



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:18b-25*

“...Be filled by the Spirit: <sup>19</sup> *speaking to one another...*, *singing & making music* with your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> *giving thanks* always...to God the Father...<sup>21</sup> *submitting* to one another in the fear of Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, (submit) to your husbands as to the Lord, <sup>23</sup> because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. [Eph. 5:18b-24 CSB]

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church & gave himself for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. <sup>27</sup> He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy & blameless. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands are to love their wives...” [Eph. 5:25-28a CSB] <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides & cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, <sup>30</sup> since we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> *‘For this reason a man will leave his father & mother & be joined to his wife & the two will become one flesh’.* <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ & the church. <sup>33</sup> To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, & the wife is to respect her husband. [Eph. 5:28-33 CSB]

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. <sup>2</sup> *‘Honor your father & mother,’* which is the 1st commandment with a promise, <sup>3</sup> *‘so that it may go well with you & that you may have a long life in the land.’* <sup>4</sup> Fathers,

don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training & instruction of the Lord. [Eph. 6:1-4 CSB]

<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as you would Christ. <sup>6</sup> Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord. <sup>9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves the same way, without threatening them, because you know that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. [Eph. 6:5-9 CSB]

## 1. Submission (Gk. *hypotasso*) Revisited

- a. An unmistakable proof of being filled by the spirit (Eph. 5:18, 21-22)
  - a. <sup>18</sup> Be filled by the Spirit...<sup>21</sup> *submitting* to one another...<sup>22</sup> Wives, (submit) to your husbands as to the Lord" (5:18-22)
  - b. "[Submission] is a phrase too *often neglected*...It names a test of spirituality which Christians *too seldom apply*...Many persons feel that shouts of 'hallelujah' & the utterance of...'unknown tongues' are proofs of being 'filled with the Spirit.'...Submission to our fellow Christians...[is an] *unmistakable proof* of the Spirit's power." [Charles Erdman, *Ephesians*, p. 106]
- b. It results in joy!
  - "Submission is a matter of the heart, which doesn't mean it doesn't include actions; it's a reforming & reshaping of our heart so that internally we can see the goodness of not always getting my own way. And the *result of submission should be joy*, not resentment or bitterness." (Richard Foster, *Renovare Podcast*, 118)
- c. Mutual—"submitting to one another" (Eph. 5:21a)
  - "'One another' *turns a one-way relationship of power & superiority into a mutual relationship of reciprocal deference*, where each seeks to promote the interests of the other. Thus, submission...[is] such that service & honor are continually exchanged." [John M. G. Barclay, *Paul & the Power of Grace*, p. 70]
- d. Voluntary
  - "The Biblical...concept of *hypotasso* involves a *voluntary attitude* towards those who legitimately exercise authority over, or responsibility for, an individual...This is *significantly different* from the cultural baggage of the English term submit, which seems to suggest the *surrender of oneself directly to the control of another*." (David B. Bell, "Submission & Its Conflicting Value Systems," in J. Gillespie (ed.) *Translating Values*, p. 92)
- e. It frees us from always having to have our own way (Mk. 8:34)
- f. In the Context of Christ & the Church
  - "The church is a major theme of Ephesians. It reaches its pinnacle in this passage [5:22-33]. In fact *the major focus of the passage is not on human marriage but on Christ's union with the church*. The passage [concerns] Christ's union with the church, which uses the household order as a point of departure." [John B. Polihill, *Paul & His Letters*, p. 371]
  - "One can ask... 'What does the text mean within the theological framework in which its stance about marriage is embedded, or how is the point about marriage informed by the theological framework?'... Ephesians 5:22-33 certainly supports such a view very strongly. To interpret any ethical statements about marriage without taking into account the theological framework of these statements would be completely against the flow of the text." [Volker Rabens, *Key Approaches to Biblical Ethics*, p. 53]

## 2. The Greco-Roman System in Place

- a. Hierarchical – Stats showing hierarchy/patriarchy – everything was for the benefit of him
- b. Greco-Roman Society – this is "the norm," not scandalous
  - "The parts of household management correspond to the persons who composed the household, & the complete household consists of slaves & freemen. Now we should begin by examining...the first & fewest possible parts of a family:...master & slave, husband & wife, father & children." (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1:3)

- “Of household management...there are 3 parts: one is the rule of a master over slaves...another of a father, & the third of a husband. A husband & father...rules over wife & children,...but the rule differs; the rule over his children being royal, & the rule over his wife is based on natural constitution. For although there may be exceptions...the male is by nature fitter for commands than the female...” (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1:12)

c. The state & the household

- “[...]n the Greco-Roman world...the household was viewed as *the foundation of the state*...proper household management was generally regarded as a matter of crucial social & political concern &...*any upsetting of the traditional hierarchical order* of the household could be considered a *potential threat to the order of society as a whole*.” (Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Vol. 42, Word Biblical Commentary, p. 358)
- “In [1st Century writings] there’s a constant appeal to submission because that’s *the way the ‘gods’ have created things*; it was *one’s station in life*. Not a single NT writer appeals to submission on that basis.” (R. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 117-18)

### 3. Jesus’ Counter-Cultural Submission (Phil. 2:5-7a)

- a. “Submission is an ethical theme that runs the gamut of the NT. *It’s a posture obligatory upon ‘all’ Christians: men as well as women, fathers as well as children, masters as well as slaves. We are commanded to live a life of submission because Jesus lived a life of submission not because we are at a particular place or station in life.*” (Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 117)

### 4. Paul’s Scandalous Household Codes – adopting but adapting what was in place – “redemptive movement”

- “God, in a pastoral sense, accommodates himself to meeting people & society where they are in their existing social ethic, and from there he *gently moves them with incremental steps towards something better.*” (William J. Webb, *JETS 48/2*, June 2005, pp. 331-49)

a. Addressing the parties traditionally subordinated as dignified & active participants (Eph. 5:22)

a. There is no verb in Eph. 5:22 (it’s implied from 5:21)—he’s filling out the portrait of mutual submission here

b. Addressing wives, children & slaves

- “What is striking is *the way Paul addresses people*. He first addresses the wife, then the husband. He addresses children first, then the father. He addresses slaves first, then masters. That’s not normal! *For Aristotle, the only one worth addressing is the patriarch*, because he is the ruler!” (Tim Mackie, *Classroom*)
- “The revolutionary thing about this teaching is that these people, to whom first-century culture afforded no choice at all, are addressed as free agents. Paul gave personal moral responsibility to those who had no legal or moral status in their culture. *He made decision-makers of people who were forbidden to make decisions.*” (R. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 118)
- “By addressing wives, children and slaves, Paul gives them *a level of dignity* which shows they are ‘*players in the game*’. He does this by naming them and by giving them *their own responsibilities.*” (Tim Mackie, *Classroom*) – an invitation to voluntarily engage vs. that’s what society or the ‘gods’ says you should do
- “Paul addresses wives directly, exhorting them *to participate fully & willingly in the new Humanity.*” (T. Gombis, *The Radical New Humanity*, p. 326)

b. Addressing the patriarch – radically undermining his ‘inherent male authority’ (Eph. 5:25)

a. The husband is called to become an agent of the Messiah’s dignifying love to all in his home

b. The husband’s self-giving love as submission

- “Some...will object that the command to the dominant partner *does not use the language of submission*. What we fail to see is *how much submission those commands demanded* of the dominant partner in his cultural setting. For a 1st-century husband, father, or master to obey Paul’s injunction would make a dramatic difference in his behavior...*the ‘sting’ of the teaching falls on the dominant partner.*” (R. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pp. 119)
- “If a husband loves his wife, he’ll *live in consideration of her needs*. He will be willing to give in to her. He’ll be free to regard her as more important than his own needs (Phil. 2:3).” (R. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 119)

### 5. Subtly Subverting Greco-Roman Household Codes

- “*The Ephesians code...introduces new attitudes implicitly meant to...subvert* exploitative elements of ancient household ethos...”—Elna Mouton

- “The [Household codes] in Ephesians...directly *confront and subvert the social structures of contemporary society*.” –Tim Gombis
- “*Contemporary household codes were given for the benefit of patriarchs & that they were advised in how to manage or control their households –wives included– for their own benefit...Paul subverts the contemporary notion that the ordering of the household should be for the benefit of the patriarch...when he sets in parallel the ‘headship’ of the husband in relation to his wife & that of Christ in relation to the church (Eph. 5:23). The headship of Christ is characterized by providing salvation for the church, recalling Christ giving himself to death for the salvation of the church. This is the kind of ‘headship’ Paul has in mind, so that those in the subordinate positions in the New Humanity do not exist for the comfort of those at the top. Rather, those who have authority or power are to use it for the good, protection, and nurture of those subordinate to them.*” (T. Gombis, *Radical New Humanity*, p. 326)
- “In the [Household code] in Ephesians Paul[’s]...exhortations are radical in that they directly *confront and subvert the social structures of contemporary society*.” [Tim Gombis, “*Radical New Humanity: Function of the Haustafel in Ephesians*,” JETS, Vol. 48/2 (June 2005) p. 330]
- “While *the Ephesians code* does not explicitly do away with traditional hierarchical structures, it rather *introduces new attitudes implicitly meant to confront and subvert* exploitative elements of ancient household ethos...” [Elna Mouton, “Faithful Discipleship & Responsible Citizenship? ... Eph. 5:21-33,” p. 14]

## 6. Application:

- a. *Hupostasso* doesn’t mean a wife can be treated like a door mat or forced to do things
- b. The home is sometimes the greatest test to our spirituality
- c. Christ modeled submission in community (Jn. 13:13-15)