

How do you relate in your marriage?

To others looking on is your marriage happy/harmonious?

If you're not married how would you expect it to work?

Dominant wife & husband opts out?

Husband & wife both in charge?

Authoritarian husband & oppressed wife?

One Christian author says about men & women:

MEN want a battle to fight, an adventure to live, a beauty to rescue.

WOMEN want to be fought for, be part of an adventure, be the beauty.

On what basis? This is not clearly taught in scripture.

“Think of the films men love, the things they do with their free time & especially the aspirations of little boys & see if I’m not right about this.”

J Eldredge (Wild at Heart)

Who does 17mth old Lucy Wriglesworth think is the most important?



Nana or Pa?

Though she has more time with Nana she says 'Pa'.  
In this potentially very divisive area what does the bible say?

Read Eph 5 v21-33 – Ethics in marriage

**1) We are to submit to one another**

**2) Wives are to submit to their husbands**

The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church

**3) Husbands are to love their wives**

as Christ loved the church & as their own bodies

**4) A mystery**

# **1) Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ**

Submitting does not make you inferior

John 6 v 38 (Jesus & his father). Gen 1 v27 (creation)

Submitting is an evidence of being filled with the Spirit:

‘submit’ is a present participle (lit: ‘submitting’) like ‘speaking to one another’, ‘singing & making music’ & ‘always giving thanks’.

All 4 participles depend on the command ‘be filled with the Spirit’ in v18

‘One another’ here have no particular authority.

Example of Christ as one who serves

“ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others” Phil 2 v3-4

Context of church in Ephesus – new converts from a wide variety of background encouraged to submit to one another out of love & to express their unity

submit (*gk hypotasso*) built on the word '*taxis*' (order)

authority (*gk exousia*) is the complementary word

“Let everyone be subject to (*hypotasso*) the governing authorities, for there is no authority (*exousia*) except that which God has established.” Rom 13 v1

However as Eph 5 moves on to the role of husbands/parents/masters 'exousia' is not used at all.

Rather husbands/parents/masters are to think of the other party's best interests.

Husbands are to love their wives & care for them.

Parents are not to provoke your children, but bring them up in the way of the Lord.

Masters are not to threaten slaves but treat them with justice.

## 2) For wives

“Wives submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour” v22

**As to the Lord.**

**For the husband is the head . . as Christ is . . v23**

this has roots in creation

Gen 2 v18-25

1 Cor 11 v3-12, 1 Tim 2 v11-13

Head (*gk kephale*) physical head, top stone in a building, one in primary place.

What kind of head is Christ?

Look back at Eph 4 v15-16

His headship expresses **care** rather than control, **responsibility** rather than rule. He is the Saviour v23 – headship characterised more by saviourhood than Lordship.

**“As the church submits to Christ,** so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” v24

There is nothing demeaning here.  
Not an unthinking obedience to his rule  
but a grateful acceptance of his care.

Whenever the husband’s headship mirrors the headship of Christ,  
then the wife’s submission to the protection & provision of his love,  
far from detracting from her womanhood, will positively enrich it.”

Stott

Wives are you submissive to your husbands?  
Do you dominate at home?  
Do you nag (or constantly correct) your husband?

### 3) For husbands

“Husbands, **love** your wives, just as Christ loved the church & gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her . . . , & to present her to himself as a radiant church (without any blemish) but holy & blameless” v25-27

Love (*gk agape*)

Affection between husbands & wives in surrounding cultures was normal.

Paul’s Stoic contemporaries taught husbands to ‘love’ but they used the weak Greek word ‘*phileo*’.

It was Christian teaching that introduced strong, sacrificial ‘*agape*’ love



## Husbands love your wives **as Christ loved the church v25**

(bridegroom/bride)

v25-27 has five verbs:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ **loved** the church & **gave himself up** for her to **make her holy, cleansing her** by the washing with water through the word, & to **present** her to himself as a radiant church . . . “

“Let us rejoice . . & give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright & clean was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people). Rev 19 v7-8

Loves her.

Gave himself up for her.

Cleansing her.

To make her holy.

To present her faultless

Husbands are you exercising this kind of love for your wife?

What sort of vision do you have for her?

Husbands to love their wives **as their own bodies (v28-29)**

We feed & care for our own bodies.

Very appropriate guidance as husband & wife have become 'one flesh' which Paul goes on to explore.

#### 4) A mystery v29b -32

Husband to love his wife  
as Christ loved his bride & as his own body.  
But Christ's bride & Christ's body are one & the same!

“For this reason a man will leave his father & mother & be united to his wife & the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ & the church.”  
v31-32

Initially the ‘one flesh’ refers to husband & wife . .  
but also Paul says the ‘one flesh’ is Christ & the church.  
Eph 2 v15 speaks of just this: “His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two (Jew/Gentile) . .”

Christ & us so inextricably one that he is not complete without us & we are not complete without him.

## Husband's headship in marriage

Men never commanded to rule their wives but love them

Not the power of a superior over an inferior

More a responsibility than a right

Authority to serve, opportunity to lead

Circumscribed by scripture

Does mean making a final decision when agreement not achieved (can delegate)

Involves gentleness, sensitivity & honouring one's wife

Loving 'as your own body' & 'as Christ loved the church'

## Wife's submission in marriage

A particular example of a general Christian duty

To be given to a lover not an ogre

Husband is to love like Christ, sacrificing in order to serve

Is but another aspect of love

When husbands & wives fulfil their roles this is a beautiful thing

“Christ 'loved' the church and 'gave himself' for her, in order to 'cleanse' her, 'sanctify' her, and ultimately 'present' her to himself in full splendour and without any defect.

In other words, his love and self-sacrifice were not an idle display, but with a purpose. And his purpose was not to impose an alien identity upon the church, but to free her from the spots and wrinkles which mar her beauty and to display her in her true glory.

The Christian husband is to have a similar concern. His headship will never be used to suppress his wife. He longs to see her liberated from everything which spoils her true feminine identity and growing towards that 'glory', that perfection of fulfilled personhood which will be the final destiny of all those whom Christ redeems.

To this end Christ gave himself.

To this end, too, the husband gives himself in love.” Stott.

## For discussion:

1. Does submission mean that the husband makes all the decisions?
  2. Does headship mean that he should never yield to his wife?
  3. Are specific tasks in marriage gender-related (housework, providing financially, etc.)?
  4. Should a wife submit without comment when she knows her husband is making a foolish mistake?
  5. Sometimes the personalities of husband & wife are such that she definitely 'wears the trousers', and in many respects takes a lead in the relationship. They may both be perfectly happy with this pattern. Should we tell them this is against Scripture, & they should try to change?
  6. What about when either husband or wife is not doing their part or not a Christian?
- 1 Pet 3 v1-2 for wives, ??? for husbands.