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**Ephesian 5:22-24**  
**Battle of the Sexes Part 1**  
**The Wives Responsibility**

A few weeks ago I preached a sermon that spoke of how your emotions can be a guide to whether or not you need to press into Jesus a little bit more.

Sometimes when our emotions get the best of us, emotions like fear, anxiety, anger, unforgiveness or frustration, we can use these as a barometer that we need more Jesus in our life.

A couple of the Psalms I quoted were...

**Psalm 16:11, “You reveal the path of life to me; in Your presence is abundant joy; in Your right hand are perpetual pleasures.”**

**Psalm 21:6, “Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of Your presence.”**

In Your presence is abundant joy and again, he was glad with the joy of Your, God’s presence.

The primary feeling of being in the presence of God should be one of joy.

Now, if you are like me, you have come to the realization that staying in the presence of God and experiencing the joy He has for you can be a challenge. Isn’t it true that most things in the world try and pull you out of the presence of the Lord? In fact, even our own flesh and of course Satan is constantly trying to put roadblocks in your way so that you won’t spend enough time with Jesus to cut through all the stuff the world binds you up with so you can experience the great, healing, joy-giving of the presence of the Lord.

I would also say not only this but there are times when, even though you press into Christ, His presence is not found in such a way that heightens your emotions, your joy.

What to do in cases like this. One of the things I have learned over the many years of my Christian walk is that it is hard to keep the fervency of my relationship with Christ going year after year. Even as a pastor it can be challenging. Would you agree, that it is hard to keep going, searching, studying, reading God's word, praying and keeping engaged in the church year after year?

It is isn't it? So what should a person do when they know keeping a relationship with Christ is so difficult? Shouldn't we always strive to do the right thing whether we feel it or not? Shouldn't we strive to read God's word, pray, attend church and the other disciplines of the Christian life.

I share this because we all know that being in and having an ongoing relationship with Christ takes work. If we want to keep growing, keep moving ahead in our growth as Christians there are certain disciplines, certain things that we really should be engaged in whether we feel the presence of Christ or not. We do them because we know it is the right thing to do. Agreed?

Now, I am setting you up for this next passage in Ephesians. I skipped over the middle of chapter 5 and the first part of chapter 6 because I knew the importance of understanding and learning how to put on your spiritual armor.

I knew it would be important to learn how to get strapped up in the armor God makes available because we are in a war aren't we? We are in a battle with unseen evil forces but most of you are also in another battle in your lives. The battle of the sexes, the battle called marriage.

Let's begin by reading the opening passage on this teaching of marriage which is addressed to the wives. Read with me.

**Ephesians 5:22-24, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”**

Now, before we go any further I recognize that submission is not a popular word. Submission is not a popular word in our world today. You're not going to find an Oprah show dedicated to wives submitting to their husbands. You're not going to go to Barnes & Noble and find a best selling book that instructs wives in submitting to their husbands. Its not going to be there.

I get that but I think that this passage and this word submission has been abused terribly. This passage is not about men lording over their wives. It is not about wives becoming a doormat for their husbands. It doesn't mean that women stay in abusive marriages. Absolutely not. But this passage brings us into understanding of how God sees the marital relationship.

We must always remember that this is God's word, given to us for edification, for building up the body of Christ. For building up, husbands, your wives. For building up, wives, your husbands. For showing the world what Christ's loving, forgiving, empowering relationship is to His church.

Like so many passages this particular passage and those that follow can be used wrongly. I remember when I first totally surrendered my life to Christ and shortly thereafter Michal and I got married. I remember looking at this passage, remembering the legalism that I was raised in and thinking, yep, I'm right. A woman is to submit in everything to her husband period.

If you know Michal very well you know that didn't fly. Well, the sparks did fly but I hadn't read the rest of the story. I didn't read fully the word

of God and what it meant for a woman to submit to a man and what it meant to for a man to love and serve his wife as Christ did the church.

It took years, a number of painful years for Michal, for me to begin to understand what Paul was saying, what God had put in order for a marriage. I am still working my way through it and I know Michal is as well.

Before we get into this passage let me say this. Guys, hang on because even though this section of scripture begins with a message to the wives in the first three verses, the next nine verses speak to the husband on how they are to treat their wives. There is three times the teaching for the husband than the wives. Why? Well, I think it might be that we guys are a little more hard headed. We are slower to take instruction than the ladies are.

So, before we move into our teaching for the wives this morning let me say this. This is one of the most important teachings for our church because I see the pain some of you are in. I see and sometimes even feel the tension of marriage, of being in a special, physical relationship with another human being. It is hard. I can testify to you it is hard. Michal can testify to you it is hard.

This message is not just for those who are married. The principles of relationship span not only marriage but all relationships including our relationship with the Lord.

As we follow the Lord and His teachings, as we follow in holiness and obedience, I have the hope and the belief that God has some healing for us, for you and for me.

So let's read again our passage.

**Ephesians 5:22-24, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”**

Now, as we move into this teaching concerning the women’s responsibilities in the home, I think it is important for us to look at verse 22 in its entirety.

Wives, submit to yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. What do you think is the most important statement in this verse? As you do unto the Lord. That really is the key to this instruction isn’t it.

It is restated in verse 24, look with me. **Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.** Submit, as you do unto the Lord. Submit like you do to Christ. This begs the question what does it mean to submit to the Lord?

Again, most of us dislike the word submit but all Christians are called to submit to the proper authorities if it doesn’t compromise or go against God’s teachings. We are told in scripture that we are to submit to our government, employers, church leaders, heads of family and most importantly to the Lord.

Look with me at what James, the brother of Jesus said. **James 4:7, 10, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”**

When we humble and submit ourselves to the Lord, something great and wonderful occurs. God gets involved in our lives. Not that He isn’t blessing us on a regular basis but when in holiness we exhibit obedience in the commands of God, God releases special blessings from heaven.

- 1. Special blessings from heaven are released through your obedience**

It says here in James that when we are obedient then God exalts you.

Look how this verse reads in the New Living Translation. **James 4:10, “When you bow down before the Lord and admit your dependence on Him, He will lift you up and give you honor.” NLT**

When we are humble, admit our dependence on God, admit that His ways, His teachings as we find here in His word are correct and we live by them, God lifts you up and gives you honor. Honor in His presence and honor within the relationships you are in.

This is great news. This is great news in all your interactions with people because you don't have to be right, you don't have to have it all your way, you don't have to have your voice heard because God hears it. He knows what is right, he knows what's in your heart and as

## **2. As you submit to God and His teachings, God has your back!**

Christians are by no means degraded by submitting to the Lord. On the contrary, Christians are high and lifted up by the Lord and, and the Lord is glorified.

As we think about our passage, God's teaching to the wife, it is not degrading for a wife to submit to her husband. Rather it results to her glorification and possibly, salvation or even surrender of her husband to the Lord. Let's look at what the Lord at to say through Peter.

**1 Peter 3:1-5, “3 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. 4 Rather,**

**it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.**

**5 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands..."**

This passage is pretty self-explanatory isn't it? When an unbelieving or I would even say, an un-surrendered husband, you can be a believer and not be totally surrendered can't you?

Wives,

**3. When an unbelieving or an un-surrendered husband sees your behavior, your purity, your reverence, your hope in God, then it has an affect on him.**

I think it not only affects him emotionally, but I wonder if this is how the wife is lifted up and given honor by the Lord. I wonder if this is when God exalts the wife. By working in the heart of her husband.

It's just not her handling of herself towards her husband but it is her obedience before the Lord. God honors and blesses obedience and when a wife is obedient to the instructions of the Lord, wonderful things occur. Maybe not in the first year, maybe not even in the 50<sup>th</sup> year. Maybe the husband is never completely won over but the wife's heart is changed over time towards the Lord and that is what God cares about most. Your heart before Him. Having your husband won over is icing on the cake.

I realize that this is not an easy subject to apply and obey, but I would encourage each of you to grapple with it especially in areas where you may be resisting the Lord. If you're having trouble in your marriage, don't blame your husband or wait for him to start loving you as he should. Instead, do something radical. Submit to your husband in every area, even as the church is to submit to Christ.

I started this sermon on the note that it is hard to maintain fervency in our relationship with the Lord. But

**4. Even when we don't feel God's presence, we still do the right thing**

The same is true in our marriages. It is hard to maintain fervency in your relationship with your husband but even when you don't feel like it, even if when we don't feel his love or approval you still do the right thing before the Lord.

Amen?

One last thing, men, husbands, this is not a message that you will want to repeat to your wife. Let the Lord do His work and let your heart be ready for the teaching He has for you next week.

Let's pray