

# LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for November 14: Being married

October 27, 2010

In our last lesson, the Apostle Paul encourages his readers to be careful in how they conduct themselves. His burden came from the simple realization that Christians are the only Bibles many nonbelievers ever observe and read.

As a Christian obediently lives his life for the glory of Jesus, unbelievers are drawn to the Savior. In Ephesians 5:21, Paul encourages all believers, out of the reverence for Jesus, to “submit to one another.” Through this mutual submission of believers to each other, unbelievers see something different from what they experience. These observations of contrast allow Christians the opportunity to share the source of this conduct—Jesus Christ.

Paul now brings mutual submission of Christians into the marriage relationship. In 5:22-33, he speaks of an ideal marriage relationship where both partners are believers and mutually submit to one another. When Christians submit to the Lord they become more willing to submit to other Christians.

There are two reasons Paul gives for this command of submission for the wives—the lordship of Jesus and the headship of the man in Christ. In 5:22, he instructs the wives to submit to their husbands “as to the Lord.” Paul encourages wives to willingly follow their husbands’ leadership in Christ.

Throughout the Bible, we are taught a spiritual man is to be the spiritual head of his family, and his wife should acknowledge this leadership. A man is not to force his wife to submit. Submission has to be a voluntarily act.

The husband “earns” this submission by sacrificing for his family as Christ did for his church. The wife is led to submit as the result of this sacrificial leadership of the husband (v. 24).

Submission rarely is a problem in homes where both partners have a strong relationship with Jesus and each is concerned with the happiness of the other. This kind of submission keeps order and harmony in the family, while it increases love and respect among members of the family.

Paul takes twice as many words to give husbands instruction in how they are to relate to their wives in 5:25-30, as he did in his instructions to the wives in the previous paragraph. In these verses, Paul demonstrates a high view of marriage.

Here marriage is not a practical necessity as he states in 1 Corinthians 7:32-38, but a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. To Paul, marriage is a holy union, a living symbol and a loving relationship that needs to be cultivated through tender and sacrificial care.

In 5:26-27, he describes what it took for Jesus to make the church holy and clean—his sacrifice of his life on the cross. Christ cleanses his disciples, who make up the church, from the old ways of sin and sets them apart for his special sacred service.

In his lifting married love to the highest possible level, Paul instructs the husbands how they should love their wives. First, as Christ sacrificed everything for the church, the husbands should be willing to sacrifice everything for their wives (v. 25). Second, husbands should make their wives’ well-being their priority (v. 28). Last of all, they are to care for their wives as they care of their own bodies (vv. 29-30). When husbands demonstrate this type of love for their wives, they live out the example Jesus Christ set in how he demonstrated his love for the church.

Paul goes back to creation to remind his readers of God’s plan for husband

and wife to be one in verse 31. The union of husband and wife merges two individuals in such a way that little can affect one without also affecting the other. Oneness in marriage does not mean one person loses his or her personality in the personality of the other. It means each person cares enough for the other as though caring for him or herself. This gives freedom to both to anticipate the other's needs and help the other to reach his or her potential. They complement one another.

Therefore, in 5:31-33, Paul called for husbands and wives to relate to one another in ways that show the picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. Where husbands and wives love and respect each other, they have both healthy marriages and a healthy family life in which to rear children.

If Christian homes are to be a heaven on earth, then the family members have to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. How can we know if we are filled with the Spirit? In 5:15-31, Paul gives us three evidences of the fullness of the Spirit in the lives of believers. They are joyful (v. 19), thankful (v. 20), and submissive (vv. 21-33). God give us Christian homes.