

# Love & Respect One Another

"The Relationships Initiative" Series, April 25 & 26, 2026 | Ephesians 5:22-33  
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## Marriage is a blessing, a challenge, and, above all, a calling.

### **The Bible challenges us by showing us the blessing that marriage can and should be.**

Genesis 1 tells us that God created us male and female; we need one another. In Genesis 2, He says that it is not good for the man to be alone, so He creates woman from man. When the man sees the woman, he recognizes her for who she is. In **Genesis 2:23** he says,

... "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh ..."

We are made from each other and made for each other. **Song of Solomon 8:6-7** sets the feeling to poetry,

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, jealousy is fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the LORD. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. ...

### **Who wouldn't want a marriage that is filled with a love that can't be quenched?**

We don't all dream of marriage, but if we do, we dream of someone who will catch our eye and then never leave our minds. We dream of a partnership with someone who will share life and the load with us. We dream of a love that grows and doesn't fizzle.

### **But being married is work—even a good marriage.**

My marriage is good, but it's not perfect. Tammi and I are different from each other, and there are days when different is fun and helpful and days when different makes me want to run my head through drywall. She's got plenty of flaws, but so do I, and I know there are days when she'd like to run screaming from the house like it's on fire. When I'm sick, I like to be left alone. I pull the shades, pull the covers over my head, and pretty much sleep until I feel better. Don't bug me, don't make any noise, and don't take a long time to bring me my medicine when I ask for it. Tammi has put up with that for nearly 35 years.

### **How can our marriages become more of what God designed them to be? Paul tells us.**

He doesn't give us a set of simple directions you could follow to arrive reliably at the destination of a happy, thriving marriage. Instead, Paul gives us a compass that points in the right direction, and if we head in that direction, we'll find the kind of marriage God intended.

### **What he says about marriage transforms how we think about all our relationships.**

This passage is a word about marriage, AND it's part of a section that is about walking in Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit. In these verses Paul tells us what it looks like to walk in Christ and be

filled with the Holy Spirit when you're married. But what Paul says to married people can fix what's wrong with most relationships. And it can make YOU a blessing in every single relationship in your life.

## **Wives: Respect Your Husbands out of Love for Christ.**

**Three words in Ephesians 5:22 will challenge you: submit, own, and Lord.**

Wives, **submit** to your **own** husbands, as to the **Lord**.

The first of these critical words is "**submit**", but it doesn't actually occur in verse 22. It borrows a verb from **Ephesians 5:21** which says,

"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Paul is saying that if we're walking in Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit, then we will submit to one another. Then he gives us examples. First, he talks about husbands and wives. For a wife to submit to her husband means treating him the way the Church treats Jesus. The second word is "**own**". Paul isn't endorsing men having and running all things. He is saying that in Christian marriages, the wife will submit to her own husband, not to men in general. The third word is "**Lord**". Submitting to a husband can't be easy, but we look at it as if we were doing something to and for Jesus. Wives submit to their husbands the same way the Church submits to Jesus. They think, "I am submitting to my husband as an act of love for Jesus and worship to God."

### **You may ask, "Is this text good news, or am I being kept in my place?"**

Trust me. No part of me wants to say this to women. I am not a woman, and I don't understand what it is to be a woman. Paul wasn't a woman either. But this teaching doesn't come from me or Paul. It comes from God who created you, understands you, and loves you lavishly. This teaching is about building thriving marriages and being everything God created us all to be. God made us male and female. We are all human, all loved, and all precious. You are human, loved, and precious. To submit to a husband does not diminish you in any way! Jesus submits to the Father, but He isn't diminished by it. He is still God the Son Who is eternal and equal with God the Father. And wives are equal in God's sight to husbands. If submission doesn't diminish a wife in any way or make a woman anything less than a man, what does it look like?

### **Submission is a wife freely choosing to respect her husband out of love for Christ.**

Does submission mean your opinion doesn't matter? No. Submission isn't silence – express your perspective, ask your questions. But to submit means trusting your husband's judgment even when you disagree. Be respectful when you push back. Don't belittle him or argue in front of the kids. Winning isn't the goal. And what if he doesn't deserve respect? No one does. This is where the choice comes in. Paul isn't saying submit because your husband earned it. He's saying submitting is an act of love for God.

### **Submission is not an easy button for the toughest questions in marriage.**

Paul isn't telling you to put up with a bad marriage quietly, nor is he giving you free rein to run the show and rain down fire on a bad husband. Paul isn't telling you to allow yourself to be abused. Do not stay in a situation when your life and safety are in danger, thinking that this is God's will. Get help; let us help. Nor is he telling you to leave if your husband does not treat you as Christ would. Paul is saying

that a woman walking in Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit will respect her husband as an act of love for God. Even when it is tough.

### **Respecting a husband even when it isn't easy shapes us into the image of Christ.**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father and asked to avoid the cross. But He also told the Father that He would go to the cross if that was God's final will because He loves and trusts the Father. When we submit to someone else—even when it's costly—then we are being shaped to be more and more like Jesus. That is a beautiful thing. Wives, that's what God is doing inside you.

## **Husbands: Love Your Wives with Christ's Sacrificing Love.**

### **Paul says more to husbands: more words, more responsibility, more sacrifice.**

Verses 22-25 are written to wives while verses 26-33 are mostly written to husbands. Paul writes far more words to the husbands, and that reflects an even greater responsibility and greater sacrifice. For husbands, walking in love, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and submitting to one another looks like loving your wife with the same kind of sacrificial love that Jesus showed the Church. That may be bold actions: Jesus took the weight of the sin of the world on His shoulders and then died to pay the price for that sin. It may be simple, daily acts of sacrifice: At the Last Supper, Jesus took off His clothes, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed His disciples' feet. Husbands bear a weight of responsibility and sacrifice.

### ***Jesus Himself is the husband's model for dying to self.***

Paul describes this mentality in **Philippians 2:5-8**:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Jesus set aside massive privilege, became a servant, and gave up His life. Like Him, husbands are called to die to self for their wives. Daily.

### **Last week I thought I was dying to myself for my wife, Tammi.**

One evening I made her buttered toast, something she loves. Then she said, "Would you do me a favor? There's raspberry jelly in the refrigerator." I knew what she wanted. I could have just gotten her the jelly and a knife, but I made her ask. "Would you get the raspberry jelly for me?" No "dying to self" there. Just a healthy dose of control and manipulation. It would be much quicker if we could just take a bullet for our wives.

### **Dying to ourselves is a daily discipline, not a single heroic act.**

It may be an act of service like taking the kids for a night so your wife can go out with her friends; life isn't all about you. It may be giving your wife quality time by going on a date, asking a question, listening intently to the answer, and sharing what's really on your mind; opening the vault that's full of the stuff you're keeping to yourself. It may be words of affirmation that build her up instead of tear her down, which shows that you have a grip on your temper. These daily disciplines show love the way Christ loves, and they are all part of dying to self. That's what we're called to do.

### **Dying to yourself also shapes us into the image of Christ.**

Husbands, we are called to love our wives and families the way Christ loves us. That means dying to ourselves daily. That isn't easy, but our wives and families deserve nothing less! That's the compass heading for a thriving marriage. It's the way of Jesus. And walking this way shapes us into the image of our Lord and Savior. Now, the image of Christ is coming out in both of us!

## **Christian marriages put on display Christ's relationship with the Church.**

### **Our dining room has a large picture window.**

And that dining room is on the street side of our house. Tammi and I were having a meal in the dining room with a friend recently. It was a cloudy day outside. We looked up and saw a neighbor curbing their dog in our yard. The neighbor had a doggie bag and bent over to clean up the dog's business then waved. We all realized that with the light on in the dining room, we were on display for everyone passing to see. That's a truthful picture of what our marriages are like. Whether we want to be or not.

### **We ARE a picture to the world of Christ and the Church.**

Wives are pictures of the Church; they submit to husbands the way the Church submits to Jesus. Husbands are pictures of Christ; we love our wives the way Jesus sacrificially loves the Church. When people know that we are followers of Jesus, then they are watching how we behave to see what it means to be a Christian. What they see in us as husbands and wives says everything they need to know about Christianity, about who we are as Christ followers, and about our Savior. What do they see in our marriages? What do people see in us?

### **Christian marriage isn't just an accidental witness; it's a CALLING.**

God has seated you in a dining room facing Main Street. He has turned on the lights and opened the curtain. He means for you to represent Jesus in your marriage. Our marriages should be thriving marriages that help people to see hope in Jesus Christ. Our marriages should draw people toward God, not push people away.

### **So, our prayer is that God would shape in us the One we represent.**

Everything hinges on Jesus' being inside us! We won't have thriving marriages unless we have Jesus in our hearts helping us to be the kind of wives and husbands God created us to be. We can't show the world Christ and the Church unless we have Christ in our hearts and are part of the Church. So, we desperately need forgiveness. We desperately need God to shape us into the image of Jesus. And we desperately need God to fill us with His Holy Spirit. That's the only way we can ever love and respect each other.

## **Love and respect one another. Sounds simple, right?**

### **It's not simple, but it's possible. For you. Today.**

You can stay up until 2 o'clock in the morning talking with a friend whose marriage is in trouble. Or make your colleague's contribution to your project at work clear to everyone because they too need the boost. Those are both sacrificial ways to show love. You can speak kindly to your neighbor, even when they don't pick up after their dog. You can look past a clerk's unkind words in the store because

you know they probably had a worse day than you. Those are both ways to show respect. We can do it because the Holy Spirit is living within us and making us new so that we can love and respect one another.

### **Are you starting to realize just how broken our vision of relationships is compared with God's?**

We naturally think that love and respect are almost impossible. They're too costly. But this is what it looks like to walk in love and holiness as Paul said in Ephesians 5:1-14. This is what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit as he described in verses 15-21. It looks like loving and respecting one another because we have Jesus in us. That's a very different way of relating to each other, but it's God's way. Will you choose love and respect?

### **Robertson McQuilkin had to choose what love and respect look like when he found Muriel's feet bloodied.**

Muriel had been suffering with Alzheimer's disease for ten years. At first, Robertson and Muriel laughed off the symptoms. Then they resisted the first diagnosis. It took a second doctor to convince them that Muriel was not just becoming a little forgetful in her 50s. The diagnosis was a crisis for the couple. Robertson was the President of Columbia Bible College and Seminary; Muriel had a speaking ministry of her own and was vital to Robertson's own ministry. Muriel had to lay down her public-speaking ministry when her talks stopped holding together. Then she was no longer able to host events in their home. Gradually, Muriel forgot family names. Then there was the time when she cut apart the flowers in the house, thinking she was making a bouquet. When Robertson was away at the office, Muriel would walk to the office to see him. She desperately wanted to be with her husband. One day, she made the trip ten times. That evening, Robertson took her shoes off and found her feet bloodied. College leaders wanted to get help for Muriel or put her somewhere so that she could be cared for and Robertson could continue to lead the College, but he was firm that he had made a vow to Muriel, and he would care for her. He resigned and became Muriel's caregiver. It was hard work; there were days consumed with getting her to the bathroom and cleaning her up when she didn't make it. It was hard work, but it wasn't a drudgery. He was with his beloved who had cared for him for 40 years. What Robertson McQuilkin did for Muriel is love and respect, and that's what Paul is calling all of us to do for one another.<sup>1</sup>

### **What if someone loved you like that?**

Our hearts would sing! We all long to be loved that way. Wives, husbands, all of us. We all long to be both loved with sacrificial love and to be respected. It is a gift of inestimable value.

### **What if you loved someone like that?**

There may be one person at home already whose eyes would light up. But think bigger. God has placed a compass in your hands. It's pointing toward thriving relationships. You'll need sacrificial love mixed with respect to get there. Jesus Himself is the Way.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/1990/10/living-by-vows/>