

“The Model for Marriage” (Ephesians 5:21–33)

I love words and ideas. I particularly enjoy bringing words and ideas together. Those closest to me know that I like how certain words roll off my tongue. One such example is the word “rock.” Typically, I pronounce this word as “RAAAAWK,” as in: “You rock!” or “That meal rocked!” This use of “rock” is a positive affirmation and I will be utilizing this word in my sermon. Many decades ago the word “rock” was formed into an idea called “rock ‘n roll,” which as you know is a genre of music. Now, you may appreciate rock ‘n roll, but I am not going to discuss the pros and cons of rock ‘n roll. What I am going to do is challenge you to *rock your role in your marriage*. In Eph 5:21–33 Paul shares two roles that need to be rocked.¹

1. Wives, graciously respect your husbands (5:21–24). Paul calls wives to respect their husbands because of Christ’s lordship and the husband’s headship.² He begins in 5:21³ with a critical principle: “. . . **and be subject to one another in the fear⁴ of Christ.**” This verse seems to say that everyone ought to submit to everyone else. Yet, the pronoun “one another” (*allelon*) doesn’t always mean “everyone to everyone.” Sometimes it means “some to others.” The context of 5:21 makes it clear that Paul is calling for submission to *specific* God-ordained authorities.⁵ Wives are to submit to husbands in 5:22–24; children are to submit to parents in 6:1–3; employees are to submit to employers in 6:5–8. The order is *never* reversed in any of these cases.⁶

In 5:22 Paul pens the famous controversial exhortation: “**Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.**” It is important to note that the verb “be subject” or “submit” is not in the Greek text of 5:22. Rather, the verb is carried over from 5:21. To be precise, the word “submit” ties back to the command in 5:18: “Be filled with the Spirit.”⁷ Submitting is an expression of being filled with the Holy Spirit.⁸ So 5:21 should read: “Be filled with the Holy Spirit . . . submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.” This submission is limited in its sphere. Paul is not saying all women are to be subject to all men. He is simply saying that if you are married you are to submit to *your own* husband. Single women are under no obligation to submit to their boyfriends. Nothing in the Bible prohibits a woman from leading a corporation, commanding a battalion of soldiers, or serving as president of the United States. The only two arenas in which a woman is to submit to male leadership are in the home and in the church. But in every other relationship and structure, women are not obligated to submit to men solely because of gender.⁹ Of course, submission is still not an easy calling so Paul includes the phrase “as to the Lord.”¹⁰ By this Paul means that submission to your husband is a part of obedience to the Lord. If you are fighting against the idea of being subject to your husband, you are really fighting against the Lord, who ordained this order in marriage.

It is important to address the meaning of the word “submit” because this verb has been misunderstood and abused for years. I like to call this word the Christian “s-word” because for many women it is on par with an expletive! However, the notion of submission is not as problematic as some have made it out to be. The word “submit” (*hupotasso*) is primarily a military term that literally means “to arrange under.” It brings to mind an organizational chart. Certain positions are arranged under other positions, and the ones that are arranged under are intended to submit to those above.¹¹ Whenever the Bible calls someone to submit, a leader or an authority is in view.¹² Yet, please note that Paul deliberately chose the word “submit” instead of obey. The word “obey” (*hupakouo*) is used in the relationship between children and parents and between slaves and masters, but *not* between wives and husbands. A wife is never to be treated as a child or a slave, but as an equal partner in the marriage. Paul also uses the Greek middle voice, which implies a voluntary choice on the wife’s part to order her life in the arrangement that God has designed (5:21, 24).¹³ Wives, *rock your role* by submitting to your husband as unto Christ.

In 5:23–24 Paul gives the basis of the wife’s submission: **“For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself¹⁴ being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.”** As difficult as these verses may be to accept, Paul means exactly what he says.¹⁵ The reason that a wife is to submit to her own husband is “the husband is the head of the wife.” The apostle’s use of “head” (*kephale*) refers to the husband’s authority and responsibility for the marriage and family.¹⁶ In case there is any doubt on this interpretation, Paul likens the husband to Christ who is “the head of the church” (cf. 1:22–23; 4:15–16). Thus, Christ is the head of the church and the husband is the head of his family. This should not come as a surprise. In every institution God has created—the government, the church, the workplace, or the home—He has also established a hierarchy to maintain order. Headship is critical in every realm of society. Life can’t work well without it. This is why it’s been said: “Anything in nature with two heads is a freak, and anything with no head is dead!”¹⁷ In 5:24 Paul assumes that the church is subject to Christ and wives ought to follow suit. He even adds the phrase “in everything” (*en panti*). Does this mean what it seems to suggest? Yes! Christian wives are called to submit to their husbands “in everything.” However, if your husband asks you to do something that is sinful you must disobey his authority. The principle of Acts 5:29 is binding: “We must obey God rather than men.”¹⁸ Thus, if your husband asks you to do something indecent, you must say no (Eph 5:3–4). If your husband commands you not to attend church, again, you must say no (Heb 10:24–25). The Scriptures are clear that you should not submit to your husband in these two examples.

A far more notorious example is when a husband urges his wife to “submit” while he physically abuses her or their children. Submission does not mean that wives are to put up with abusive husbands. Nowhere does Scripture condone domestic violence or abuse. In fact, the primary reason the Bible gives for the destruction of the world in the days of Noah was because “the earth was filled with violence” (Gen 6:11). Our reverence for the sanctity of human life should be reserved not only for human beings inside the womb but for those outside the womb as well, including ourselves. One way we demonstrate our respect for human life is by protecting ourselves, as well as others, from those who would seek to injure or destroy God-given life.¹⁹

Perhaps you are thinking, “Keith, you need to know your audience! Christian husbands don’t abuse their wives.” I certainly wish this was true, but it isn’t. Research reveals that about 43% of “Christian” husbands physically assault their wife at least once during their marriage and 50% will routinely verbally abuse their wife.²⁰ This is inexcusable and intolerable! Husbands, don’t you dare hit or shove your wife. Don’t get up in her face and intimidate her. Don’t use your words as weapons. Wives, don’t listen to your husband if he tells you to submit to abuse. That’s a lie from hell! Don’t stay in your home if your husband is physically abusive with you or your children. Separate from him! Send a very clear message that abuse will not be tolerated under any circumstances!

So practically speaking how can you as a wife submit to your husband?

Focus on Christ, not your husband. What woman who has fallen in love with Jesus would not willingly do anything for Him? Never in the Gospels do we find a woman treating Jesus badly. Never do we read of a woman speaking against Him. Never do we read of a woman doing anything to harm Him. The women of the New Testament love and honor Jesus—He was everything a man should be.²¹ Naturally, most wives aren’t married to Jesus. Your husband is full of sin and selfishness, which makes it often difficult to submit to him. This is where you must change your perspective. Your submission to your husband must *first* be submission to Jesus. In other words, you submit to Christ by submitting to your husband whether he deserves it or not.

Honor your husband with unconditional respect. Many wives will say, “I would submit to my husband *if* he would love me, be sensitive to me, and be the spiritual leader of our home. My husband needs to earn my respect!” The problem with these types of statements is that they are unbiblical! Furthermore, many wives will be waiting until Jesus returns before they ever submit! Paul is clear that you are not to wait upon your husband to meet all your needs before you respect him. You are not responsible for how your husband treats you. He will have to give an account for how he has treated you when he stands before Jesus Christ. But, I must remind you, that you will also give an account for how you have fulfilled your role as a wife.

The principle of submission is a sobering reality relevant to young women considering marriage. A commitment to marry a young man is the commitment to a lifetime of submission to that man. If there is any one question that should be in a young woman’s mind concerning marriage it is this: “Is this the kind of man I want as my ‘head,’ to whom I will submit in all things for the rest of my life?”²² If you are contemplating marriage, think this through very carefully. Apart from your decision to trust Christ as your Savior, this is the most important decision you will make.

Support and encourage your husband in every way possible.²³ Many husbands are beaten down by work. They come home feeling insignificant, inadequate, and unfilled. Such men often work long, hard hours for an angry, demanding, insensitive boss, and it naturally carries over into how they relate to their wives (often unconsciously).²⁴ This inevitably leads to conflict in the home. Now imagine how these men must feel when they receive less than respectful treatment from their wives as well. It can utterly demoralize even the best husbands. What your husband needs is an oasis of encouragement. He needs to know that you believe in him even if no one else does. He needs you to affirm him for any step that he takes in your marriage and family. He needs you to resist the temptation to complain about his leadership and “take control” of things when he fails. He needs you to forgive him and speak well of him in public. He needs to know that you are trustworthy and loyal.

[The first role that Paul mentions is that wives are to graciously respect their husbands. Now, the apostle emphasizes a second role . . .]

2. Husband, sacrificially love your wife (5:25–33). Paul gives two models to inspire love: Christ Himself and the husband’s own body. The apostle writes, “**Husbands, love²⁵ your wives,²⁶ just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.**” The husband’s obligation to love is repeated three times in this section (5:25, 28, 33). Obviously, this command is important to Paul! How did Christ love the church and give Himself up (*paradidomi*) for her? He proved His love through personal sacrifice by dying on the cross for the sins of humankind (cf. 1:7; 2:13–16). Earlier in 5:2 Paul commanded believers to “walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up [*paradidomi*] for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.” Now in 5:25 the apostle is calling husbands to die for their wives! Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it like this: “When Christ calls a man he bids him ‘Come and Die!’” This is especially true when God calls a man into marriage. Naturally, many husbands claim a readiness to die for their wives if some violent intruder threatened her. Yet, the same men struggle to deny themselves, put their wives first, and demonstrate love in tangible ways on a daily basis.²⁷ One wife told her husband, “Dear, I know that you are willing to die for me; you have told me that many times. But while you are waiting to die, could you just fill in some of the time vacuuming the living room?” OUCH! This hits a little too close to home, doesn’t it? Christ-like sacrifice means doing acts of kindness like watching the kids, cleaning the house, and giving your wife a night out. Loving sacrifice is meeting your wife’s needs by refusing to whine and living selflessly. Husbands, *rock your role*.

After issuing the command, Paul shares the purposes²⁸ in 5:26–27: A husband is to love his wife **“so that He might sanctify her,²⁹ having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,³⁰ that He³¹ might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”³²** Why does God command husbands to love their wives? Because we are to take the lead in demonstrating the nature and power of unconditional love, the kind of love Christ demonstrated for His church. In these verses the implication is that a husband’s love is meant to be so powerful that it transforms his wife into what she should be, just as Christ’s love for the church transforms her into what she should be. That means we love our wives in spite of any blemishes they may have. Of course, this type of love requires extreme patience (the same type of patience our wives must have with us) and a supernatural response. Unfortunately, many husbands want to bail out when their marriages get tough. I frequently have husbands come to me ready to throw in the towel when they have only been working on their marriage problems for a week or two. However, this is weak-kneed and weak-willed. Problems that threaten divorce don’t happen overnight. In most cases, these husbands have been ignoring their role and putting their marriages in jeopardy for five, ten, or fifteen or more years. They then foolishly expect a miraculous change in their marriage after a few days. I tell such husbands that for every year that they have hurt their wives they need to expect to put in a year to heal their wives. Most men aren’t willing to count the necessary costs to make this happen. But, when we demonstrate this kind of sacrificial, servant love, we will see our wives transformed from what they were into what they should be. Do you care about the spiritual well-being of your wife? Is your wife more like Christ because she is married to you? Or is she like Christ in spite of you? These are scary questions for every husband (including me). But we have to face these sobering questions head-on and take our role as husbands seriously. Would you make three commitments today? (1) I am going to read Scripture with my wife once a week. (2) I am going to pray with my wife two or three times a week. (3) I am going to encourage my wife in ministry once a week. Each of these commitments is measurable and achievable. The key is to start small and build up. Husbands, *rock your role*.

In 5:28–30 Paul gives the second reason that husbands must love their wives: their own love for themselves. **“So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body.”³³** Paul uses the word “ought” (*opheilo*) signifying that husbands are morally obligated to Christ to love their wife on account of Christ’s ultimate sacrifice.³⁴ The apostle says that we men are to do so as we love our own bodies. This is a most difficult task because we can often be rather preoccupied with ourselves. Greek mythology tells of a beautiful youth who loved no one until the day he saw his own reflection in the water and fell in love with that reflection. He was lovesick! Stuck staring, he finally wasted away and died and was turned into a flower that bears his name—*Narcissus*.³⁵ Disgusting, huh? We are repulsed by narcissism and carefully seek to avoid it. Rightly so! But it is shocking to see how narcissistic we can be as husbands. It is so easy for us to look out for number one. We get tired, grumpy, and stressed, and we take our frustrations out of our wives. Paul says that this should not be the case. Instead, we are to “nourish” and “cherish” our wife. The verbs “nourishes” (*ektrephe*)³⁶ and “cherishes” (*thalpo*) are bird metaphors. The former means “to feed to maturity.” This word seems to suggest that the husband is to provide for his wife’s physical needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. The verb “cherishes” means “to warm.”³⁷ This word refers to meeting your wife’s emotional needs for tender love and physical affection and giving her the warmth, comfort, protection, and security that she so desperately requires. It is worth noting, though, that when we love our wives, they grow into the godly wives, mothers, and churchwomen that God wants him to be. It goes without saying that this benefits us as well. You could say that everyone wins when we love our lives! *Husbands, rock your role!*

As a husband, how can you truly love your wife?

Listen to your wife. The question is often asked, “If you could change one thing about your husband, what would you change?” Most women respond that they would like their husband to communicate better. Many years ago the *Harvard Business Review* recommended that 65% of an executive’s time should be spent listening. How much more so the wise husband?³⁸ This week make it your priority to listen to your wife. When you come home from work instead of kicking back and relaxing, why not talk to your wife about her day? Ask her questions like: “How was your day?” “How did things go with the kids?” “How are you feeling physically and emotionally?” “Is there anything I can help you with?” “Is there anything I can pray with you about?” However, one bit of very important advice: When you ask these questions, pay very careful attention to the answers. Do not, I repeat, do not tune out your wife or allow your eyes to glaze over. I speak from personal experience.

Praise your wife. Billy Sunday (1862–1935) once said, “Try praising your wife even if it does frighten her at first.” Each and every day find new and creative ways to praise your wife. Tell her how beautiful she is, inside and out. Quote Prov 31:30 to her: “Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, *but* a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised.” Let her know how much you appreciate all the things that she does for you and your family. Praise her for cooking your meals, doing your laundry, caring for your kids, paying the bills, working outside the home, putting up with you, or anything else that she does. Praise her as if your marriage depends upon it. I can assure you that you will never regret praising your wife too much. Martin Luther said it well, “The Christian is supposed to love his neighbor, and since his wife is his nearest neighbor, she should be his deepest love.”

Touch your wife. Most men get excited about this particular application, but I am not talking about sexual touching. I am speaking of nonsexual touching, which is a critical responsibility for husbands. A couple was having some trouble, so they did the right thing and went to a marriage counselor. After a few visits, and a lot of questioning and listening, the counselor said that he had discovered the main problem. He stood up, went over to the woman, asked her to stand, and gave her a hug. He looked at the man and said, “This is what your wife needs, at least once a day!” The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, “Ok, what time do you want me to bring her back tomorrow?”³⁹ I fear that we find this illustration amusing because many husbands aren’t affectionate. Husband, it is your role to be affectionate with your wife. So, *rock your role!* Put your arm around her in church. Hold her hand when you walk in the mall or in a grocery store. Hug her when she is working in the kitchen or around the house. Put your hand on her shoulder when you greet her. Bless her with a back massage after a hard day. If you want to be touched, make sure that you touch your wife in a warm and thoughtful way.

Refuse to demand respect or submission from your wife. Don’t you dare say to your wife, “Woman, you must submit to me! The Bible and Pastor Keith say so!” Don’t you ever demand your wife to respect you. (She may very well laugh at you if you do). You cannot force your wife to submit to your authority, but you can encourage her submission by your example and your sacrifice. Has it ever occurred to you that one reason your wife may have difficulty placing herself under your authority is because she has never seen you submit to God’s authority? There is a relationship between the two. In 1 Cor 11:3 Paul writes: “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is that of Christ.” Before your wife feels comfortable following your leadership concerning her children, her finances, or her future, she needs the assurance that you are listening to God and that you place yourself under His authority.⁴⁰ Husband, *rock your role.* Give your wife an earnest desire to respect you.

In 5:31–32 Paul refers back to the creation of Eve and the forming of the first home in the Garden of Eden. **“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE⁴¹ FLESH.’ This mystery⁴² is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.”** Gen 2:24 makes it clear that the husband and wife are “one flesh,” so the husband who loves his wife does indeed love himself (cf. Eph 5:28). The verb “be joined” (*proskollao*) literally means “to glue two objects together.” The noun cognate (*kolla*) is the Greek word for glue. Husbands, God’s goal for your marriage is that you and your spouse stick together like glue and reflect Christ’s unconditional love and acceptance.⁴³ Verse 32 explains why this is so important and strategic: It may appear that Paul is primarily speaking of marriage, but he is predominantly using marriage as an illustration of Christ’s relationship with His church. The point being: A Christian marriage is the best picture of Christ’s love for His church. This is why Satan spends so much time attacking Christian marriages. If he can eliminate God’s greatest gospel illustration, he has been quite successful. But please don’t give the devil this satisfaction! Instead, use your marriage to preach the gospel in a way that not even the best sermon can preach it. Use your marriage to demonstrate to your children, your relatives, your neighbors, your coworkers, and your friends the reality of the gospel and Christ’s love for His church. *Rock your roles.*

Paul concludes this passage in 5:33 by summarizing and restating the previous twelve verses: **“Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself,⁴⁴ and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.”⁴⁵** Paul goes for the jugular here! He finally targets “each individual among you” to emphasize direct and personal individual responsibility.⁴⁶ Husband, your greatest duty in marriage is to love your wife in ways she can see and feel in her own heart. You are responsible not only to love your wife you are also responsible to make sure that she knows she is loved. Show me a man who lays down his life for his wife, and I’ll show you a wife who has no problem with submission. Wife, your greatest duty in marriage is to respect your husband for who he is as the head of your home. To summarize: The wife is told to respect her husband so much that she lives out Christ’s life, and the husband is told to love his wife so much that he lives out Christ death. Today, make a commitment to love and respect your spouse without any conditions. Take the word “if” out of your vocabulary. “If you will do . . . If you will say . . . If you will respond, then I will give myself.” Instead, show the unconditional and sacrificial love of Christ. *Rock your roles!*

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Scripture References

Ephesians 5:22–33

Ephesians 5:15–21

Colossians 3:18–4:1

1 Corinthians 11:3–12

1 Corinthians 16:13–14

1 John 4:7–21

Genesis 29:14–30

Study Questions

1. Am I running my husband down and complaining about his shortcomings or am I thankfully focusing on his strengths? Are my words encouraging and affirming? Are my attitudes and actions supportive and responsive? Do my actions, words, and attitudes enable my husband to lead my family to a better knowledge of God? Have I truly “in everything” submitted my life to this highest priority?
2. What will I say when (not if) a friend asks me, “How can I respect my miserable husband?” How have I respected my husband when he hasn’t deserved it? What did this look like practically? Would Jesus Christ be pleased with the respect I have shown my husband? Why or why not?
3. Is my wife more like Christ because she is married to me? Or, is she like Christ in spite of me? Has she shrunk from His likeness because of me? Do I sanctify her or hold her back? Is she a better woman because she is married to me? Is she a better friend? A better mother? Am I leading my family to a better knowledge of God? Is my leadership self-serving or sacrificial?
4. In what practical ways have I died to myself for the good of my wife? How do I love my wife as my own body? How do I care for her as I do myself? What is my wife’s primary “love language?” How can I begin to more effectively express my love for her this week?
5. Walter Trobisch said: “Marriage is not an achievement which is finished. It is a dynamic process between two people, a relationship which is constantly being changed, which grows or dies.” Am I still treating my spouse the same way I did when we were dating or when we were first married, or has my love and respect grown old and cold? What specific steps will I take to rectify our relationship?

Notes

¹ Although Paul begins with wives, his words to husbands are over three times as long.

² Eph 5:22–24 is not an isolated and unusual text (cf. Col 3:18; Titus 2:4–5; 1 Pet 3:1).

³ Eph 5:21 seems to serve as a “hinge” verse between 5:15–20 and 5:22–33. See esp. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 659. Most English versions start a new paragraph with 5:22; however, the Greek text (UBS, NA) starts the paragraph at 5:21. Stott also sees 5:21 as a transition verse and notes that the NEB puts it in a paragraph by itself. John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1979), 215. See also Thielman who argues for a new section beginning in Eph 5:21. Frank Thielman *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 365.

⁴ For the translation “fear” (*phobos*), see HCSB, KJV, NKJV. See also Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary series (Dallas: Word, 1990), 366 and Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 404. Most English versions prefer the rendering “reverence” or “respect.” See Hoehner for an explanation. Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 719.

⁵ For this justification argumentation, see O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 399–404.

⁶ Eaton writes: “It is true that there is such a thing as **mutual** submission among all Christians across all relationships (5:21), but this does not cancel out what is deal [sic] with in 5:22–33, and the fact that the verb is carried over from verse 21 does not change this. Paul does not call husbands to be submissive to wives, or parents to obey children, or masters to obey slaves! Verse 21 does not cancel out the leadership patterns of 5:22 through to 6:9. And the verb is present in 5:24!” Michael Eaton, *Ephesians*. Preaching Through the Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 2002), 106.

⁷ The Greek verb “submitting” is a present participle just like “speaking to one another,” “singing and making melody” (Eph 5:19), and “giving thanks” (5:20). All four participles depend on the command “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18) and describe the consequences of the Holy Spirit’s fullness.

⁸ A proper understanding of the immediate context leads to the conclusion that the primary indication that you are filled with the Holy Spirit is how you are fulfilling your role as a spouse, if you are married.

⁹ Robert Jeffress, *Hell? Yes! . . . And Other Outrageous Truths You Can Still Believe* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook, 2004), 135.

¹⁰ Paul does not mean that a wife must submit to her husband in exactly the same way that she submits to the Lord. The Lord is perfect and every husband is far from perfect.

¹¹ Wives are to relate to their husbands submissively . . . NOT as a buck private to a five-star general, but as an Executive officer to a Commanding Officer; not as a water boy to a varsity football player, but as a running back to a quarter back; not as a janitor to a big shot businessman, but as a Vice President to a President.

¹² E.g., 1 Cor 15:28; 16:15–16; Eph 5:24; Titus 2:5; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 3:22.

¹³ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 402; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 372; BDAG s.v. *hupotasso*.

¹⁴ The pronoun *autos* (“He Himself”) is emphatic.

¹⁵ For studies on “headship,” see Wayne Grudem, “Does *kephale* (‘Head’) Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6NS (1985): 38–59; idem, “The Meaning of *kephale*: A Response to Recent Studies,” *Trinity Journal* 11NS (1990): 3–72; and idem, “The Meaning of *kephale* (‘head’): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 25–65.

¹⁶ Some NT scholars attempt to argue that *kephale* (“head”) can mean “source.” However, this is unlikely (see Eph 1:22; 4:15–16). Even the Greek lexicons don’t have a category for “source” (e.g., BDAG; L&N).

¹⁷ Jeffress, *Hell? Yes!*, 132.

¹⁸ The biblical principle is clear: Always obey human authority until or unless it is sin to obey that human authority (1 Pet 2:13–17; Acts 5:29). Stott, *God’s New Society*, 218–19 says it well: “If therefore they (husbands, pastors, parents, authority figures) misuse their God-given authority (e.g., by commanding what God forbids or forbidding what God commands), then our duty is no longer conscientiously to submit, but conscientiously to refuse to do so. For to submit in such circumstances would be to disobey God. The principle is clear: we must submit right up to the point where obedience to human authority would involve disobedience to God.”

¹⁹ Jeffress, *Hell? Yes!*, 136.

²⁰ See Don Stewart, *Refuge: A Pathway Out of Domestic Violence and Abuse* (Birmingham: New Hope, 2004). Stewart cited these statistics in a *Family Life Today* radio broadcast (18 October 2005). Detective Sergeant Don Stewart served for twenty-five years on the sheriff's department in Green Bay, Wisconsin.

²¹ Sam Gordon, *The Genius of Grace: The Message of Ephesians*. Truth for today series (Belfast; Greenville: Ambassador, 2003), 341.

²² Bob Deffinbaugh, "The Submission of the Christian Wife" (Eph 5:21–32):

www.bible.org/seriespage/submission-christian-wife-ephesians-521-32; accessed 18 September 2011.

²³ Miller writes: "Submission means I voluntarily limit what I might do naturally in this relationship in order to benefit you. If I have more power, instead of doing what I might do naturally and use that power to make my life easier, out of reverence for Christ I'll use my power instead to serve you. I'll give up even my life in order to benefit you. Submission also means that if I have less power, instead of doing what I might do naturally and fight you every step of the way, I'm going to show you respect and honor." See Kevin A. Miller, "What's So Scary About Submission? Six Secrets About What the Bible Really Teaches," in *Marriage Partnership*: www.kyria.com/topics/marriagefamily/marriage/spirituality/4.34.html; accessed 18 September 2011.

²⁴ Sam Storms, "Ephesians 5:1–33": www.enjoyinggodministries.com/article/51-33/; accessed 18 September 2011.

²⁵ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374, observes: "Significantly, the call to all to love and sacrifice for one another in 5:1–2 takes a similar form to that directed to husbands here in 5:25, since in both places the analogy with Christ's own self-sacrificing love provides the warrant for the appeal." O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 419: "Earlier in Ephesians love is seen as a grace that all believers are to show in their relationship with others (1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2). Now, it is required of husbands in relation to their wives." Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 748: "This exhortation to husbands to love their wives is unique. It is not found in the OT, rabbinic literature, or in the household codes of the Greco-Roman era. Although the hierarchical model of the home is maintained, it is ameliorated by this revolutionary exhortation that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church."

²⁶ This is the only imperative in Eph 5:21–33.

²⁷ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 404.

²⁸ There are two *hina* clauses ("in order that, that").

²⁹ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 421 takes the approach that Christ's sanctification of the Church does not refer to progressive sanctification writing that, "The basic idea of this verb 'sanctify or make holy' is that of setting someone apart to God for his service. Christians are described as those who are 'sanctified in Christ Jesus' (1Cor. 1:2), whom God has set apart for himself in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor. 6:11). In an expression which is without parallel in Paul's letters, Ephesians 5:26 stresses the corporate dimension by asserting that it is the church (note the emphatic position of 'it') which is sanctified through Christ's death. Some understand the verb here (and the language of sanctification generally) as describing a process of moral renewal and change, which is preceded by an initial cleansing from sin. But the verb ('might sanctify') refers to the church being brought into 'an exclusive and dedicated relationship with God, as the holy people of the New Covenant' (cf. 1Cor. 1:2; 6:11), not to an ongoing process of sanctification . . . Through his sacrificial death Christ claimed the church as his own to be his holy people (cf. Eph. 5:27). 'Christ died to devote the church to Himself in an exclusive and permanent relationship analogous to marriage'. There are two elements: a separation from all that is unclean and evil, and a consecration to God and his will."

³⁰ In the phrase "the washing of water with the word," Paul likely sees an echo to Ezek 16:8–14. In this text, the prenuptial bath of the bride is used for God's people. The image of the bath refers here to the cleansing that has happened to God's people through the word of the gospel. In Ephesians Christ is the beautician; as God is in Ezek 16. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 387; Eaton, *Ephesians*, 110–11; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 756; Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*. Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 142. However, most scholars see this as a reference to water baptism (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 422; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375). Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 375–77 does see the former interpretation as having a secondary connotation.

³¹ The use of the pronoun *autos* is intensive and focuses attention on Christ as the *one* who has made the church glorious (see NET study notes).

³² Paul is referring to the cleaning power of the gospel (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 422–24; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 752–54; Thielman, *Ephesians*, 384). Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 761 concludes: "The allusion to the church's holiness and blamelessness is important, not only in the immediate context but it also serves as a climax to the argument in theology of the whole book. In Eph 1:4 God chose believers in order that they might be holy and blameless before him in love."

³³ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 380: "[T]he imagery as applied to Christ's treatment of the Church is meant to recall his constant provision for and building up of his body (cf. 4:11-16)."

³⁴ See also Arnold, *Ephesians*, 391.

³⁵ R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 40.

³⁶ This verb is used of the rearing of children in Eph 6:4.

³⁷ In the Greek OT, *thalpo* can mean "to keep warm," as of birds covering their young with their feathers (Deut 22:6).

³⁸ Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, 43.

³⁹ Vogel, "Walking Wisely: Two People-One Body: Part 2" (Eph 5:21–33):

www.my.execpc.com/DD/C7/crnrstn/sermons/ephesians_52233_part_2.htm; accessed 21 September 2011.

⁴⁰ Jeffress, *Hell? Yes!*, 139.

⁴¹ "One" (*mian*) is in the emphatic position as the climactic conclusion of the quotation of Gen 2:24.

⁴² Paul uses the term "mystery" (*mysterion*) elsewhere in Ephesians (1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 6:19). All five instances convey the same meaning: God's hidden purposes now revealed in Christ (see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 394).

⁴³ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 396 writes: "The nature of the union between husband and wife goes beyond a simple comparison or illustration . . . The implication of this is that there is something more profound about the Genesis text than providing a simple illustration, model, or analogy for the union of Christ and the church."

⁴⁴ Paul probably derived his concept of self-love from Lev 19:18 (or ultimately so through Christ's own words). See J. Paul Sampley, *'And the Two Shall Become One Flesh': A Study of Traditions in Ephesians 5:21–33* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1971), 32.

⁴⁵ Paul's use of *phobos* ("fear" or "reverence") forms a *chiasm* between Eph 5:21 and 33.

⁴⁶ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 436; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 781.