

Choose To Sacrifice

Long Beach Alliance Church • September 27, 2015 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...
~Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

1) Submitting Wives (¼) & Sacrificial Husbands (¾)

- A) The section of the “household code” devoted to husbands (Ephesians 5:23, 25-33) was much more counter-culture than the section devoted to wives (5:22-24, 33). Self-sacrifice out of love was a foreign idea, so Paul’s instructions for husbands is substantially longer and more detailed than that for wives (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- B) Even more radical than the instruction provided regarding submission of wives and loving self-sacrifice of husbands is the central ethic which drives the household of God. The abiding ethic at the center of a Christian marriage is an intentional and willing submission to Jesus Christ which reveals the Gospel (5:22, 25):

2) The Exercise Of Headship For Husbands

- A) In the midst of marriage, the headship of the husband reflects the headship of Christ (authority, leader) in the midst of His church (5:23, also 1:22-23). As discussed last week, headship is a reflection of the hierarchal creation order of God, and maintains individual importance and value (cf. Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 15:28).
- B) Headship is mentioned in the instructions to wives, but the exercise of headship is described in the Christ-centered instructions given to husbands (Ephesians 5:24-32). Headship is centered in loving your own wife (5:25), a natural loving fidelity. But then all cultural anchors for marriage are exploded with the radical call to Christian husbands to exercise headship “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (5:25).
- C) In the same manner that a wife is called to exercise her followership of Christ in her marriage “as to the Lord” (5:22), so also husbands exercise their followership of Christ in marriage “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (5:25). Equally terrifying in their vulnerability, both a husband and a wife are called to complete submission to Christ in their practice of a “one flesh” marriage to one another (5:31).

3) Self-Sacrificing Leadership

- A) Despite the equality of terror in vulnerability, the call to headship for husbands carries an absolute mandate for leadership in marriage. Christ’s leadership of the Church was self-sacrificing, even giving Himself over to die on behalf of the church (Philippians 2:5-11). The sacrifice of Christ is presented as a divine romance, the sacrificial life of Christ invested in the future glory and purity of His bride, the Church (5:26-27, Ezekiel 16:3-14).
- B) Thus, exercising authority, leadership, or headship by a husband is not to be expressed in an over-bearing manner. Harsh, forceful, selfish, prideful, and/or unpredictable behavior by a husband as an exercise of being the “head” of household does not bear the image of Christ for a wife and/or children (note 6:4).
- C) While the insecure, harsh, and abusive Christian husbands who use headship to hammer submission from those under their care is certainly an issue, there is a far more common and insidious problem for Christian households. One of the great scandals in Christian homes is not the overbearing husband, but the husband who is passive, disengaged, abdicating his leadership, and/or regularly avoids responsibility.
- D) Clearly, Jesus initiated leadership for His bride, the Church (1:7, 13, 2:17-18, 4:7-16, 5:1-2, 6:25-27). Passive avoidance of marital leadership is far more common and troubling than any other marriage issue in the church. Husbands who exercise Spirit-filled headship (5:18-21) distinguished by self-sacrificing other-choosing love on behalf of their wives expresses the Gospel in culture more profoundly than in any other way (5:32).
- E) How does a husband exercise his love for his wife as Christ? First, he initiates mutual submission to God’s Word in his relationship with his wife for the sake of purity and ongoing refining (5:26-27). The spiritual tenor of your home will never improve by itself. Husbands must lead with God’s Word, or the devil wins (cf. 6:11). The responsibility for the spiritual condition of the home lies with the husband as the spiritual leader.
- F) Secondly, a Christian husband exercises his headship by loving his wife as Christ does, revealing a vision of who she is becoming (5:27), rather than fixating on weaknesses, on her current sins and shortcomings. This is not limited to spiritual matters, but also extends to her mind, soul, and body. See her with Christ’s eyes.
- G) Thirdly, a Christian husband sacrificially loves his wife as Christ does by celebrating their “one flesh” relationship (5:31). The union of two people into one flesh appreciates distinction and diversity, finding strength in the marital union, a reflection of the Trinity (4:4-6). The “one flesh” union extends to the deep parts of the soul, mind, and heart; and is celebrated in triumph through sexual “one flesh” union.
- H) Fourthly, a Christian husband loves his wife as Christ loves His church by actively keeping the mission of the Gospel as the most important measure for every family decision. Knowing that God is revealing the Gospel through our marriage, how will this decision reveal the Gospel to our family and to others, especially those who do not yet know Jesus Christ?

