



## ***Wives & Husbands - Eph 5:21-6:9***

Jan 26 - Dave Navarro

### **INTRO**

In this passage, Paul lays down expectations for wives, children, and slaves. In doing so, he says some controversial things around marriage and slavery. How do we read a passage like this, and how do we live it out today?

***Open with prayer<sup>1</sup>, then read Eph 5:21-6:9 together as a group. Consider dividing it by paragraph. It's helpful to all use the same Bible translation. SLC preaches from the NLT.***

***Agree together that your discussion around the role of both genders will be sensitive, and you will posture yourselves as humble learners.***

### **SERMON RECAP**

1. Intro: Recap last week
  - a. Affirm slavery, disregard Bible, or READ MORE DEEPLY.
  - b. Reading the Bible more deeply
    - i. 1st Century or Bust
    - ii. Someone Else's Mail
    - iii. Context Matters
  - c. Today: Wives and Husbands
2. Preface
  - a. Today: Gender roles in MARRIAGE, not CHURCH LEADERSHIP. (But that's coming in 1 Timothy.)
  - b. A very tender subject - our own marriages and backgrounds.
  - c. Acknowledge singles.
3. Wives (5:21-24)

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<sup>1</sup> Some groups prefer to begin with a longer time of sharing and prayer. This is a good instinct and ensures that prayer time doesn't get shortened by time constraints.



- a. Remember: household code, and Christians a powerless minority.
  - b. Ephesian wives ALREADY forced to submit by Greco-Roman society. Why would Paul tell them to submit? Actually, he kind of doesn't.
  - c. V21-22 one long sentence. The WIVES clause is an illustration of the main idea, which is "submit to one another." Paul just acknowledging that the wives already submit.
  - d. (In fact, the second "submit" isn't there in the Greek.)
  - e. They're already submitting, but Paul REDEEMS their submission. Not "submit because you're a woman," but "submit *as to the Lord*."
4. Husbands (5:25-30)
- a. Sexual and reproductive ethics in Ephesus. Promiscuity. Wives' purpose was just functional - to bear legitimate heirs.
  - b. This is the first time in the ancient literature that husbands are instructed to love (*agapeo*) their wives. Paul is INTRODUCING the idea of love in a marriage.
  - c. Sacrificial, unconditional love isn't optional for a Christian marriage.
  - d. The husbands have the power in Ephesian society. Paul calls them to use that power to serve. Not surprising given Jesus' teaching in Mark 10:42-45.
5. Marriages That Preach (5:31-33)
- a. Intertwined discussion about HUSBAND/WIFE relationship and CHRIST/CHURCH relationship.
  - b. The big idea: Christian marriages embody and *prove* the *agape* love that God offers through Christ.
6. Takeaways
- a. Mutual marriages. No dominance.
  - b. No abuse
  - c. Love is spiritual. Your romance with your spouse is part of your devotion to Jesus.

## BONUS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*If you're covering 2 sermons in 1 Life Group meeting, skip to the Core Discussion Questions to save time. Otherwise, start here.*

1. Our Sunday teachings didn't cover Eph 6:1-4, so take some time in your group to work through it using the following instructions.
2. Read the following background from the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*:



- a. **6:1 Children, obey your parents.** Household codes (see note on 5:21-6:9) instructed fathers (see note on v. 4) how to govern their minor children, but did not normally address the children themselves. Nevertheless, Jewish and Greco-Roman writers unanimously agreed that children needed to honor their parents, and, at least till they grew up, needed to obey them as well. Many Jewish teachers considered the Biblical injunction to honor parents (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16) the greatest commandment. They also felt this meant not shaming them by one's behavior (cf. Dt 21:18-21). It should go without saying that obedience to parents is a general principle not applicable to participation in sin (cf., e.g., Nu 26:9-11; 1Sa 19:11; 20:32).
  - b. **6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children.** Household codes instructed fathers how to govern their minor children. Fathers were responsible for their children's education, but this could include beatings (both from the father and from teachers). A minority of teachers, however, warned against beatings and excessive discipline, and Paul here would likely agree. *exasperate*. May suggest deliberate provocation. *bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*. Certainly Paul would also share the unanimous sentiments of ancient Jews, Christians and Egyptians against the widespread Greek practices of abandoning babies, aborting them in the womb, or, sometimes when malformed, killing them. Abandoned babies who were not retrieved by others—usually to be reared as slaves—were often eaten by vultures or dogs.
3. Remember our three principles for reading the Bible more deeply (1st century or bust; someone else's mail; context matters).
    - a. Summarize in your own words exactly what Paul was asking of the Ephesian Christians. What it look like for the Ephesian Christians to live out this text?
    - b. What principles from this section might apply to Christians in Canada in 2020?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Eph 5:21-33 aloud as a group.
2. Compare Bibles within your group. Which Bibles have V21 separated from this section? Which Bibles have it included? Why is it important that V21 is included in this section?
3. What are some ways this passage could justify abuse or unhealthy dynamics in marriage? How do we guard against this misinterpretation?
4. V23 states, "A husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church."
  - a. Read Eph 4:15-16 and 5:25-30. In these passages, what does it look like for Jesus to be the "head" of the church? What kinds of activities does Jesus undertake as "head"?



- b. In stating that a husband is the “head,” do you think Paul was describing the reality of society in Ephesus, or describing a reality that was true for all time, or both?
5. Recalling the cultural discussions from the last 2 Sundays, describe the ways that power was used in Greco-Roman society.
  - a. What is Christianity’s alternative vision of power dynamics? (Remember Mark 10:42-45.)
  - b. Where do we see that vision in 5:21-6:9?

## ACT & PRAY

1. As a group, share areas of praise and need. Write them down so you can be praying for them during the week.
2. Remind yourselves of your Adopt-a-Missionary, and any prayer requests you’ve seen from them.
3. Pray for Alpha, which starts Tuesday!
4. Spend time praying, either all together, or in smaller groups. Feel free to experiment with silent prayer, written prayer, etc.

