

**Living In Resurrection Power
(Week 10)
Ephesians 5:21-33
“What Love Requires”**

Introduction

“submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

The Old Testament is a book of Law. It commands the people of God to obey His commands, and then, it describes in great detail all of the rules and regulations. God promised the people that they would be blessed, if they obeyed The Law (**Deuteronomy 11:27**). So, needless to say, many tried to obey The Law of The LORD. When faced with any circumstance in which they longed to know God's will, the question would simply be, “What does The Law require?”. Once a person had a clear understanding of what The Law prescribed in a given situation, they would have the wherewithal to act accordingly. Unfortunately, no one was able to perfectly keep the letter of The Law, much less the spirit of The Law. This is the reason that mankind desperately needs a Savior.

Enter *The New Testament* and the Age of Grace. Jesus died on a cross and empowered us with a Helper, Who would enable us to not only obey His commandments, but to do them with the proper attitude. You see, you can “technically” obey The Law and still have the wrong heart and motives. For example, *The Bible* tells us that God hates divorce (**Malachi 2:16**). So, knowing this, a couple might stay together for fifty years, because The Law requires it, and for fear of what others would think, if they were to ever separate, even though in their hearts they would rather be apart. While they stay together in obedience to the Law, their motivation for staying married is completely wrong. *The Bible* commands them to LOVE one another! So, you see, their “obedience” is still very much in disobedience. God's perfect standards have never changed. Many Christians today believe that because we live in an age of grace, God will give us a pass on obedience. Nothing could be further from the truth. For now we have The Holy Spirit Who lives within us. He will enable us to follow Christ's commands, and He will give us the right heart to do so! As believers, we are not just motivated by the letter of The Law, but by the spirit of The Law. And, what, might you ask, is the spirit of The Law? LOVE. God's love for us, is the very reason that we have been born again. He continued to love us even though we made a real mess of keeping His perfect Law. Jesus died to save us from our very selves.

“For rarely will someone die for a just person — though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 5:7-8

This passage of scripture reveals for us the very heart of God. He is love. His love endures. It cannot be earned, and it cannot be measured. He loves, even when we are unlovable! Therefore, we obey His commands not because we must, but because our heart's desire is to please Him. For He first loved us, and we respond with love for Him.

“If you love Me, you will keep My commands.”

John 14:15

So the question for the believer is no longer, “What does The Law require?”, but rather, “What does LOVE require?” And believe me friends, this is much higher standard.

In the latter portion of his letter to The Church at Ephesus, Paul begins to explain how we, as followers of Christ filled with His Spirit, are to submit to one another in love. He begins in the most logical of places, the home, and then, he takes the discussion into the outside world that we live in. The child of God is to be filled with the love of God, and therefore, in all of our dealings with those around us, we are to have love as our sole motivation. Today, we will begin to examine this reality by observing God's perfect plan for Christian marriage.

Many have read these words of Paul out of context and subsequently took them as a license to serve their own selfish desires. This was absolutely not the intent of these scriptures, however, for to be filled with The Spirit is to be emptied of oneself. The commands given here for husbands and wives are commands of self-less-ness, motivated by the deepest kind of love. This is what God always intended for

marriage to be. Anything less is but a cheap imitation of the real thing. Men and women are different. I know that sounds like an obvious declaration, but they truly are. They are of Different Design, created for Different Depictions, and have Different Desires. But, they are meant to gloriously compliment one another, as they glorify Christ in a way that is completely unimaginable by the rest of the world.

Different Design

Men and women are not the same! I know, go ahead and roll your eyes. I am stating the obvious, right? But I think that most people, even Christians, do not completely grasp the why and how that we are so completely different. It wasn't by accident. It was done with careful planning. We live in a world that wants to blur the lines between male and female. I even read in an article the other day that some countries are considering passing laws that allow children to decide their own gender, when they are old enough to determine which sex they would rather "identify as". Did you ever believe that society would become so depraved as it has? We don't get to choose "who we are". God does. And, He does it long before we were ever born.

"I chose you before I formed you in the womb; I set you apart before you were born. I appointed you a prophet to the nations." **Jeremiah 1:5**

So how about we just let God be God, Ok? The sinful pride of this perverse generation in which we live, is sickening to say the least. God is our Creator, and it is He who gets to decide "who's who" and "who's what".

"Wives submit to your husbands as to The LORD, because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word. He did this to present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless." **Ephesians 5:22-27**

Ok, first things first. The word "submit" in verse one has been added for clarity. Remember there were no chapters or headings in this letter to break up the thought process. The last sentence of the last section is meant as a lead in to Paul's illustrations of submission. So, therefore, the original text reads more like:

"Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives to your husbands..."

When you follow this way of reading the text it becomes evident that wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands to their wives. Both are to do so out of love and reverence for Christ, Who is LORD over all creation. Too many have tried to use this passage to say that the husband is king, while the wife his lowly servant, but upon careful reading of the text, we find that the responsibility of the husband to his wife is actually greater than hers to him! The wife is supposed to submit to his leadership in love **as** he is loving her **as Christ loves His church!**

Now, think about that for a minute. Just how does Christ love His church? He loved it so much that he was willing to give up His throne in heaven and suffer and die, just so the Church could be redeemed! (**Philippians 2:5-11**). There is no greater love than that my friends (**John 15:13**). So guys, the next time you think that your wife isn't supportive enough, ask yourself this question. Am I really loving her as Christ loves His Church? Allow me to go ahead right now and answer for you. No. No you are not. That is a lofty standard, and we all should be striving to get there, but (pardon my slang) we ain't there yet! We can only do it, when we are filled by The Spirit of God, my brothers. You see, Paul isn't speaking of Phileo type love here (fondness, or brotherly affection). He didn't use the word Eros (romantic or sexual love). The command given here by The Spirit is for men to Agapeo their wives. The word is the verb form of Agape which is the kind of self-less giving love that can only come from God. So guys, you have been commanded to love your wives self-less-ly, willing to give all that you are to see to it that they have everything that they need, both physically and especially spiritually. It should be the hearts

desire of every Christian husband to see his wife growing closer to Christ with every passing day. It is his responsibility to be the spiritual leader of his household, to be the priest of his home, as it were.

God gave this charge to men in the Garden of Eden, when Eve was deceived by the serpent. He declared that the man would be given the burden of seeing to it that all his house followed The LORD'S commands, as the wife submitted to his leadership (**Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-14**). This does not by any means suggest that women are less than men, whether it be spiritually, intellectually, or in overall worth. In fact, they are to be treated as precious. It simply means that God intends for a man to take the lead in spiritual matters and lovingly guide his household in the way that they should go, as he follows the leadership of The Holy Spirit. Think about it for a moment, what wife, who loves and reveres Christ, would object to following her husband, who is not only sold out for The LORD, but sold out to serving her with every fibre of his being as well? Answer, none! A godly woman will have no problem whatsoever submitting herself to a man who submits himself to Christ and therefore, to her well being.

And another thing, the word that Paul uses here for "submit" doesn't mean "obey" as he says when speaking a bit later in reference to "children obey your parents" (**Ephesians 6:1**). The word he uses is *Hypotasso* (pronounced hoop-ot-as'-so), and it means to subordinate oneself or to put oneself under subjection. In fact, isn't this how every Christian is commanded to treat everyone?

"Let nothing be done in strife or vainglory: but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves." **Philippians 2:3 KJV**

Now folks, I'm gonna lay some truth on you right here and now. If you want to see truly just how Spirit filled a person is. Don't go by what they say, or how many scriptures that they can quote. Just look at the way they treat their spouse. Does she show reverence and submission for her husband? Does he really strive to love and serve her as Christ loved and served His Church? For you see, if you can't be submissive to one another on the home front, you are surely not in the least bit qualified to serve and lead other believers (**1 Timothy 3:4-5**). Men and women are quite different by design, but they are both called to be subject to one another. They simply have different roles for doing so.

Different Depictions

"In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh but cares for it, just as Christ does for the Church, since we are members of His body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the Church." **Ephesians 5:28-32**

Ok, this is about to get deep. The husband and wife are designed differently, for they are meant to depict two different spiritual things. The wife is a picture of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and the husband is meant to be a picture of Christ Himself! When you think about it, both are incredible standards of how we are to live.

Have you ever wondered why God does things the way that He does? For instance, that whole creation story back in *Genesis*, when God formed man out of the dust, but then, rather than just make a woman out of that very same dust, he took a part of the man to create her. Have you ever really thought about that? Why on earth did God do it that way? Answer: Because even way back then, God was drawing Jesus pictures in the dust, that's why!

You see, God placed Adam in a deep sleep and opened up his side to take a rib to fashion Eve. He took from Adam's side the necessary component for making both a body and a bride. Now don't run ahead of me! At Calvary, the Son of God (the second Adam - **1 Corinthians 15:45-49**) gave up His life on the cross in the "sleep of death". His side was pierced (opened up) and out of it came the water and the blood (**John 19:32-34**). These were the very elements needed to create the body and bride of Christ, (the Church)! I'm gonna stop there for a second and let you have a shouting moment, as you let this sink in. You see, marriage was ALWAYS intended to point to the relationship between the Son and His Bride!

So, do you understand why it is so important for believers to be constantly on guard (to walk wisely - **Ephesians 5:15**). We were created to show the world Christ! The believing husband is to mirror Him, while the believing wife is to mirror His Bride.

It is no coincidence that the first two times the word love is mentioned in all of Scripture can be found in the story of Isaac. The first time is when God commands Abraham to take his only son, the one that he **loves** and sacrifice him upon Mount Moriah (**Genesis 22:2**). The second time that love is mentioned is when Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for Isaac. When she agrees to marry him solely upon the testimony of the servant, who tells her "All that belongs to his father also belongs to Isaac." Rebekah begins her long journey to become the wife of a man she has never seen, and *The Bible* says that when Isaac saw her he took her into his tent, and she became his wife, and he **loved** her." (**Genesis 24:67**). You see, the entire *Bible* is a story written to depict the Son, Who would lay down his life for The Bride that He so loved! Remember to always look for Jesus, when you read those wonderful old stories.

The relationship between believing spouses are also designed to tell this same story. Everything that we say and do in our marriages ought to depict the love that Christ has for His Bride. This is why we must willingly accept the roles that we have been given. Wives, submit to your husbands as the Church submits to Christ, and Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. Anything less from us will mar the picture that we have been created to portray. We are Designed Differently in order to Depict the relationship between Christ and His Church. Is this what others see in your marriage?

Different Desires

"To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as Himself, and the wife is to respect her husband." **Ephesians 5:33**

Upon carefully reading this verse, we can see that men and women have different desires (needs), when it comes to the marriage relationship. It is the responsibility of every believing couple to see to it that the needs of their spouse are met with submissive agape love. For the wives, their primary need is, and has always been,... love. This is why husbands are commanded to "love their wives". Without knowing that she is loved and appreciated, a wife will feel starved of the very oxygen that she needs to breathe. Men, it is not enough just to tell your wives that you love them the day you get married and then tell them that if anything changes you will let them know! They need to hear it regularly, and more importantly, you need to show it always. An abusive husband may tell his wife that he loves her, but she won't believe him because of his actions. God created your spouse to be your equal, not your doormat, not your servant, not your property. She is to be loved and appreciated. Guys, when is the last time that you did something for your wife that was commensurate to her worth to you? I'm not talking about, "I love you sweetheart, here's a new vacuum cleaner". No I'm talking about Jesus gave His life to serve His Bride. Are you living your life to serve yours?

And ladies, your husband's number one requirement is admiration and respect. Oh, we like to hear you say that you love us, but frankly, that is not exactly what we need. We long to know that you admire us. A man will do almost anything to win the admiration of his wife. And, when he loses it, he feels absolutely defeated. Your husband needs for you to look up to him, and he needs it more than anything. This is why so many men define themselves by their jobs or their accomplishments, whether they be on a battlefield or in a sports arena. Men need to feel respected. Is this how you treat your spouse, ladies, or do you talk to him like he is perpetually four years old? The way we treat our spouses shows just how filled with The Spirit that we truly are. We must never forget this truth. We have Different Designs, we are created to Depict Different Things, and we have Different Desires. I don't know about you, but I'm glad that God chose to make us different! I am grateful that we have been given the opportunity, even in our marriages, to glorify Christ and His Bride, The Church! What an honor it is to be called the children of God! Let us show in our marriages that we have truly been remade in His image. We have been captivated by His love and filled with the fullness of God (**Ephesians 3:14-19**). So you see, the question is not, "What does The Law require?" But rather, "What does love require?"

And let all of those inseparably joined in holy matrimony say... TRUTH!!!