women are of equal worth in God's eyes, then why did God ordain that wives submit themselves to their husbands? There are several reasons. First of all, God designed it this way because **He is a God of order**. Think about God Himself. God is *three* Persons in one—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and no member of the Godhead is *inferior* to any other member. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in every way. Though three distinct Persons, they are all of one eternal essence. They are equal in power and wisdom; and we are to honour them equally. Jesus said, "***That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.***" Yet, even though the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all equal, there is still a chain of submission in the Godhead. The Son willingly submits to His Father; and the Holy Spirit willingly submits to the Son.

Now, do the members of the Godhead *take counsel* with each other? Yes. In **Genesis 11**, the members of the Trinity took counsel with themselves and said, "***Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.***" Think of this! The Godhead actually *talked over* how to deal with the rebellious men who were building the tower of Babel! Likewise, when Christ, the Son of God, was on earth, He prayed to His Father and requested, if it were possible, to allow the cup of suffering to pass from Him. Christ actually *talked over* His coming crucifixion with His Father. Yet, how did Jesus conclude His petition? He said, "***Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.***" In the end, the Son submitted Himself to His Father's will, and went to the cross. Similarly, husbands and wives can, and should, take counsel with each other. The husband should *listen carefully* to his wife, and the wife should listen carefully to her husband. (James commands us to be

“*Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.*”) However, in the end, if they still do not agree, the wife should sweetly submit to her husband’s lead. Husband and wife are two people, with two minds: yet, God calls them “one flesh,” and He commands them to walk in unity.

By the way, this “distinctness” yet “oneness” in the husband / wife relationship is a reflection of the “distinctness” yet “oneness” of the Trinity. This is one of the ways in which marriage glorifies God. The union of husband and wife is a picture of the union of the Godhead!

Read 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Is there another reason why God has ordained for wives to submit to their husbands? Yes, there is. The second reason is that **God created the man first**. If God had intended for the woman to be the head in the relationship, He would have created Eve first. However, He didn’t do it that way. He created Adam first. In **1 Timothy 2:13** Paul pointed out that “*Adam was first formed, then Eve.*” Furthermore, God did not create Eve independently, with no connection to Adam: He created Eve *from* Adam, and *for* Adam. God took a piece of Adam (his rib); and with it, He created the woman. The wife was uniquely designed for her husband, to be a “*help meet* (appropriate, or fitted)” just for him.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:8-9.

Liberal “Christian” theologians these days apologise for the Apostle Paul’s words. They say that Paul was “prejudiced” against women, because he was the product of an “unenlightened age,” and because he was, after all, a bachelor. Such statements show that these people do not know the Scriptures, nor the power of God. They are unregenerate people, in spiritual darkness. First of all, Paul was not a life-long bachelor. He was a *widower*. As a one-time member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, he was *required* to be a married man. Paul *did* personally know what marriage is like. However, far more importantly, Paul was *not* writing his own fallible opinions. Paul’s letters, like *all* other Scripture, were given by “*inspiration of God.*” These are not merely Paul’s words: they are *God’s* words. We can expect that unsaved people will reject God’s words about marriage; but as God’s people, we must *receive* God’s words.

Now, why else did God ordain for wives to submit to their husbands? God has ordained it that way **because the entrance of *sin* into the human heart made it even *more* necessary.**

Read Genesis 3:16-19.

As we have already seen, the husband-wife relationship is an earthly mirror of the Godhead. Christ is equal to His Father; yet, He submits to Him. Likewise, the woman is equal to her husband (except for the obvious differences in emotional and physical makeup); yet, the woman is to submit to her husband. Why, then, is it so *hard* for husbands and wives to maintain their proper roles in marriage? The reason is very simple: **sin!** When Adam and Eve sinned against God, they declared independence from God, and began to go their own way. Sinners think of themselves as autonomous. They do not wish to submit to *anyone*—whether to God, or to man. Therefore, sin causes husbands and wives to reverse their God-given roles. What primary duty did God give to Adam? To work and earn bread for his family by the sweat of his brow. Yet, what does sin cause many husbands to do? It causes them to want to *shirk* their responsibility, and to sit around on the couch and be lazy. Likewise, sin causes wives to recoil from *their* responsibility to submit to their husbands’ authority. Sin causes

women to want to be the ruler of the home, and to control their husbands. In fact, sin also causes husbands to *relinquish* their role of spiritual leadership in the home, and to *let* their wives do all the moral and spiritual instruction of the children, while he does his “own thing.” If sin had not entered into the human race, there would have been no struggle in the husband-wife relationship. Women would have sweetly submitted to their husbands, with no thought of resisting his authority; and husbands would have lovingly taken the lead. But that all changed on the day when Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam. From that point onward, it became even more necessary for the husband to take the lead. And here is the reason why.

Read 1 Timothy 2:11-14.

Notice what Paul is saying here. Paul (by inspiration of God) says that Eve was *completely* deceived by Satan’s lie; and instead of deferring to her husband about this matter, she went against his spiritual authority, and ate the fruit. Adam, on the other hand, was *not* deceived. He knew that this “*ye shall be as gods*” malarkey was a lie from an enemy. Nevertheless, he bowed to Eve’s wish, surrendered his leadership, and sinned against God. *Both* of them violated their God-given roles; and the result was unspeakable calamity upon mankind!

This, Paul says, is reason why a woman is *not* to teach a man spiritual truth in the church. God created women with a stronger emotional component than men have; and if there had been no sin, this would not have been a problem. However, the fact that a woman’s emotions are now warped by *sin* makes her even more vulnerable to spiritual deception. Because the woman was quickly deceived, and the man wasn’t so readily deceived, it is all the more necessary for the man to be the spiritual protector of the woman. Again, this isn’t Paul’s opinion: it is what *God* says. He is our Creator; and He knows what is best for us.

By the way, have you ever noticed that in witchcraft and the occult, the female figure is always predominant? Sue Monk Kidd, an American lady who forsook her Christian upbringing, and embarked on a “spiritual journey” which led her to feminist goddess worship, proudly affirms that fact. Early in her marriage, Kidd “began to think that the Bible is wrong in its teaching about women, and that women should *not* take the subordinate position . . . She came to believe that Eve might have been a *hero* instead of a sinner, and that eating the forbidden fruit had actually opened Eve’s eyes to her true self. Kidd came to the conclusion that the snake was not evil, but ‘symbolized female wisdom, power, and regeneration’ . . . She was surprised and pleased to learn that the snake is depicted as the *companion* of ancient goddesses.”¹ Now, that is interesting, isn’t it? According to a pagan occultist, the reversal of men’s and women’s roles is the work of that old Serpent! Is it any wonder that in the television sitcoms these days, the man is portrayed as a blundering stooge, and the woman is the one in charge? (She usually has an “attitude,” too!) The Father of Lies is behind it, my friends! Satan is *promoting* the idea that men should be lazy, incompetent, reckless, irresponsible with money, and slaves to their lusts and recreations, and that women should be disrespectful and insubordinate to their husbands, manipulative, and controlling. Our enemy, the devil, wants both husbands and wives to cast off their God-given roles and responsibilities, so that there will be disorder, chaos, and eventual disintegration, in the home!

Now, let’s take a closer look at just how godly submission plays out in everyday life.

Read 1 Peter 3:1-6.

¹ Dr. David Cloud, “From Southern Baptist to Goddess Worship, Sue Monk Kidd (published July 15, 2008, Way of Life Literature).

In this passage, Peter is addressing a very important question: What does a Christian wife do if she have a husband who is unsaved? Obviously, her husband is not equipped to lead the home spiritually, because he does not know the Lord. Nevertheless, God says that the wife is still to submit to her husband with a meek and quiet spirit. Now, many Christian ladies struggle with this teaching. They wonder, “How can my husband lead my family spiritually when he isn’t saved?” To be sure, the fact that the husband is dead to God does make it impossible for him to fulfil a large part of his role. However, God is clear in the matter: the wife is still to submit to her husband with **“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.”** In fact, Peter says that as the saved wife submits to her husband in this sweet and godly way, there is a good possibility that her husband will, in time, receive Christ as Saviour. Why? Because God has hard-wired into men the need for *respect* (or “reverence”) from their wives. When an unsaved husband sees that his wife’s faith in Christ has caused her to *stop* nagging him, to *stop* cutting him down, and to *stop* defying him, and that she now *respects* him, and submits to him with a sweet and godly spirit, he will probably begin to consider whether *he* needs Christ in his life, as well.

Paul says that the woman is to submit to her husband; and along with this submission, there will also be spirit of reverence. **(Read Ephesians 5:33.)** As I mentioned last week, the word **“reverence”** literally means “fear.” It is a “fear” that is directed *beyond* the woman’s husband toward *God*, since God is the one who has commanded wives to submit to their husbands. By the way, *all* Christians should be afraid to defy God-given authority—whether the authority be a husband (over his wife), parents (over their children), pastors (over the flock of God), employers (over employees), or of Gardaí and civil rulers (over the citizenry). As Christians, we must *all* submit to human authorities; and it all begins with our submission to *God*.

Submission to the Holy Spirit is the key to all sanctified living. As we read back in **verse 18**, Christians are commanded to be **“filled with** (controlled by) **the Spirit.”** As Christian wives submit to the Spirit’s control, they will be able to fulfil their role as a godly wife. However, the same goes for husbands, as well. Men, it’s your turn, now! Let us now examine...

II. The husband’s role

(Read verses 25, 28-29, and 33 again.) Tragically, most people have a wrong understanding of what the Bible teaches regarding the husband’s role in marriage. Most people imagine that the Bible teaches that men should rule over their wives with an iron fist, and that women’s only purpose is to please the man. Nothing could be further from the truth! The Bible teaches that the purpose of *both* men *and* women is to please *God*! That means that a husband and wife should be working together to bring honour and glory to God through their marriage!

Now, *does* the man have authority in the home? Yes, he does. However, we men need to remember that with authority comes great responsibility. What *are* the husband’s duties? Let’s look again. **(Read verses 18-21.)** According to **verse 18**, a husband’s first duty is to submit to the Holy Spirit. A husband cannot rightly fulfil his role as husband unless he is allowing the Spirit of God to control his thoughts and actions. Husband, you *must* allow yourself to be filled with the Spirit, so that you can teach God’s truth to your family, and lead them in songs of praise to God, and have a spirit of thankfulness to God! *You* must lead in setting a spiritual climate of praise to God in your home. *You* are the spiritual leader!

What other duties does a husband have? Let's read **verse 21** again. (**Read verse 21.**) Paul says that *all* believers should submit themselves one to another. However, this precept also applies to Christian husbands and wives. According to this verse, **a husband's duty is to submit to his wife!** Now, perhaps you are confused right now. Perhaps you are thinking, "Wait a minute! Isn't the *wife* supposed to submit to her *husband*?" Yes, she is. However, there is also a sense in which both the husband *and* wife should submit to *each other*. In what sense does a husband 'submit' to his wife? Well, first of all, he submits to his wife in that **he commits his heart only to her**. He does not allow an emotional or lustful desire for another woman (nor for a woman on an ipod screen) to spring up in his heart. He is satisfied with his wife's beauty at all times; and he is ravished only with her love. Even when she is not all that *she* should be as a wife, he loves her anyway. He does not allow bitterness to spring up in his heart. (**Colossians 3:19** says, "**Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.**") The husband also submits to his wife in that **he puts her needs ahead of his own**. Just as Christ waived His rights as God when He came down into our world, so the husband does not look after his own needs, but the needs of his wife.

This concept is unknown in most heathen lands. In lands where the Bible has had no influence, women are usually treated as slaves, or as cattle; and the man is not expected to be loyal, kind, or considerate to his wife. In stark contrast, a Christian husband who is fulfilling his biblical role is gentle, kind, and loving. Because he is yielding himself to the Spirit of God, he is filled with the fruit of the Spirit, which is "**Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness,**" and "**temperance.**" He doesn't have the attitude, "Well, who can understand women anyway? I'll just hang out with my buddies, and when I need my wife, I'll call for her." On the contrary, He asks his wife questions such as, "What makes you most fulfilled and happiest as a wife? What are your greatest fears? With what chores do you like my help? At what times do you need the assurance of my love the most? What things that I do irritate you? What personal habits do you want me to change? In what ways can I show my appreciation of you?" He does his best to understand the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of his wife, so that he can meet those needs, and protect her!

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Read 1 Peter 3:7.

Every sacrifice that Christ has made for His church is a charge that He has laid upon *Himself*, out of his incredible love for us. He was not bound to submit Himself to us; yet, He chose to yield His own life as a ransom for us, so that we might be saved. Furthermore, Christ has promised never to leave, forsake, or cast out those who come to Him for salvation. In this sense, Christ *submits* Himself to His church. Likewise, in a marriage, the husband submits himself to his wife in a self-sacrificial way. Though he is the head, he puts his wife's needs before his own. He does not demand his own selfish way simply because "he's the boss"; rather, he dies to self, and puts his wife first. The wife does the same for him: and as they submit to each other, their marriage is filled with the fruit of the Spirit, and God is glorified.

Husband, do you desire to be a godly husband? Then you must love your wife with the kind of self-sacrificial love that Christ has for His church. You must love her as yourself, as Paul says here in **Ephesians 5**. By the way, many Christians these days imagine that **Ephesians 5:28** is an instruction to "love yourself." Most modern preachers, who have been taught psychology in the seminary, teach their flocks that "In order for you to love others, you must

first love yourself”; and they use **Ephesians 5:28-29** and **33** as their “proof texts.” But is that really what Paul is saying? Let’s look at those verses again. **(Read verses 28-29 and 30.)** Is Paul saying that we should love ourselves? Not on your life! Nowhere in Scripture is there an instruction to “love yourself.” It’s just the opposite! God constantly instructs us to *abase* ourselves, *humble* ourselves, and put self *last*. In **2 Timothy 3:2**, Paul says that the number-one characteristic of apostates in the last days is that they would be “**Lovers of their own selves.**” Self-love is not the solution to our problems: it is the *cause* of our problems.

What *does* Paul mean, then, when he says, “**For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it**”? Well, for one thing, Paul is saying that we *all* “love our own flesh” in the sense that we all have the natural impulse to take care of our *bodies*. God has put that desire in us, because our bodies are His property. (People arrive at a state of wanting to *hurt, cut, or torture* their bodies only after their minds have been perverted by satanic thinking!) However, the main key to understanding these verses can be found in **verse 31. (Read verse 31 again.)** In this verse, Paul points out that a husband and wife are not two individuals anymore, but rather “**one flesh.**” They are not two people living separate lives under the same roof: they are “*one flesh*”! The implication is clear. By saying “**He that loveth his wife loveth himself,**” Paul is not teaching you to “love yourself”: he is merely saying that a husband and wife are inseparable. A marriage cannot be broken without both parties’ being “broken.” Why? Because they are one unit! By loving and cherishing your wife, you are bringing blessing to *your own* flesh. If you *hurt* your wife, it’s like *hurting* your own flesh. You are joined to your wife; and if you want God’s blessing on your life, then you must seek to know your wife’s spiritual needs, so that you can grow in Christ together!

Read 1 Peter 3:7.

Peter says that in a Christian marriage, the man and wife are “**heirs together of the grace of life.**” In other words, they both have the same inheritance in Christ, and the same spiritual privileges: and since, as husband and wife, they are “one flesh,” God sees them as *one* spiritual unit in Christ. That means that if there be *strife* between them, they cannot be right with God in their individual lives. Husband, should things not be right between you and your wife, and you are not doing your utmost to make it right, you *cannot* be right with God. Should there be a problem between you and your wife, you’d better be seeking to know whether *you* are contributing to the problem, and what *you* can do to make it right. That means that you must be communicating with your wife, and seeking to dwell with her according to knowledge. Prayers *will* be hindered until you get things right between yourself, your wife, and the Lord!

Are you getting the picture, husband? Your marriage is all about glorifying the Lord! Your marriage is not about *your* happiness; it is about pleasing God. Even the marriage bed is not about self-gratification; it is about pleasing your *wife*, and meeting *her* needs. By seeking to meet your spouse’s needs, and not your own, you are pleasing and glorifying God.

Conclusion: Husband, are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church? Wife, are you sweetly submitting to your husband? If not, then you may be sure that Satan is, at this very moment, crouched like a lion, ready to pounce on you, and make mincemeat of your life, and your marriage. He will do it, too—if you do not take heed to God’s Word! **In closing, I would also ask this: Are you saved?** If you have never repented of your sin and trusted Christ to save you, then you cannot possibly glorify God with your marriage, or with *any* aspect of your life. **Hebrews 11:6** says, “**But without faith it is impossible to**

please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Trust in Christ’s sacrifice for you, and ask Him to be the Lord of your life!