

**DAY 86**

READ

EPHESIANS 5:21-30

FOCUS

²¹ SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE FOR CHRIST. ²² WIVES, SUBMIT YOURSELVES TO YOUR OWN HUSBANDS AS YOU DO 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[A] 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 THEIR OWN BODY, BUT THEY FEED AND CARE FOR THEIR BODY, JUST AS CHRIST DOES THE CHURCH— ³⁰ FOR WE ARE MEMBERS OF HIS BODY.

REFLECTION from PASTOR CONNIE SURRATT

First of all, let me say how much I appreciate that I drew the short straw and got this passage. I'm sure it's because I'm the one who has been married the longest of our group (39 years on June 19—yes, I was a child bride). I'm also thrilled that I get to write about this during a pandemic when there has been a lot of "togetherness" and frankly tension with all that is going on around us. So, here goes....

I think in today's society we tend to skip over these Scriptures and consider them archaic since they were written in the time of patriarchal society. But, stay with me and you'll see these teachings are true today and are actually the key to a successful marriage.

I think we all get stuck on a few key words: "submit" and "head of the wife." Let's look at the words. Submit - this is not the same as obedience. The actual Greek word is *hupotassomai*, which means to place, to station, or to place in a certain order. Paul is saying, "subject yourself." This is voluntarily placement of oneself under another "out of reverence of Christ." When you actually look deeply at this teaching, you will find it is completely radical for it's time and truly about equality.

First, we have to internalize that submission and obedience are not the same thing. This is a voluntary placement. This is far different than blindly following your spouse and doing it with a bad attitude. We, as women, bring the totality of who we are, our gifts, and our strengths to our marriages--most likely each of these traits will be quite different than our husband's. Our husband's word is not the final word--in a healthy marriage we can have healthy discussions. So, this verse doesn't sound quite right to us; where does submission come in, you ask? There will be times in your marriage when you don't agree. I'm sure it's never happened to you, but on those rare occasions, if I am in submission to my husband, voluntarily, I will trust that together he will lead us as we find common ground.

All of the major decisions in our marriage--other than to actually get married--we have not instantly agreed on. The way that we make decisions as a couple is to take time to pray together, separately and then together again. Through this process we discuss and finally come to an agreement. During these times Doyle has led, not in a heavy headed way, but in a Biblical model. I can give you a recent example. When we were building the West Auditorium it involved a building campaign. We were separately praying about what we would give to financially support the campaign (those are always hard and soul searching times). We came together and I went first with my number, he said "I feel like maybe you should pray some more about it." When he said that, first of all, I already knew what the real amount should be--I was holding back because I thought it was too much, too hard. In this scenario, he didn't say, "You're wrong, this is what we are doing." He helped guide us as a couple. I prayed about it and gave up all the fears and everything I was holding on to--and when we came back together the amount I felt like we were supposed to give was the exact amount he had. I look back over those years and, for me, not only did it strengthen our marriage, but it was another amazing time of growth to watch how God provided. The great thing was we got to do it together!

It may seem, so far, like the wife has to do all the "heavy-lifting" but you are oh, so wrong. Let's look further at what Paul has to say to the husband. "Love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." Literally, Christ gave His life. Not only that, but He washed the disciple's feet when the question of greatness came up at the



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Last Supper. Men, you have a lot to do as the "head" of this marriage. You are called to be the source, provider, sustainer, source of unity and growth...the list goes on.

I can tell you after 39 years of marriage, if you have a husband that loves you as much as Christ loves the church (us), you will think entirely differently about this passage. We get stuck on the first part and never get to the second--which is an incredibly high standard. In marriage, we come together wanting only the best for one another--knowing that we both bring to the union the totality of who we are. I could probably write 5 more pages on this passage because I feel it is so misunderstood. I would even go so far to say that, if you have a hard time submitting to one another in your marriage, you probably have a hard time submitting to Christ. There is such freedom in wanting the best for one another, as Christ does for us. I encourage you husband, or your wife to really take another look at these passages, with no preconceived ideas, and let God show you His plan.

QUESTIONS

- IF YOU ARE A WIFE: DO YOU HAVE TROUBLE "PLACING YOURSELF UNDER" YOUR HUSBAND (VOLUNTARILY SUBMITTING)? IF SO, DO YOU ALSO HAVE A HARD TIME SUBMITTING TO GOD? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS?
- IF YOU ARE A HUSBAND: DO YOU HAVE TROUBLE GIVING YOUR LIFE FOR YOUR BRIDE, SACRIFICING AND SERVING HER? WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IS? HOW DOES IT REFLECT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?
- IF YOU ARE SINGLE: HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE CHANGE THE WAY YOU PERCEIVE MALE/FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS IN MARRIAGE?