

Notes: *The Servant Head* (Eph. 5:25-33)

Intro: Christians must be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” In other words, walking by faith in God’s Word (cf. Col. 3:16), they must be increasingly “filled” with the life of Christ and presence of God (Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13). Putting of the ways of thinking and behaving that correspond to the old unbelieving life and putting on those which correspond to the new, Christians must become increasingly Christlike. In a marital relationship, the wife must imitate the body of Christ, the church, by submitting to her husband as the church submits to Christ the head. But the husband must imitate the head of the body, which is Christ, by loving his wife as Christ loves the church. But what does biblical headship involve in practical terms? We must consider three aspects.

#1: The Priority of Headship (25). If the word which characterizes the wife’s duty is submit, the word characterizing the husband’s is “love.” Husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the church is the great priority of headship in marriage. The term “love” raises the question “what does it mean for a husband to love his wife?” As a starting place note that “love” is used in an active sense. It is a duty husbands must perform. That’s significant since our culture often refers to love only in a passive sense--in a way that is impossible to create by an act of the will. We say “I fell in love,” or “Zing went the strings of my heart.” Sproul: “Love in the world’s view is something that *happens* to me, not something I can conjure by shutting my eyes, taking a deep breath, and making a decision.” But Paul means something radically different from saying that husbands should love only when they “feel” like it. He uses “love” more as a verb than a noun. It has more to do with acting than feeling. Christ loved the church not simply with his affections engaged but by giving “himself up for her.” At the cross our Savior took the initiative in handing himself over to death for the church he loves. He made the supreme sacrifice. He gave everything he had. That kind of love has two applications for husbands: Headship is not self-serving. Though many in the church deny it, when Paul says that the husband is the “head of the wife” he does mean that the husband has assumed the place of authority and leadership in the relationship. We know this is true since Paul compares the husband’s headship in marriage to Christ’s in the church. Women, choose your mate wisely! If a husband is dictatorial and domineering let him learn from the love of his Savior who said, “I came not to be served but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many.” More common, however, is not headship by domination but by abdication. Many use headship as an excuse for passivity, refusing to expend the effort to do anything responsible in their marriages. The opposite of love is not hate but indifference. Headship is self-sacrificing. Christ “gave himself up.” How much patience does Christ have with his bride, the church? How often does he endure loss of affection and even rebellion? Is there any problem that a man could possibly have with his wife that Christ hasn’t had with the church? Yet he forebears in sacrificial love! Sproul: “Christ never regards his bride with a casual interest or considers her of secondary importance...He gives himself without reservation. What woman would mind submitting to that kind of love?”

#2: The Purpose of Headship (26-27). Christ gave himself for the purpose of the church’s personal growth and spiritual beauty. Nothing speaks more eloquently about how Christ cherishes and supports his bride. Servant headship has two great purposes: The blessing of the wife. The husband is called to help his wife apprehend the Lord’s grace in her life. Christ is devoted to the dignity of his bride and similarly the husband must use his authority to establish

his wife in the fullness of her dignity. After marriage, the greatest influence on the development of the wife's character is the husband. When a man complains that his wife has changed for the worse, he should look in the mirror and say; "You are the culprit." He should make sure the Word of God is honored in the home and that worship is not neglected. Christ seeks to make his bride glorious. Husband, affirm your wife's internal and external beauty! Obey vs. 31, leave all others to cleave to your wife, including parents. Insist that your children honor their mother. Model it for them. The benefit of the husband (31, cf. Gen. 2:24). As in the case of neglecting one's body, the man who neglects his wife hates himself. Diminish your wife and you deprive yourself of support only she can give you.

#3: The Power for Headship. Where does the power for "active" love come from? God's grace! Remember: You are loved. God asks you to show your bride the love he has shown you as Christ's bride. Cleansed by Christ's blood (1 Jn. 1:7). Acknowledge your sins to your wife and even if her forgiveness is not immediate reckon them covered by Christ's blood. You are alive. You have the Spirit and Christ's resurrection life in you. You are a new creation in Christ, put off the old ways and put on the new! God is working in you by his Spirit to will and do his good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Christ gave himself for you, give yourself for him by giving yourself for your wife.

Recommended Readings: *The Intimate Marriage* by R. C. Sproul and *Each For The Other* by Bryan Chapell.