

Within this mutual submission, Paul directs that wives are to *submit to their own husbands as to the Lord* and that husbands are to *love their own wives, just as Christ also loved the church and handed himself over on her behalf*.

The marriage relationship is very special. Quoting the creative purpose of God in Genesis 2.24, Paul teaches that a new entity has come into being through the commitment of marriage. We are not independent parties who happen to be living together.

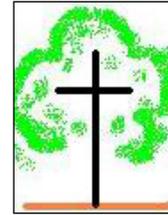
Within this new entity there are diverse roles in which husbands are to exercise loving responsible leadership and in which wives, as *joint-heirs of the gift of life* (1 Peter 3.7), accept and live under that leadership. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. (We find this theme elsewhere in the Scriptures – see, for example, Jeremiah 31.31-34).

Reflect:

- The whole concept of submission of any type seems totally foreign to the modern temperament. Do you agree? Why do you think this is so?
- How can mutual submission within marriage express equality and respect for each partner?
- What differences would the proper application of Paul's teaching make to marriage and family life today?

6. Equipped and Ready. Bible Reading: Ephesians 6.

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Alive in Christ!

Six Studies in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
by Peter J. Blackburn

5. A Whole New Way of Life

Reading: Ephesians 5

In the latter half of chapter 4, Paul had many things to say about the whole new way of life that we are to live as Christians. He gives much clear instruction about the elements of the old way of life that need to be *put away* and the need to put *on the new humanity*.

This theme continues into chapter 5. Verse 21 introduces the theme of mutual submission as one of the important characteristics of the new life. This becomes the transition point for considering the whole theme of relationships with others, a theme that flows over into chapter 6.

Chapter 5

¹Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ²and walk in love, just as Christ also has loved us and handed himself over for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God ³But let there be no suggestion among you of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity, or greedy desire, which are out of place for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be filth and foolish chatter or coarse joking, which are improper, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵For know this for certain that no immoral or indecent or greedy person (he is an idolater) has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God.

⁶Do not let anyone deceive you with empty words – it is because of these things that God's wrath comes on the children of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be associated with them. ⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord! Walk as children of the light ⁹(for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness and righteousness and truth) ¹⁰and consider carefully what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness but rather expose them. ¹²For the things done by them in secret it is shameful even to mention. ¹³But all the things exposed by the light become visible, ¹⁴for light is what makes everything visible. That is why it says,

*Wake up, sleeper!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you!*

¹⁵Therefore look carefully how you walk, not as unwise but as wise ones, ¹⁶maximising the opportunity because the days are evil. ¹⁷For this reason do not be foolish, but understand what is the will of the Lord. ¹⁸And don't get drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be continuously being filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making music in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰giving thanks at all times for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, ²³because a man is head of his wife as Christ also is head of the church, being himself Saviour of the body. ²⁴But as the church submits itself to Christ, in the same way also the wives to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and handed himself over on her behalf, ²⁶in order that he might make her holy, purifying her with the washing of water in the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself resplendent, without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind, but that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸In the same way also husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. The one loving his own wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own body, but provides and cares for it, just as also Christ cares for the church, ³⁰so that we are members of his body. ³¹“For this reason a man shall leave behind his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will be one flesh” (Gen. 2.24). ³²This is a great mystery, and I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³However, each of you individually must in the same way love his wife as himself, and the wife must fear her husband.

Living in the Light

We are to *be kind to one another and compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also has freely forgiven you in Christ*, and Paul now calls on us to *be imitators of God, as beloved children!* A bit daunting? But we are not to think of this as some new impossible

standard demanded of us. Rather, having become children, our lives should express the character of our Father.

Christ himself *has loved us and handed himself over for us* - that is the basis on which we are *saved by grace through faith* (2.8). We are to have that very kind of love - it is *a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*.

Sexual immorality, impurity, greedy desire... have no place among God's forgiven, holy people. *Filth, foolish chatter, coarse joking...* have no place on our lips, *but rather thanksgiving*. The person remaining *immoral, indecent or greedy* shows he has no place in the Kingdom.

These are *the unfruitful works of darkness*. They are the reason God's wrath comes on the disobedient. But we are now *light in the Lord*. So we are to walk as *children of the light... and consider what is pleasing to the Lord*. So we *do not participate in these works, but rather expose them* – that is the very nature of light.

Yet our lives are not meant to be one big negative! That is why it is important that we walk *as wise ones, maximising the opportunity*. It is quite inappropriate for us to *get drunk with wine*, but rather we must *be continuously being filled with the Spirit*, with hearts overflowing in praise and thanks to God. The whole purpose of being *filled with the Spirit* is so that we may *understand* and do *what is the will of the Lord*.

Reflect:

- How should we relate to a world whose values and practice are so contrary to the will of God?
- What is the relationship between worship and doing the will of God?

Wives and Husbands

Part of the will of the Lord is that we *submit ourselves to one another in the fear of Christ*. Paul goes on to apply this to three specific relationships – wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters. The first of these is considered in the present chapter.