

“Submit,” “Head,” “Love”: Fightin’ Words? (Part II)

New Vision, 11/14/2010, John Fickett

Eph. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. *23* For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. *24* Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her *26* to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, *27* and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. *28* In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. *29* After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church — *30* for we are members of his body. *31* “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” *32* This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church. *33* However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

I. Review

A. Outline:

Main idea/heading/transition (by the way, not just a marriage issue):

Eph. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In particular/for example:

1. Eph. 5:22-33 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...
2. Eph. 6:1-4 Children, obey your parents in the Lord...
3. Eph. 6:5-9 Slaves, obey your earthly masters...

B. Submit

1. Middle voice: (Submit) “stand under”
2. A heart attitude
3. Compare the “right-side-up kingdom”
4. “Submit,” vs. “obey”— overlapping, but not identical
5. Christians live in a network of submissive relationships
6. Peter’s advice (1 Pet 2:13; Acts 4:19)

II. For the husband is head...

- A. Compare Eph 1:22
- B. A metaphor.
- C. Whatever it means, it’s the main reason for the wife to submit. It parallels in some way the relationship of Christ to the church.
- D. Always seems to relate to authority.
- E. The JF definition: The buck-stops-here responsibility and authority that enables a self-sacrificial, limitless commitment to the good of those over whom one is head.
- F. The JF definition of this love: the self-sacrificial, limitless commitment to the good in the above statement.

G. Doesn’t mean:

1. Makes all decisions
2. Doesn’t receive input from his wife
3. Doesn’t value his wife’s gifts and (sometimes superior) abilities

H. The Jesus-style head:

1. Lives a life of submission to authority.
2. Doesn’t get a kick out of bossing others around.
3. Doesn’t “Lord it over” others (domineer). Doesn’t demand submission.
4. Serves, provides for, cherishes, builds up, those he leads.
5. Is not in it for himself. It’s not about his privileges, power, control, status...
6. But does lead! Makes sure there is initiative, bases covered, ready to answer for well-being of wife and family. Willing to make final decisions as necessary. Takes responsibility for family outcome.
7. Never, ever quits. Doesn’t have any if’s.

III. “Submit,” “love” if the other does their job?

IV. The wildly popular teaching:

Wives and husbands have identical responsibilities

- A. Wives and husbands job descriptions completely the same here? Are the responsibilities interchangeable, “equal”?
- B. Implication of “one another [ἀλλήλων]”?
- C. Head [κεφαλή] means “source”?
- D. Wasn’t this temporary because wives were uneducated and had a narrow experience in those days?
- E. Wasn’t this head thing a product of the fall anyway?
- F. What about “inequity of empowerment”?
- G. What about abuse?

Discussion-starting questions for small groups

1. What is the difference between “submit” and “obey”?
2. What does “as Christ is”
3. What does a marriage look like in this passage (in your own words)?
4. What does “love...just as Christ loved” mean in your own words?

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