

## United Family – Ephesians 5

Adam is sitting in the Garden of Eden, talking to God. He says to God, “You’ve given me life, the purpose of naming every animal, and plenty of food to eat. You’ve made me comfortable, kept me well fed and a sense of purpose. However, I’m feeling quite lonely; is there anything you can do to fix that?” God replies, “I will give you a partner, and she will be called “Eve”. She will stand by you and support you. She will lift you up, enforce your rules, and be at your right hand whenever you ask. She will bear your children and raise them to your liking. She will feed you, clothe you, and take care of you. She will be beautiful, graceful, and warm. She will be kind, caring, thoughtful, and will always be there for you. But it is going to cost you an arm and a leg.” Adam thinks for a second and says “... **what can I get for a rib?**” I want you to go back with me to the Garden of Eden for a minute. Everything is absolutely perfect. The weather is perfect. The temp is perfect. The flowers are big and beautiful. The colors and the smells are amazing and perfect. And then one day, God tells Adam, “I have something for you.” And out walks Eve in all her perfection. She was perfect mentally, spiritually and physically and Adam loved her. I have a theory that not all of you may agree with. That’s okay. It’s not a big issue and it’s just my opinion. We know that when the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden, she was deceived by the serpent and believed his lie. But Adam wasn’t deceived and yet he still ate the fruit. **1 Timothy 2:14** tells us that Adam was not deceived but only Eve. I believe he chose to eat the fruit because he was willing to die **for** her and **with** her. If she was going to be punished, he would too. He loved her that much.

Now, of course, that doesn’t make what he did right or okay, but it tells us something about true agape love and we will see more of that in **Ephesians chapter 5** this morning. We are continuing our in-depth study of the book of Ephesians and we are almost done. The whole book is about the church and about unity in the church. We have one more passage to look at after this one and then it will be Christmas time around here. But this passage is perfect for the Sunday after Thanksgiving since Thanksgiving is traditionally very family focused. This passage is all about the family and the dynamics of making a family work and work well. But it’s not just about blood family. It also works for, and I believe originally intended for, the church family. In fact, this passage is almost always used to talk about blood family when Paul mentions several times that he is really talking about the relationship between Christ and the church. So, keep that in mind as we read **Ephesians 5:21-33**.

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup>Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do 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 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 their own body, but they feed and care for their body, 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>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.*

I was reading what the great pastor **W.A. Criswell** said about this passage of scripture. He said, “*The passage is one of the most meaningful to be found in all holy writ. That is a marvelous and unusual passage. This is one of the most meaningful of all of the texts in the circumference of the Holy Scriptures. It’s not one that we ought to say, “Yes, yes indeed, that’s true” and forget it, but it is a passage that is like manna from heaven. It is like the stream of life that flowed from the rock in the weary land. And as Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, so we sit today and meditate*

*and wonder at the words of grace that are written in this Book of life.*” I think he liked it. I think I do too and I hope you will at least appreciate it by the time we are through. I think it is so powerful because it is truly the secret to life. If we can know and understand and live by what Paul says here then, while our lives on this earth will still see problems and pain – nothing can stop that – we can still have peace and joy in our families and in our church and in our lives as a whole. What’s that worth? That’s kind of a big deal, right?

And there are two words that are repeated in here that are the keys to having peace and joy in this life and they are “submit” and “love.” And when I say those two words, I know that for everybody here you would say you love one of those and you hate the other, right? We love “love” but we all hate “submit.” And part of why that is so is because we have a misunderstanding of the words. When we hear “submit” we automatically think it means to obey and that may be part of it but there is more. It literally means to voluntarily place oneself under another, like a ranking. It was originally a Greek military term meaning to arrange troops in a military fashion under the command of a leader. It involved giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility and carrying a burden. (5293 hupotasso- Strong’s Concordance) And I know what you’re thinking. “Yes, Todd, that just proves my point. That doesn’t sound like any fun. I don’t want to submit.” Right? But here’s the key. What if everybody was doing it? What if everybody – men, women, big, small, famous and important and no-names – everybody was submitting to each other? That’s the way it’s supposed to be.

I was taking the dogs for a ride the other day out in the country and I came to a little bridge going over a little low area with some water flowing. The road narrowed down to just one lane as it came to the bridge and as I got closer, I saw there was a yield sign on this side of the bridge. So, I slowed way down but I could see that there weren’t any cars coming from the other side so I went on. We drove around a while and headed back the same way and when we got to that bridge, I saw that there was a yield sign on that side too. I thought that was interesting. Both sides had a yield sign. Now, what do you think would happen if two cars came to that bridge at the same time going opposite directions? Well, I’ll tell you what *wouldn’t* happen: a collision. That’s the thinking in **Ephesians 5:21**. Everybody everywhere submit to each other. And if everybody submits to everybody, there will be no collisions and there will be peace and joy.

Then in **Ephesians 5:22**, Paul narrows down the scope a bit. He has been talking to the church as a whole. Here he begins to talk about families specifically but it still is in context of the family of God. In other words, this is Paul’s words for married women but they also apply to the bride of Christ which is the church. And what is the church? It’s not just Christ Fellowship. It is the global church, the people who are true believers in and followers of Jesus. So, in **verse 22**, Paul says that wives are to submit to their husbands. I’m not going to spend a long time on this and I’m not going to debate you after the service if you have a problem with this. I have preached on this before and we have talked about this many times and ladies, if you have a problem submitting to your husband then either your theology is wrong or your husband is wrong, or both. But for women who have husbands who are following Jesus and love Jesus and want their lives to please Jesus, then submission is no big deal. And it’s no big deal because that is the parameter that Paul gives. Women, voluntarily place yourself under your husband. He says that in one sentence. And then in a whole bunch of other sentences, Paul says that men should love their husbands like Jesus loves the church.

Now, how does Jesus love the church? Well, first off, He died for it. He gave His own life for it. He traded His sinless, perfect, blameless life for our sinful, nasty, dirty life. He died on the cross so He could be with us forever. Then He went back to Heaven to prepare a place for us to live there in Heaven but while He is gone, He has sent His Holy Spirit to live with us here. Not only that, but Paul said that He is cleansing us by the washing with water through the word. Do you see that in **verse 26**? The word is the word of God which is the Bible. The Bible is like soap for our lives. It cleans us up like we should be if we will just use it. And it is man’s responsibility to use the word of God to

make sure that nothing bad happens to his wife. A man should protect his wife from anything that would hurt her mentally, physically or spiritually and what is the worst thing that can happen to any of us? Sin. Sin is the worst thing that can happen to us and we are cleansed from sin by the truth that we read in scripture. So, whose responsibility is it to read the Bible in the home and make sure the family goes to church every week? It's the husband's responsibility. Men, if you truly love your wife as Christ loves us, then you will be the spiritual leader of your house. That's God's plan and when you are loving her like Christ loves us, it is easy for her to place herself under your authority.

But none of this is going to happen without the right motivation and that leads us to the other word that we so often misunderstand. I said there were two words in this passage that are often misunderstood. The first one is "submit" and the other one is "love." *"But Todd, we all know what love is. We all love each other. We love God. We love Christ Fellowship. We love peanut butter. We love the Cowboys."* Well, some of you do. But that doesn't mean you understand love. Love is a choice you have to make every day. Now, you know I'm not talking about all the other kinds of love. This church has talked about agape love lots of times so, again, I'm not going to spend much time on that. But we all often need a reminder of what agape love is. The thing is, even unbelievers can understand agape love even if they don't call it that. [Elizabeth Earnshaw](#), who, as far as I know is not a professing Christian, but is a licensed marriage and family therapist from Philadelphia, explains that [lasting love](#) requires conscious decision-making. She said in the online magazine PsychToday that *"Hormones may continue making you feel sexually attracted to your partner, for example, but that's different than love. As your relationship grows, your hormones will no longer be the driver of the feelings,"* she says. *"This means you need to be the driver of the feelings. You do this by actively choosing to be a loving partner."* ([Here's Why Love Is a Choice and a Decision](#)) Now, knowing about love and how to define it is way different and way less difficult than actually doing it, right? If you have been married for any length of time, you know that. But love is not something you fall into. If you could fall into agape love, you could fall out of it. Agape love is a choice. It is tuning the radio into one station and pulling the knob off. And doing it every day. Agape love is wanting the best for the other person. Agape love is loving someone even if they don't love you. Even if they tell you they don't love you. Even if they show you they don't love you. Even when they mistreat you and take things from you. Agape love is a choice you make that is not affected by the actions of the person you choose to love.

Todd, c'mon now. That's too much to ask. Right? Well, how do you think Paul would respond to that? If you asked the Apostle Paul, how is it possible to love with agape love, how do you think he would respond? I think he would quote **verse 32**. *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.* You want an example? You want motivation? You want a reason? Jesus is all that. It sounds simplistic but it's truth.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, including love like he does. I can love like Jesus does if I submit to Him. You can submit to your husband if your husband submits to Christ. We can submit to each other if we love each other with agape love. See how God made all that work? It's like He knew what He was doing or something, isn't it? And when we do all that, we can have joy and peace and be unified in our blood families and our church families. Sounds like a pretty good deal to me. Let's ask God to help us do that right now. Lord, we come to you today to ask big things but we ask a big God. We ask that you would help us to love each other like you love us. We ask for your strength and your grace to help us do the impossible but we know that all things are possible to those that believe. And Lord, we believe. Help our unbelief and help us to love like you do. Remember that Paul was writing to the church. He was writing to believers. None of this is possible without a relationship with God through His Son Jesus. Do you have that? I want to give you that invitation right now. Just ask God to forgive you of all your sins. Ask Him to come into your life and change you from the inside out. Believe in Him as the only way to Heaven. Do it right now as the music plays.