

## Ephesians 5:21-31

What do you think of when you hear the word **moonshine**? Your **first** thought might be the **alcoholic product** made in the **still** of an old **bootlegger** out in the hills of Kentucky or Tennessee. That's **not** the thought I want you to **focus** on. Instead, I'd like you to think about the **rays** which come from the **moon** - the **moonshine**. The moon actually has **no** light of its **own**, but rather, it **reflects** the light of the **sun**. And as Christians, we are very much **like** the moon. We have no light of our **own**, but the light of **Jesus** shines in our lives. This is especially true in the relationship of **marriage**. The relationship between husband and wife is meant to **mirror** the relationship **God** has with **us** through His Son, **Jesus Christ**. We don't have the right to **decide** on our **own** what marriage **is**, or how we are to **live** as husband and wife. God has already **determined** that **for** us. So, we **receive** the gift of marriage **as God created it**, and we carry out our roles as husband and wife in a way that reflects the love of **Jesus** for His **Church**. With that in mind, we'll consider the theme, **Reflect God's Light In Your Marriage**. This theme allows us to take a look at the roles of both **husbands** and **wives** as we have received those roles from **God**, through the Apostle **Paul**.

First of all, Paul addresses Christian **wives**. He wrote, "*Wives, **submit** to your husbands as to the Lord.*" The word **submit** generally raises a few eyebrows in our world today. In fact, many Christian churches have actually **removed** that word from their **marriage** ceremonies. We are **not** among them, because **submission** is something which is important for **all** believers. Therefore, it's important for us to make sure that we know what God actually **means** by the word **submit**. In the opening words of our text Paul wrote to **all** believers, "***Submit** to **one another** out of reverence for **Christ**.*" The word **submit** means to willingly place yourself **under** another person's authority, in order to bring about **good** for that person. Paul told the **Philippians**, "*Do nothing out of selfish **ambition** or vain **conceit**, but in **humility** consider others **better** than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your **own** interests, but to the interests of **others**.*" God wants **every** member of His Church to have a **humble, serving** attitude toward others, out of reverence for **Christ**. Our Lord Jesus, the mighty Son of God, **humbled** Himself throughout the days of His earthly life. He was born in a **barn**, He didn't have a **home** to call His own, He washed the **feet** of His disciples, and the very next day in **total** submission, He **suffered** unthinkable **cruelties**, and then even gave up His **life** on the **cross**, to save us

from our sins. So, out of **reverence** for Jesus and **His** acts of **submission**, we are to **submit** to **one another**.

Paul then goes on to direct **wives** to apply this way of living toward their **husbands**. He wrote, “*Wives, **submit** to your husbands as 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 **Savior**. Now as the **church** submits to **Christ**, so also **wives** should submit to their **husbands** in everything.*” Christ is the **head** of the Church. He purchased us to be His own by shedding His blood on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. He is the Lord who **guides** and **directs** our Christian lives through His Word. The Church of believers **submits** to Jesus. We say to Him, “*Speak, Lord, your servant is **listening**.*” We pray, “Lord, take my hand and **lead** me upon life’s way.” In the same way that the **Church** submits to **Christ** and follows His loving leadership, so **wives** are to submit to the loving leadership of their **husbands**.

**Wives**, your husband occupies a high position from God. He has called him to be your **head**, to **lead** your marriage, to **guide** and **direct** you as Christ guides and directs the **Church**. And as the Church **submits** to Christ, you are to submit to your husband in everything. You already willingly follow the leadership of **Jesus**. Now take that same attitude and extend it to your **husband**. Receive his leadership **gladly** and **willingly**.

That’s **not** the advice you will get **from** the **world**. The world would have you think that **submission** means you have lost your **dignity**. But that’s **not** actually true. Jesus **submitted** to His heavenly Father, and that **submission** didn’t **demean** him **at all**. In fact, as a **result** of His Son’s **obedience**, God **exalted** Jesus to the **highest** position. What is a wife really **saying** when she **submits** to her husband? The sinful nature within **men** would say, “She says I can **boss her around**.” But the LORD says, “**No**, that’s not it at all.” **Unbelievers** want to exert their **authority** over others, but Jesus says that is **not** to be the case with **us**, His **children**. Instead He says, “*Whoever wants to be **great** among you must be your **servant** ... For the **Son of Man** did not come to **be served**, but to **serve**, and to **give his life** as a **ransom** for many.*” So, what a Christian wife who submits to her husband is **saying**, is, “I am a humble **servant** of Jesus Christ, my Savior. I **belong** to Him and live to **serve** and **honor** Him. And **part** of my service and honor to **Jesus** is to willingly and humbly serve my **husband**, whom Jesus has **given** to me.”

Next, Paul addresses Christian **husbands**. He writes, “*Husbands love your wives, just as **Christ** loved the church.*” The word for **love** that Paul uses here does not refer to love as **affection**, or as the passionate **romantic** love **movies** are made of. He refers to **agape** love, a love that is **unselfish** and willing to **serve** for the **good** of another, with **no strings** attached. That’s the love which **Jesus** has shown toward **us**. “*Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, to make her **holy, cleansing** her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a **radiant** church, without **stain** or **wrinkle** or any other **blemish**, but **holy** and **blameless**.*” The love of Jesus is truly **wonderful**. He saw us in our **sinful** condition - in our **rags**, and our **rebellion**. We were **dead, blind, enemies** of God, who deserved nothing but everlasting **shame** and **condemnation**. But Jesus **loved** us and **gave Himself** for us. He took the **blame** for **our** sins, and suffered on the cross the **shame** and **agony** which **we deserved**. Jesus **sacrificed** Himself for **us**, and He **did** it for a **purpose**, so that we would become His holy **bride**. His **death** removed the **guilt** of our sins. Through Holy Baptism, Jesus made us a new creation. We were **washed**, and **cleansed**, and **sanctified**, so that not a single **stain** of sin remains on us. We are completely **holy** in God’s sight, because Jesus has **forgiven** of **all** our sins, We are 100% **pure** in God’s sight, because when God looks at us as His **forgiven** children, He sees **Jesus**, the spotless Lamb of God **Himself**. Jesus Has prepared us for the Last Day, when He will take us, His beloved **bride**, into the banquet hall of **heaven** for a wedding celebration that has **no end**.

**Husbands**, let this love of Christ be the **pattern** for your love toward your wife. Paul continues, “*In this same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the Church - for we are members of his body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’*” With these words Paul reminds husbands of the very **nature** of marriage - that in marriage, the **two** become **one**. Marriage is an **intimate** relationship. A man **leaves** his parental home, and together with his **wife** forms a new **family** - a family to **love** and to **cherish**, without expecting **anything** in return.

**Jesus** is our **pattern**. He **feeds** and **cares** for His Church. He gives us His Word and Sacrament to **feast** on, so our faith can be **healthy**, and we can abound in **hope**. Paul writes, “*We are members of Christ’s body. This is*

*a profound mystery.*” What he means is that the Bible reveals something to us about marriage that is so **wonderful**, that no human mind could ever **conceive** it. He’s talking about how the relationship of a **husband** to his **wife** corresponds to the relationship of **Christ** to His **Church**. Jesus dearly **loves** His Church, and has joined her to Himself. That same love and closeness is to be **reflected** in the love and closeness of a husband toward his wife.

What are husbands **saying** who love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and who care for **their** needs as much as their **own**? The **world** would say, “He’s not a **real** man. She’s got that guy wrapped around her little finger.” But **Jesus** is a real man. And Jesus was willing to **totally** give Himself, even to the point of **death**, in order to fulfill the needs of His **bride**, the **Church**. So, what a husband is **saying** when he lives to take care of all of his wife’s needs, is that he is reflecting the light of **Jesus**, the perfect Son of God. Because Jesus **loved** us and **gave Himself** for us, Christian husbands **love** their wives, even when they are unlovable.

Maybe that sounds a little bit **crazy**. Maybe that makes Christian husbands and wives sound like **lunatics**. Well, **lunatic** is a word in our dictionary which is used to describe someone who is acting very **strangely**. It comes from the Latin word for **moon** - **luna**, and it goes back to the ancient thought that **moonbeams** cause people to act **strangely**. According to the standards of this world, **Christians** act **strangely**. So, the world thinks we are **lunatics**. They think that wives who **submit** to their husbands out of love for Jesus, and husbands who **love** their wives with an **unselfish** sacrificial love are **lunatics**. But we know that our strange behavior has **nothing** to do with the **moon**. Rather, it’s all about the **son** - the Son of **God**, Jesus Christ. As Christians we are **going** to act **differently** from those who **do not** know Jesus, because we are reflecting **His** love - a love that moved Jesus to **submit** to His heavenly Father, and a love which moved Him to **give Himself** into death, to rescue us from our sins. And if that’s being **crazy**, then I’m **all in**, and I hope **you** are too. Amen.