

Connect

It has been said that **"marriage is when a man and woman become as one. The trouble starts when they try to decide which one."**

This is an old joke, but has some relevance to our lesson today.

What makes it funny? Why is grace necessary to be able to laugh?

Verses - Ephesians 5:22-33 (CSB)

21 ...submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. 27 He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. 28 In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of his body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. 32 This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

Study

Last week's lesson ended in verse 21, where Paul concludes that Christians should all submit to one another in the fear of Christ. Each of us is a child of God, each of us is redeemed by the blood of Christ, each of us has the Holy Spirit, living in us.

1. How does v.21 affect relationships between husbands and wives?

2. Must Christian wives obey their Christian husbands? To what extent?

3. May Christian husbands dominate their Christian wives as they submit? (v.28)

4. What do these verses teach us about the decision making process for spouses?

APPLY

This can be a little confusing, but Paul leaves us with a summary, in v.33. Each man is to love his wife as himself. Each wife is to respect her (Christ-like) husband. When our marriages are not this way, then they are falling short of what God desires for us. They need to go to God, in prayer and in his Word, and ask for help. Can we believe that God responds to prayers such as these? What can we expect? How often should couples pray this way?

DISCUSS

Consider for a moment if Paul is mainly interested in teaching Christian wives and husbands how to behave, or if he is mainly interested in using Christian marriage as a metaphor to help us understand the relationship between Christ and his church (v.32).

What does Christian marriage teach us about Christ and the Church?

Share

If you are comfortable doing so, please share a story about a time when you have experienced one of the following: (1) sought God's help to help your marriage, (2) learned through your marriage something important about God and the gospel of Jesus Christ, (3) learned something important about yourself (bad or good) through your experiences in marriage, **or** (4) came to realize how God is blessing you through your marriage, etc. (If you are not married, you could speak of the marriage experience of someone you know.)

Grow

Please pray that God will teach all of us: **More** about Christ and the church, through the powerful example of marriage in Eph. 5; **how** Jesus loves the church, gave himself for her, and worked to make the church holy and blameless; **how** Jesus loves his church even while it remains imperfect, just as husbands are to love their wives and wives are to respect their husbands. (The church surely is to respect Christ.) So that God will forgive us when we do not respect Jesus as he deserves, or submit to one another in the fear of Jesus as we ought.