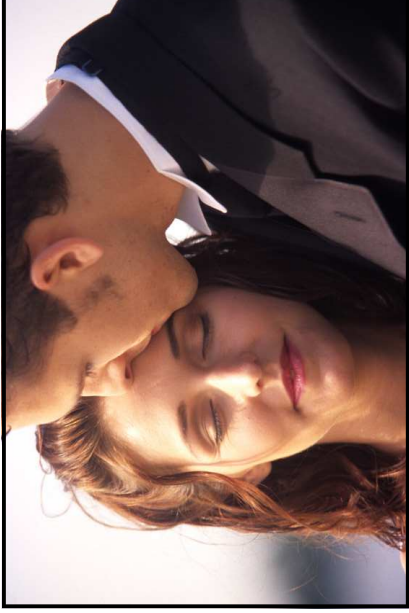


But the good news is that a husband will have a good reward for his sacrifice - a beautiful, fulfilled, loving wife by his side! Christ's sacrifice of laying down His life for the members of the church results in His having "a glorious church"(verse 27). In the book of Hebrews it says that because of "the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross"(12:2). As Christ hung upon the cross, what kept Him going was knowing that His sacrifice would result in an amazing body of believers called the church. Every husband needs to keep in mind that his hard work to provide for his wife, protecting her from harm, supporting her in her walk with the Lord, and considering her needs over his own will create the wonderful marriage partner he has always wanted to have.

On the wife's part it is a challenge to submit to a husband who is learning to be a good leader, making lots of mistakes, and trying to figure out how marriage really works. But a wife can learn to love a husband and overlook many mistakes when he loves her sacrificially as Christ loves His church. As the husband "nourishes and cherishes"(verse 29) his wife, she will in turn nourish and cherish him.

The goal of marriage is for the two individuals to become functionally "one". On every level - physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, relationally - they begin to function as one new person. They will bring their different skills, talents, and experiences; his maleness and her femaleness into the new marriage relationship. But as they move forward, they go forth in growing partnership.



This new partnership brings the two individuals, with all their differences, into a deep unity. The Apostle Paul closes this handbook of marriage by revealing to us a tremendous mystery. Even as a wife and a husband are very different in many ways, struggling to find unity in their marriage - so a Christian is so different from his or her Savior, Jesus Christ. We are human, earthly, guided by five senses while Jesus is divine, heavenly and spiritually directed. How different we are from our Savior and yet He wants to be one with us! On the evening before Jesus was taken to the cross, He prayed, "that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us..." (John 17:21). The challenge of marriage to become a deep union reflects the challenge of redeemed human beings longing to be one with their Lord. Therefore, every success and challenge we experience in marriage can lead us into a deeper union with the One who designed marriage - our Lord Jesus Christ.

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"Marriage"

How Christianity Works Series

By Pastor Curt Carter

"Why did I ever marry him?"

"She never seems to understand me!"

Truly, marriage is one of the most challenging relationships that anyone can enter into. It exposes all of the opposing dynamics in the personalities of men and of women. It can be truly exasperating, making you think that there is no way to make it work. But it also can be truly exhilarating, making you realize that there is nothing so wonderful. When marriage is working as God designed, the husband and wife are each personally deeply fulfilled and committed to help their partner reach his or her God-designed best.



Because God is the author of marriage, He is the one who has written the handbook on how to make it work. For our discussion of marriage in this pamphlet, we are going to look at a passage written by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:17-33.

He begins by reminding us not to be *"unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is."* God has a design for marriage just like an engineer has a design for how a sports car is suppose to run at its best. If you do not take care of the car by constantly checking its levels of oil, water, and other fluids, it won't be able to operate like it was designed.



Next Paul discusses how a Christian is one who should be *"filled with the Spirit"* of God. By being *"filled"* or in partnership with God's Spirit, we avoid the old excesses in our lives that got us into trouble, learn to have a inner spiritual melody in our hearts, become thankful to God for everything He has done for us, and are able to *"submit ourselves one to another in the fear of God"* (verses 18-21). "Submission" is largely misunderstood by most people. Many think it means that we allow ourselves to be walked on by others continually *"turning the other cheek."* But it is actually a military term speaking of the soldier, battle-tested and ready to deploy, who submits him or herself willingly to their commanding officer. All of their considerable skills and experiences are available to serve at a moment's notice. This isn't speaking about weakness it is speaking about strength.

Soon Paul will begin to open the *"handbook"* of marriage, describing God's design, but first we need to be able to submit ourselves to each other because we have a deep respect and fear of our God. He made us and we want to please Him. We have to ask ourselves whether we are ready and willing to serve our marriage partners in the way that God designed the marriage covenant to work.

Next Paul addresses wives, *"...submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord"* (verse 22). Clearly, this is a challenging concept for any wife. To use her considerably skills and understanding to serve her husband as she would serve the Lord.

The next verse says that her submission is based on the fact that *"...the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body."* What does it mean to be *"the head"*? In every organization or association of people that are working together for a common outcome there has to be a head person or leader. This is the person who is ultimately responsible for the output of the group. The coach is responsible for whether the team is playing well and winning games. If the team is losing who do they fire? They usually fire the coach. The president is ultimately responsible for how the world views America. The shift manager is responsible for the daily output of the factory workers. In marriage, God has made the husband responsible for the well being of his wife and children.

And the example for every husband of how to be a good leader in his home is Christ. Christ sacrificed Himself for the church, so husbands should sacrifice themselves for the sake of their wife and children. They should love as Christ loved (verse 25), showing their love by laying down their desires in favor of meeting the needs of their marriage partner. This is the challenging part for the husband.