CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

Citylight Marriage Seminar

March 6–7, 2026

SESSION TWO

Marriage: The Display of God

"Most foundationally, marriage is the doing of God. And ultimately, marriage is the display of God." – *This Momentary Marriage*, John Piper

Ephesians 5:31-32 - "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

> *Every time a bride and groom stand there and take their vows, they are reenacting the biblical love story, whether they realize it or not. The Son of God stepping down out of eternity, entering time, taking on flesh, pursuing and winning his bride as his very heart and body with his inmost, sincerest love so that he can fit her to be with him forever above-that dramatic super-reality is the breathtaking reason why human marriage exists. It is truly profound. And Christian married couples have the privilege of making the mystery of the gospel visible in the world today by living out the dynamic interplay of an Ephesians 5-quality marriage. We should not think that Christ and the church are the metaphor in this passage, but the reverse. Christ and the church are the reality of realities, and our Christian marriages are the metaphors. - Marriage And The Mystery of The Gospel*, Ray Ortlund

BIG IDEA: CHRISTIAN MARRIED COUPLES HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO DISPLAY THE MARRIAGE BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

WIVES (5:22-24, 33)

Ephesians 5:22-24 - Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

What the Lord calls wives to

SUBMISSION ISN'T ABSOLUTE

1 Peter 3:1-2 - Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

SUBMISSION ISN'T MERELY A TIE-BREAKER

We could summarize the woman's responsibilities in marriage this way: *Wives, in submitting to their husbands, ought to <u>support</u>, <u>respect</u>, and <u>follow</u> them as to the Lord…*He roots the command in two unchanging theological principles. First, the husband is the head of the wife. And, second, "as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands" (Eph. 5:24). Because of these two realities— the headship of the husband in the created order and the analogy of Christ and the church—the wife should freely submit to her husband. And don't miss that word *freely*. The command is for the wife, not the husband. The man is never told to submit the wife unto himself. Instead, the woman is told to submit herself unto her husband. It is a submission freely given, never forcibly taken.

WHAT IS SUBMISSION?

1. Support.

> *Wives, support your husbands. God made you to be a helper for your husband (Gen. 2:18). Do what you can to encourage him as a husband, father, and worker. Come alongside him, not to control him or to be recognized for your service (but your husband should recognize it), but to help him.*

I think it is fitting, in most situations, that the wife let her husband's vocation take priority over her own. I know that is not a popular thing to say. But I think it is a fair application of what it means to be a helpmate. When a couple cannot figure how to make both of their careers a go, I think the wife should be willing to say, "I want to be a help and support to you." - Kevin DeYoung

2. Respect.

Ephesians 5:33 - However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Wives, respect your husbands. A man may get built up or torn down at work, but the words that can really make him or break him are the ones from his wife. Give your husbands unconditional respect (which is not the same as unconditionally enduring mistreatment) just as your husband ought to show you unconditional love. "Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Eph. 5:33). The husband should love his wife regardless of how lovely she is, because she is as the church to him. And the wife ought to respect her husband regardless of how worthy of respect he is, because he is as Christ to her. Consider the way holy women of the past put their hope in God to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord (1 Pet. 3:5-6). In our culture it would be strange to call your husband "lord," but if you want to be truly beautiful, your attitude toward your husband will be like Sarah's to Abraham. - Kevin DeYoung

3. Following

And wives, follow your husbands. Respond to his initiative. Don't second-guess him all the time. You can certainly have an opinion and should not be afraid to voice it, but don't try to undermine his properly exercised authority. Provided he's not sinning against you or leading you into sin, follow him. I'm thinking especially of following your husband as a spiritual leader. I could use my wife for all sorts of positive examples in this chapter, but especially in this area I feel so fortunate. I cannot remember my wife ever refusing me, or even being put off, when I suggest we pray or sing a hymn or read a book together or work our way through the Bible or go to church. What a blessing to have a wife who gladly follows my stumbling attempts at spiritual leadership. - Kevin DeYoung

Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. - This Momentary Marriage, John Piper

Ephesians 5:22, 24 - Wives, submit to your own husbands, **as** to the Lord…Now **as** the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

> *He must mean that the same attitude that goes into giving oneself to Jesus Christ should go into giving oneself to a husband. He must mean that it is God's perfect plan for women to give themselves to their imperfect husbands in a way that echoes the creative, energetic, committed service that they give to their perfect Savior. But what is more to the point, in submitting to her husband, a godly wife is also submitting to her Lord, who gave her that husband. In submit-cing to her husband, she is submitting to the one who delegated some authority in the home to the head of that home. As John Calvin helpfully comments, it is "not that the authority [of Jesus and a husband] is equal." The point is only that "wives cannot obey Christ without yielding obedience to their husbands." In the marriage where a wife respects her husband, the Lord is honored. With all the happiness of a Saturday morning bargain hunter, Emily says that in giving herself to her husband, she gives honor to two for the price of one. - Gospel Shaped Marriage,* Chad and Emily Van Dixhorn

Ephesians 5:22-24 - Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

HUSBANDS (5:25-33)

Ephesians 5:25-33 - *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

> *Headship is the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christlike, servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home.*
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> *Leadership is the one thing, and protection and provision are the two expressions. In other words, a husband's leadership expresses itself in taking the lead in seeing to it that the family is protected and provided for…But there is another reason these two stand out. Protection and provision both have a physical and a spiritual meaning. There is physical food that needs to be provided, and there is spiritual food that needs to be provided. Husbands need to protect against physical threats to the life of the family and spiritual threats to the life of the family. So when you think it through, virtually everything a husband is called upon to do in his leadership is summed up in one of these four ways: (1) physical provision (like food and shelter), (2) spiritual provision (like the Word of God and spiritual guidance, instruction, and encouragement), (3) physical protection (as from intruders or natural disasters or disease), and (4) spiritual protection (like prayer and warnings and keeping certain influences out of the home). Provision: physical and spiritual. Protection: physical and spiritual.* - John Piper
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> *Husbands, in loving your wives, <u>lead</u>, <u>sacrifice</u>, and <u>care</u> for them as Christ does the church.* - Kevin DeYoung

1. Lead

Ephesians 5:25-27 - "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] **<u>that</u>** he might <u>sanctify</u> her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] **<u>so that</u>** he might present the church to himself in <u>splendor</u>, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, **<u>that</u>** she might be <u>holy</u> and without <u>blemish</u>.

Far from suppressing his wife or even just putting up with her, a Christian husband should actively love her toward magnificence, the way Christ loves his church, "so that he might present the church to himself in splendor" (v. 27). - Ray Ortlund

2. Sacrifice

Husbands, sacrifice for your wives. Perhaps the most important thing for your marriage is that you understand the doctrine of the atonement. Jesus died for the church. Your leadership as a husband is a self-sacrificing leadership. This can mean little things: coming home early, taking care of the kids, participating joyfully in something she likes to do, overlooking an offense, running errands, fixing something around the house, cleaning up the house. Loving your wife can also entail bigger sacrifices. You may need to forfeit climbing the corporate ladder in order to be a decent husband. You may be called upon to give up your hopes and dreams in order to take care of your wife after she falls ill or is injured. You may sacrifice the big house or the best neighborhood and live at a lower lifestyle so your wife can stay home with the kids. - Kevin DeYoung

He [Chad] tries to help her by protecting and promoting four features in life: regular Bible study, exercise, sufficient sleep, and an understanding husband. - Chad and Emily Van Dixhorn

3. Care

Ephesians 5:28-30 - In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body.

Colossians 3:19 - Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

You should just as easily treat your wife harshly as you should punch yourself in the face. - Kevin DeYoung

The man who does not love his wife is a monster. - John Calvin

Husbands are to love their wives as they love themselves, which is rarely anything but all consuming. - Chad and Emily Van Dixhorn

We should not think that Christ and the church are the metaphor in this passage, but the reverse. Christ and the church are the reality of realities, and our Christian marriages are the metaphors…May every Christian married couple, head with helper, represent and embody and exemplify and incarnate the true romance before all around with their own stunning beauty together. This too is one way we bear the image of God into the world today. And we need not feel an improper pressure about this, as if our marriages must be perfect. The whole point is that no Christian marriage can be the ultimate human experience. But every faithful Christian marriage points beyond itself to the perfect union we all share with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our little metaphorical marriages can always draw strength from the real marriage we share with our Savior. - Ray Ortlund