

# Family Series 2023 #4 – What is a Wife?

## The Power and Glory of Submission in Covenant – *Eph 5:22-24, 31-33*

**Introduction** – “What is a woman?” When that question cannot be answered out-loud, in public, straight from the teachings of the One Who made the first woman, and without any embarrassment, then we have become Ichabod, the glory has departed. We will be a defeated and shamed culture. That culture cannot flourish; it will implode upon itself. Why? Because woman is the glory of man (1 Cor 11:7). We live in a day where words like female, feminine, wife, mother, homemaker, are considered ugly and demeaning. But we know that these words define what God created and when we reject those words and definitions, we turn into a world where a third of our young girls consider suicide. Our world has become a place where there is no woman and that is a terrible place for us to be, for when God looked down and saw the man on the sixth day, He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.”

This short series on family ends with the topic of what it means to be a wife. There needs to be a huge paradigm shift, a deep cultural repentance in the modern church regarding submission, honor, and obedience to the Lord. And wives play a crucial role in speaking to the church and then to the world in this.

**What is a Wife?** (vv31-32) – A wife is a woman who, of her own volition, joins herself to a particular man with vows of faithfulness and consummates those vows with a sexual union. Paul quotes Gen 2:24 because this is paradigmatic for all marriages, both in the purpose and the details. The details include one man and one woman for life, and the purpose is to fulfill the Cultural Mandate of filling and subduing the earth to the glory of God.

**The Twist of the Fall** – The biblical roles of husband and wife existed prior to the Fall which is why Gen 2:24 can be naturally inserted into this section of Ephesians. But, when Adam and Eve fell, it affected their relationship with God, with one another, and with creation. Eve was told that “your desire shall be for your husband and he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16). This “desire” is not a hope for a sweet, perfect relationship with one’s husband, which some feminists purport; the other use of this word in Gen 4:7 makes this clear. It is a “desire” to usurp his headship and to wrongly dominate. The marriage relationship was now going to be tough. And this is why Paul (and all pastors) have to preach, teach, and exhort husbands and wives to live according to God’s design.

**Submission, as to the Lord** (v22) – A Christian wife must first of all submit herself to the Lord and to His Word. A wife cannot obey Eph 5:22-24 without first obeying 5:18-21. She cannot live out Eph 4-6 without first believing Eph 1-3. She cannot “*walk worthy of the calling*” (Eph 4:1) unless she believes “*you were called*” (4:1).

Because she is to submit to the Lord first, it follows that her submission to her husband is never absolute. Because it is “*as to the Lord*,” there are times when a woman submissively declines to follow her husband and even goes to other authorities. However, it must be said that this is not the usual place where applying these verses is difficult.

**The Glory of Obedience** – Obedience to the Lord is always glorious. It was glorious when Abraham was willing to obey the Lord, even to the point of sacrificing his son (Gen 22:18, 26:4-5). Obedience to the Lord made Israel His treasured possession (Ex 19:5). As I said last sermon, getting married is not simply an option for men and women; it is an act of obedience, and there is much glory that comes upon the earth from that obedience. A wife is to obey her husband, imitating Sarah (1 Pet 5:5-6). A godly woman adorns herself with submissiveness to her own husband. And older women are to instruct the younger women in this (Titus 2:5). Jesus obeyed the Father and the glory of this obedience is the blessing of salvation to the nations. This obedience did not leave Jesus in the grave in humiliation either. His obedience led to His exaltation at the Father’s right hand (Phil 2:8-11). Wives are imitating Christ in their submission to their head and should do so as the crown/glory of her husband (Prov 12:4), trusting the Lord for great blessing and exaltation.

**Learning from the Older Women** (Titus 2:3-5) – Women are to learn wisdom from older women, and they can see from Paul what kinds of lessons to look for. The older women are first instructed themselves against any of their own temptations (they are to be “*reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things*,” – with an eye to admonish the younger women). Paul seems to be generalizing what kinds of temptations older women may need to remember to continue to mortify. Home-Centered (v4-5) – You can see in these verses and in Prov 31 that the wife is to have her priorities towards the home, which is different than saying that her ‘place’ is in the home. She is to learn great skills in dominion and management of the

home. She oversees the spending of the home budget (Prov 31:14), but she might also make decisions in the purchase and sale of property and goods (31:16, 24). She brings these things into the home to make the home a glorious place of feasting, rest and ministry (vv15, 20-21, 27-28). “*She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness*” (v26). The idea that this is not a real vocation (“*yes, but do you work?*”) is proof that this culture despises women and the ministry of a wife and mother.

**Husband-Centered** – Titus 2:4 reads literally “*husband-lovers*.” Eph 5:33 calls wives to respect their husbands. The word there is *phobos*, to fear or reverence. Together, this means more than not showing disrespect, although it does mean that. She is to have a positive display of admiration, honor, and reverence to and about her husband (“*Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons*.” – Songs 2:3). This verse continues, “*I sat down in his shade with great delight*” and goes on to describe the erotic love of husband and wife. Honoring her husband includes her responsiveness. She is to gladly receive his advances, both as a holy blessing (Heb 13:4), and as a protection for her and her husband (1 Cor 7:3-4). “*I am my beloved’s and his desire is toward me*” (Songs 7:10).

**Children-Centered** – The fruit of such husband-loving is, naturally and regularly, children. Titus 2:4 also reads literally “*children-lovers*.” And this means, that as God grants the opportunity for children, her day-to-day activities will be filled with them. These are your disciples; this is your ministry. These are the ones God has given you (and your husband) in that cultural mandate to “*fill the earth*.”

When a culture despises life-bearers, life-givers, life-nurturers, and life-glorifiers, we become nothing more than cogs in a meaningless machine, empty of all glory and into nothing but chaos.

**Nevertheless...** - Returning and ending with v33. All this instruction declares that husbands and wives, by the God-ordained stations they have been placed, will have an inescapable impact on the building of a culture – beginning with their own children. Bitter, disrespectful and unsubmitive wives will produce a particular kind of church and culture. Abusive and angry husbands will destroy a grace-saturated, joyful and hopeful kingdom. But you have been brought out of such death-dealing natures. If you are in Christ, you have been granted new life in Jesus Christ. You have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and are able to be filled by Him with His Word so that, by grace alone, out of His overflowing life, you and your home will be conduits of radical resurrection, reformation, revival and renewal in this and future generations, and throughout the world to the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. Receive this grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9) today.

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