

Introduction

We can discern the following seven relationships given in the passage with the “as-so” or “in the same way” language:

- 22 **As** wives submit to the Lord, **so** they are to submit to their husbands.
- 23 **As** Christ is the head of the Church, **so** husbands to their wives.
- 24 **As** Church is subject to Christ, **so** wives to their husbands.
- 25 **As** Christ loved and gave Himself for the Church, **so** husbands to their wives.
- 28 **As** husbands love their own bodies, **so** they are to love their wives.
- 29 **As** Christ nourishes and cherishes His own body, **so** husbands to their wives.
- 33 **As** the husband loves himself, **so** he must love his wife.

Instructions for Wives Regarding Headship and Submission, vv. 22-24

1. Wives are to submit themselves to their own husbands. This means that they subject or subordinate themselves to their husbands. They are to obey and recognize the ordered structure of the home and show respect to the husband. This is the middle voice, indicating that it is not forced from the outside but must be voluntarily rendered from within oneself (see 1 Peter 3:1).
2. How? “As to the Lord.” The word “as” indicates that the submission is to be “in the same way.” There is a clear parallel here between the wife’s behavior toward her Savior and toward her husband. If you wouldn’t think of acting toward Christ in a certain way, then you better not also toward your husband! As she submits to her husband, she is actually demonstrating her submission to Christ as well.
3. Why? The husband has been placed as the head of the wife, v. 23.
 - a. There is a parallel relationship seen in Christ’s relationship to the Church. This comes from the headship relationship that is established in both cases by God.
 - b. In the home, God has placed the husband as the head (1 Cor. 11:3).
 - c. In the Church, God has placed Christ as the head of Church (Eph. 1:22-23). Christ is also the Savior of the Church (the body).
4. Application, v. 24. In the same way that the Church is subject to her head, Christ, wives ought to mirror this in their relationship with their husbands. This is simply the way that God has made headship relationships to work.

Instructions for Husbands Regarding Oneness and Love, vv. 25-32

1. Husbands are to love their wives, v. 25a. This means that they will show them affectionate concern and respect; they will give of themselves for their wives, they will treat her with honor and care as the “weaker vessel” (1 Peter 3:7), not as property. Remember that Christianity has lifted the woman out of the property-type status that she had in a lot of cultures.
2. How? “Just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself.” vv. 25b-27
 - a. Christ’s self-sacrifice was not just a chivalrous, “save the women and children first” kind of thing. It was with the purpose of setting the Church apart to Himself and washing her from sin. This is salvation!
 - b. Note the central place of the Word of God in salvation – it is the means by which sanctification and cleansing “with the washing of water” occurs. See James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Thess. 2:13, Rom. 10:13-15 for more on the central place of the Bible in salvation. Apart from it, no one can be saved. Of course, it may not be written in a certain language as of yet, but the preacher at least has to bring the content of the Word to the attention of his hearers.
 - c. Ultimately, the purpose is that the Church stand before Christ without spot, wrinkle, or blemish, i.e. completely holy.

- d. The husband’s love for his wife likewise must have something to do with her spiritual progress. Part of his love is that he is responsible to make an environment conducive to her spiritual growth. To not do so is not love.
3. How? “As their own bodies.” vv. 28-29a.
 - a. Why? A husband’s love for his wife must be on part with his love for himself. This is the concept of oneness (see 5:31). He loves her as himself because she is part of him!
 - b. It would be strange for someone to hate his own flesh. As strange as that is, it is likewise strange for a man who does not love his wife, who is one with him. Rather as he nourishes and loves himself, he should also his wife because she is a part of him now.
4. Illustration: Christ loves His body, the Church. vv. 29b-32
 - a. Christ nourishes and cherishes his body, showing how men should do so for their wives. Note that Jesus Christ does that for you, dear believer, YOU!
 - b. Explanation: The quote of Gen. 2:24 and “two shall become one flesh” idea is at the very heart of marriage. Eve was “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” and so when marriage occurs, two become one like Adam and Eve were one. This is a powerful two-in-one concept. But here it is used to illustrate the idea of two-becoming-one with respect to Christ and the Church.
 - c. How Christ and people can be distinct-yet-one is, Paul says, a difficult and profound thing to understand. It is a mystery.
 1. As earlier in Ephesians, a mystery is a secret that only God knows, and which He must reveal. The one body of Jews and Gentiles was such a mystery—unknown from ages past but now made known to men. Here we have a mystery but of a different content.
 2. How do we know this mystery speaks of Christ and the Church? Paul says he is so speaking in the second half of verse 32. Also, the “nevertheless” in v. 33 indicates that he is returning to the subject of marriage itself.
 3. Gen. 2:24 is a human illustration of the one-from-two concept, of which concept Christ’s union with the Church is the highest type.

Conclusion, v. 33

Whatever is mysterious about these “oneness” relationships, it is not mysterious at all that the husband must love his wife as himself and the wife must respect her husband. These are commands! They must be done.

This all may sound like a tall order. Indeed it is, but it is possible through the walk that is filled with the Spirit (5:18) and the walk that is wise (5:15).

Questions and Answers

Q: What is the mystery?

A: The union of Christ and the church.

Q: What is the connection between marriage and Christ’s relation to the Church?

A: Human marriage is an illustration of Christ’s union with the Church. It is effective as such because it is a two-to-one relationship like what Paul’s conveying with regard to Christ and the Church.

Q: What does it teach wives regarding day-to-day operations in marriage?

A: Submit to their husbands.

Q: What does it teach husbands regarding day-to-day operations in marriage?

A: Love their wives.

Q: What does it teach us about Christ’s activity for the Church?

A: He is its head; He loved the church, gave himself for her, in order to sanctify, cleanse, and present it to Himself without spot, wrinkle, or blemish, so that she would be holy.