



**Sermon: THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST RESTORES MARRIAGE  
RELATIONSHIPS!**

**- Pastor Todd Goldschmidt**

Sunday Service 9:30 am – August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – At [Living Hope Lutheran Church](#)

**Ephesians 5:22-33** - New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> 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. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

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



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Brain research demonstrates what humans have observed for centuries: men and women think differently. Men primarily process information with the left side of their brain, giving them an advantage in spatial relationships. Women, on the other hand, process information with both sides of their brain, allowing them to be more aware of feelings and better equipped to handle the “emotional side” of relationships. It’s as if God prepared the man to protect the home physically and the woman to shelter the home emotionally. Together, that can make for an amazing team!

Sadly, it doesn’t always work that way. The very first marriage broke down because of human selfishness. Instead of protecting his wife, Eve, from the serpent’s cunning comments, Adam stood silently by while she gave in to temptation. Then Eve enticed him to eat of the forbidden fruit, too. Both sinned. Yet when the LORD came looking for them to confront them in their sin and through His probing questions to call them to return to Him in repentance and faith, we get a glimpse into just how much damage their disobedience did to their once perfect relationships. When God confronted Adam, he retorted, “The woman *you* put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it” (Gen. 3:12). Adam ultimately blamed God for giving him Eve! Eve also refused to take responsibility for her sin. “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” she said.

Yet God held both Adam and Eve liable for their willful disobedience and cursed them and all of creation because of it. Part of that curse reads like this in the NIV: “To the woman [God] said, ‘Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you’” (v. 16). The original Hebrew of that verse can be rendered more accurately this way: “Your desire will be to rule over your husband, but you will find that he will rule over you.” God told Eve that their sin would result in a battle for supremacy on the home front. It’s only through the regenerating power of God’s Spirit that redeemed sinners like us are enabled to serve each other in the same way that Christ lovingly serves us. The Gospel of Jesus Christ reverses the curse of sin in our relationships: first with God, then with one another. Paul wrote that “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. For it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13).

In today’s sermon text, the Apostle Paul describes a new paradigm for marriages. It’s the one God intended to begin with—the one He originally established between Adam and Eve in Eden—and the one made possible through the Gospel of God’s love in Christ, for . . .



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Let's consider that statement from the perspective of each spouse: wives first, then husbands. Paul says that wives are to "submit to [their] husbands." The word "submit" is a loaded one. For years I've struggled to define it in a way that not only squares with Scripture but that "makes sense" when it is applied to human relationships—particularly the role relationships within the context of a Christian marriage, home and family. I believe the Holy Spirit led me to that understanding this past week as I prepared this sermon. Let's try this definition on for size and see if it fits: "To submit means to willingly place oneself under the loving leadership of another." Employing that interpretation, the opening words of our text for today would read like this:

"Wives, willingly place yourselves under the loving leadership of your husbands just as you willingly place yourselves under the loving leadership of the Lord (Jesus). For the husband is the head of the wife in the same way that Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now in the same way that the church willingly places itself under the loving leadership of Christ, so also wives should willingly place themselves under the loving leadership of their husbands in everything (that isn't sinful)."

Paul concludes our text by saying that "the wife must respect her husband." Having a profound measure of respect for her husband equips him to better fulfill his role of loving leadership in the home. A wife's role is to support and encourage her husband with words and actions that give him the confidence he needs to lead his family in a God-pleasing direction. That doesn't mean there won't be times when she disagrees with his approach to a particular problem the family faces. It's part of her calling to express her outlook in a way that informs her husband of her difference of opinion on the matter without undermining his God-given authority in the home. It can be a delicate balance, but the harder she works to "willingly place herself under the loving leadership of her husband," the more evident it should become to him that just like the "wife of noble character" in Proverbs 31, "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life" (v. 12). Then, he "can have full confidence in her" (v. 11) to be the kind of helper for him God desires.

Now it's the husbands' turn. To them, Paul writes: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." God gives us married men a huge responsibility! We're supposed to demonstrate the same sort of self-sacrificing love for our wives that Christ shows for His Bride, the Church. That's a tall order! The Bible says that Jesus love us so much that He was willing to live each and every moment of His earthly life with us on His heart and His mind. Everything He did He did for us! Every temptation He resisted, every act of mercy He performed, every commandment He fulfilled He did so as our perfect proxy, as our sinless Substitute. The writer to the Hebrews said that in Jesus: "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way,

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just as we are—yet was without sin” (4:15). When times get tough, when the going gets rough, remember: we have a Savior from sin who did everything we needed to secure our pardon and give us the peace of His abiding presence. He’s there for us for when we fail to love as He loves.

On that note, the divinely-inspired author of Hebrews went on to write: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Husbands and wives need to pray for mercy and grace for the many times we fail miserably to live up to God’s expectations for our marriage: wives, for the times that they undermine their husbands efforts to lead the family in a God-pleasing direction by hyper-critical comments, stubborn dispositions and intractable stands; husbands, by being domineering, mean and inconsiderate when it comes to serving as the head of the family. Satan delights in stirring up anger, creating hard feelings and developing deep rifts of resentment between spouses. If he can accomplish those diabolical deeds within a marriage, he may well succeed in destroying that holy union altogether. To that end, Paul warns us in Ephesians 4: “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (vv. 26-27).

What blessings transpire when husbands love their wives with a Christ-like love, with a spirit of self-denial that puts their wife’s needs and interests above their own; when wives willing acquiesce to their husband’s loving leadership—feats that can only be accomplished by God’s Spirit working in their respective hearts and lives. A beautiful, harmonious marriage can come about—one that Paul says pictures the “profound mystery” of the relationship between “Christ and the church.” To think that God would describe that blessed union between Him and us using the picture of marriage is hard to imagine. That’s because no earthly relationship—no matter how much love characterizes it—comes close to resembling the relationship between a holy God and sinful humans that was, and is, so perfectly restored by the work of our Savior Jesus Christ! “Christ loved the church,” Paul says, “and gave himself up for her, to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word (in Holy Baptism), [in order to] present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Wives—what kind, encouraging, supportive words of respect can you use in this week ahead to show your husband how much you love him and care for him? Husbands—what type of loving leadership can you exercise at home to demonstrate to your wife that you cherish her, value her and are deeply concerned about her welfare? Husbands love your wives as you love yourselves. Wives, respect your husbands. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Amen.