

## Mystery of the Marriage of Church Age Believers: Right Man-Right Woman, Eph 5:31-33: Marriage Designed to Reflect Relationship between Christ & His Church

On the other hand, the wife is required to show deference and respect for her husband as she also does to the Lord. She willingly submits to both her husband and to the Lord because she has a trust and admiration based on their demonstrated integrity.

In the Christian institution of marriage, the husband is commissioned to give a testimony to the world of the enduring devotion of Christ toward His Church. The wife, in turn, is a testimony to the world of the respect paid by the Church to its eternal Savior, Jesus Christ.

Paul summarizes the roles of the husband and wife in marriage in:

**Ephesians 5:31** - For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

**v. 32** - This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

**v. 33** - Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

This passage emphasizes the doctrine of right man-right woman. Verse 33 is intended for all men, indicated by the nominative masculine *plural* of the pronoun **σὺ, su**, translated “you” but it is also followed by the preposition **κατά, kata** plus the *singular* cardinal number **εἰς, heis**. Together this is translated “Therefore, let each one of you individually.”

Next comes the present active imperative of the verb **ἀγαπάω, agapaō**: to love.

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| present:    | Customary: denotes that which habitually occurs, or may be reasonably expected to occur.   |
| active:     | The husband is to produce the action of the verb by habitually loving his wife.  |
| imperative: | Command: the husband is under divine mandate to love his wife as Jesus Christ loves the Church. With the present tense the force generally is to command the action as an ongoing process. |

The word “wife” is the feminine singular of the noun **γυνή**, **gunē** and is the direct object of the verb *agapaō* and is translated “be loving his own wife.” Following is the phrase **ὡς ἑαυτοῦ**, **hōs heautou**: “as himself.” The first half of the verse reads like this:

**Ephesians 5:33a** - Therefore, let each one of you individually habitually and in an ongoing manner be loving his own wife as himself ...

The wife is addressed next, introduced by the connective conjunction **δέ**, **de** followed by the definite article **ἡ**, **hē** and the second use of the noun **γυνή**, **gunē** translated “and the wife.”

However, since the conjunction *de* is connective it relates the wife back to the husband and should really be translated “and *his* wife.” The clause continues with the present middle subjunctive of the verb:

**φοβέω**, **phobeō** - The root meaning is fear, but it came to represent a person’s orientation to authority and defined by concepts such as “respect, honor, reverence, admiration, esteem, consideration, and partiality” all expressed through responding love.

present: Customary: denotes that which habitually occurs, or may be reasonably expected to occur between right man and right woman.

middle: Indirect: stresses the agent as producing the action rather than participating in the results.

subjunctive: Potential: this is a result clause, so noted by the imperatival conjunction **ἵνα**, **hina**. The subjunctive mood is rarely used after **ἵνα** (*hina*) with the force of a positive command. The subjunctive is used for volitional notions quite frequently, in particular as a hortatory subjunctive and prohibitive subjunctive. In dependent clauses (such as after **ἵνα**), the subjunctive commonly has a volitional flavor to it.<sup>1</sup> The potentiality of fulfillment is indicated by the hortatory concept of “let”: “... and let his wife be sure that she respects (*phobeō*) her husband.”

NOTE: This is a command but the potential subjunctive stresses the requirement for this to be a willing response from the wife’s free will choice.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 476; 463.

Therefore, this potential subjunctive leaves open the question as to whether the wife is going to be able to fulfill the command or not. To do so is contingent upon three factors:

- 1) That she be married to her right man. Since she has a husband, whether he is her right man or a wrong man does not affect the command to respect him.
- 2) Compliance is easier if she is married to her right man. If she is married to a wrong man, then compliance is more difficult but the command still stands.
- 3) When a woman is married to her right man, and especially when both are believers, compliance with the command is dependent upon her spiritual growth and inventory of doctrinal ideas. Capacity to respect her husband and eventually to love him is based on doctrine in the soul.

The object of the wife's respect is said to be **τὸν ἀνὴρ, ton anēr**. The definite article *ton* serves as a possessive pronoun followed by *anēr*: "her husband."

From this exegesis we are able to get this expanded translation:

**Ephesians 5:33** - Therefore, let each one of you individually in an ongoing manner be habitually loving his own wife as himself, and let his wife be sure that she respects her husband."

The context of this passage is the marriage of two spirit-filled believers whose testimony to the world is the corporate relationship enjoyed by a right man with his right woman. The mystery, or the thing not revealed until the Church Age, is the relationship between the body of believers called the Church and their Savior, Jesus Christ.

The marriage of believers is designed to become a testimony to a lost and dying world about the relationship of Christ and the Church. The mystery of the marriage of right man to right woman is its corporate testimony of that relationship.

The husband represents Christ and His benevolent, loving attention and provision to His Church; the wife represents the Church and its respect, admiration, and partiality for Christ.

The mystery of the Church as the Bride of Christ is the subject of several passages and warrants mentioning here.

NOTE: The New Testament church is said to be "a virgin betrothed to Christ" in 2 Corinthians 11:2. Israel on the other hand is an adulterous wife who will be reunited with the Lord as His earthly wife in the Millennium. The church becomes the Bride of Christ in the Millennium as His heavenly bride.