

What does Ephesians 5:21ff have to say to contemporary marriage contexts where first appearances suggest that the wife is best placed to fulfil the leadership/headship role? (For example, but not limited to, where the wife is the primary or equal earner with the husband).

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## **Preface**

First of all, this dissertation is dedicated to my wife Sarah. My hope is that it will not have turned out simply to be an academic exercise. As important as the theological and philosophical debates surrounding this topic are, far more important is my need to grow as a godly husband. Secondly, it is for the congregation I will pastor. As I say in the introduction, the aim of this work is primarily pastoral rather than polemic.

I am grateful to a number of people who have helped to make this study possible. First of all, thank you to Sarah. I'm not sure whether "Wives, proof read" is a legitimate application of Ephesians 5:22 but Sarah has willingly given time to do this. Not only that but she has been a constant encouragement to me through out, taking time to listen to my thoughts, help me to clarify them and offer her own.

I would particularly like to thank my supervisor, Paul Woodbridge for the time that he has given to this project. Paul has challenged my assumptions and encouraged me to listen to the arguments of others.

Others that have helped by taking time to discuss my thesis, explain and clarify their own point of view and point me in the direction of helpful material include: David Instone-Brewer, Peter O'Brien, Kirsten Birkett and Andrea Ruddick.

As always, this comes with a disclaimer; the responsibility for any errors or misunderstandings lies entirely with me.

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## **I. Introduction**

### **I. 1. Why This Question?**

This dissertation arises from personal circumstances. Sarah and I both grew up in what might be termed traditional households; dad worked while mum looked after the children and the home. Our own circumstances when we got married were different to what we had experienced growing up; whilst I studied Theology, Sarah went out to work as the primary earner.

How were we to reconcile our situation with what we had grown to understand as men and women's natural roles? In conversation, I found other Christians seeking answers to this very question because of their own circumstances. What happens when my wife is more intellectually capable, spiritually mature or biblically literate? Is she still expected to "submit" to her husband in line with Ephesians 5:22?

So I decided to take a closer look at Ephesians 5 in order to be able to answer the question about what it teaches, both for myself and other Christians seeking to grow as godly husbands and wives.

### **I.2. The Contemporary Debate**

During my investigation, I discovered a significant disagreement within Evangelicalism about how to approach Ephesians 5 and other Biblical texts on marriage and the role of men and women.<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, we may identify two camps.

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<sup>1</sup> Our focus here is narrow on the relationship of those roles in marriage. We note the wider debate on the role of men and women in church and the workplace and the general uncertainty in society about men's and women's roles and natures (think about magazines, such as 'FHM', 'Loaded', 'Cosmopolitan' or TV shows such as 'Coleen's Real Women', 'Trinny and Susannah', 'Wife Swap' etc). These conversation areas are distinct but not unrelated.



### I.2.1. Complementarianism

This approach argues that men and women are equal in nature but different in role. There is a hierarchy in which men have authority over women, particularly in the home and at church.<sup>2</sup>

This is because in Genesis 1-2, we find a creation order: man was made first and woman for man.<sup>3</sup> In Genesis 3, woman usurped her position and man relinquished his.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, in his verdict on her, God insists that man will rule over her.<sup>5</sup>

In the New Testament, men are instructed to provide loving leadership for their families. Wives are to submit and to be busy at home.<sup>6</sup> So in practice, this might look like John Piper's approving description of his own upbringing.

When my father came home he was clearly the head of the house. He led prayer at the table. He called the family together for devotions. He got us to Sunday School and worship. He drove the car. He guided the family to where we would sit. He made the decision to go to Howard Johnson's for lunch. He led us to the table. He called the waitress. He paid the check.<sup>7</sup>

The Complementarian approach shows a genuine concern to treat Scripture seriously. Indeed, there is an admirable desire to set our marriage advice within the context of God's character, particularly the intra-Trinitarian relationship and his action within history (Creation and Redemption).

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<sup>2</sup> Raymond C Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991) 101-102. On equality of nature see Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 97.

<sup>3</sup> Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 101-102.

<sup>4</sup> Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 107.

<sup>5</sup> Ortlund treats Gen 3:16 by noting the parallels with Gen 4:7. There sin's desire is to master Cain but he must master it. Thus, he is inclined to treat the woman's desire here as negative and the man's rule as positive. Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 109.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; Titus 2:5. See e.g. Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, Id.: Canon Press, 2005), 31. See also Dorothy Patterson, "The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 365.

<sup>7</sup> John Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 31-32.

My own background is within this tradition. However, as I approached this study, I found myself slightly unsatisfied with some of the implications arising from it. In particular, I noted that even in so far as proponents allowed for the possibility of women in the workplace, it seemed a grudging acceptance. For example, Jay Adams states that:

The idea that women should not hold jobs is false...The key to whether a job is fitting or not lies solely in whether the job helps or hinders her family.<sup>8</sup>

However, in “Christian Living in the Home,” he primarily sees the wife’s role in terms of childcare, cooking and cleaning etc.<sup>9</sup> Now, it could be that their instincts are correct and that my discomfort arises out of conformity to the present culture, but I could not help thinking that perhaps this approach reflected one particular cultural context unrepresentative of wider history.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, NJ.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1972), 82.

<sup>9</sup> For example, at one point he asks, “Why is it that many women don’t enjoy being a housewife?...Because they have never learned to enjoy doing their daily chores.” Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, 78. He then answers as follows: “Don’t you know that your husband has his chores too...A man’s life isn’t easier than yours. What really counts is whether or not you can learn to delight in your work, whatever your task is. The same is true for your husband... If I had to face cooking day after day the way that you do, with only recipes at my finger tips. I might not sing so loudly either. If I had to cook for the rest of my life in that way I might find it hard to do so in delight. I think that I would try to learn at least something about the chemistry of cooking...Then cooking might begin to get exciting. You could begin to experiment a little bit. You would be able to go beyond the recipe books without fear of poisoning the family.” Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, 78-79.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to Adams and the example of Piper’s father cited above where the preference appears to be in favour of male leadership including particular traditional responsibilities such as being the chief bread earner, we note that other Complementarians express a preference for men to take on the role of bread-earner and women that of home-maker including: Dorothy Patterson (see Patterson, “The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective.” 375), Douglas Wilson (Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 31) and George Knight, [George W Knight III, “The Family and the Church: How should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood work Out in Practice?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 1991), 350].

## I.2.2. Egalitarianism

Egalitarians argue that men and women must be equal both in nature and role.<sup>11</sup> As Groothuis comments:

Due to both cultural and biological factors, there are some generalizable differences in behavior between women and men... However, these differences do not warrant the traditional notion that women are deficient in rationality and so are suited to be subordinate to men.<sup>12</sup>

In their narrative, there was equality before The Fall.<sup>13</sup> So Genesis 3:17 describes the conflict between men and women caused by sin. This is meant to be descriptive rather than prescriptive.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, the new creation in Christ Jesus begins to undo the effects of The Fall<sup>15</sup> so that there is “neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28).<sup>16</sup>

The New Testament shows a community in transition. The effects of salvation are beginning to work out socially but the early church is constrained by its social context.<sup>17</sup> This means that whilst Paul requests wives and slaves to submit, he also introduces “seed-thoughts” which will gradually subvert and undue the cultural constraints.<sup>18</sup> This was realised for slaves in the great abolition movement of 200 years ago and is now being applied to women.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role’: Exploring the Logic of Woman’s Subordination,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 306.

<sup>12</sup> Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 307.

<sup>13</sup> George Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place In Church and Family* (2d Ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985), 24-25.

<sup>14</sup> Richard S Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 92.

<sup>15</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 126.

<sup>17</sup> Longenecker refers to this as the “Development Approach.” Longenecker, “Authority, Hierarchy & Leadership Patterns in the Bible,” in *Woman, Authority and the Bible* (Ed. Alvera Mickelsen, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 80-8. See also, Johnston, “Biblical Authority And Interpretation,” in *Woman, Authority and the Bible* (Ed. Alvera Mickelsen, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 36.

<sup>18</sup> William J Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 83.

<sup>19</sup> Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*, 35. Webb argues for what he calls a “Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic.” This hermeneutical approach assumes that there is a movement within

Egalitarians are just as determined to take Scripture seriously as Complementarians. The approach should not be written off as surrender to a culture driven by secular feminism.<sup>20</sup> Rather, there is a genuine desire to wrestle with the difficult issues arising within our cultural context. Such a desire is commendable; right application of Scripture does require cultural sensitivity. For example, most commentators would treat Paul's instructions concerning hair, head coverings and holy kisses as advice for a given cultural context.<sup>21</sup>

However, if our default approach is to treat passages which make us uncomfortable as cultural, then are we in danger of limiting God's ability to speak to us? If Scripture is to do its job, then it must be allowed to disagree with us and our culture from time to time

### **I. 3. My Thesis**

In this study, I will argue that Ephesians 5:21-32 does speak to us and challenge us, both Complementarians and Egalitarians. This is so because:

1. We must understand the passage within its immediate context and the context of Ephesians as a book. Its context is God's eschatological plan to bring all things together in Christ. This plan includes spiritual warfare so that our witness is both to human authorities and spiritual authorities. This requires us to treat the passage as, to some extent, transcultural.
2. This continuing transcultural expectation includes the requirement for wives to submit.
3. Headship does mean leadership or authority.

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Scripture which is redemptive. In other words, because of the Gospel, increasingly within Scripture we see an emphasis on liberation from slavery to self and to unjust structures within society. Webb argues that this creates a trajectory towards liberty and equality which moves beyond Scripture. Whilst it was not possible to undo all the societal affects of The Fall at the time that the New Testament was written, we can identify clues within Scripture which show where the trajectory lies, enabling us to continue the reform that the early church started. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*, 35-38.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Carolyn Mahaney & Nicole Mahaney Whitacre, *Girl Talk: Mother-Daughter Conversations on Biblical Womanhood* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2005), 144.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 11:4-7.

4. Although order and authority are present in the passage, they are the means to an end, not the end in itself. The primary concern of the passage is unity ('one flesh') not authority.

#### **I.4. Method**

I have divided this dissertation into two parts. In the first part, we will focus on interpreting the passage and deal with some of the key hermeneutical and exegetical issues involved.

My intention is to be practical, whilst recognising that it would be impractical to attempt to prescribe for every marriage situation. Therefore, in part 2, we will explore three particular practical issues that arise from our exposition of the passage. They are:

1. Is it possible for the wife to be the primary earner in the household?
2. How should decision-making work in a Christian home?
3. Do headship and submission lead to abuse?

Space prevents us from exploring every practical scenario, but it is my hope that the reader will be able to develop their own application to specific scenarios by way of analogy.

Part 1  
Exegetical and Hermeneutical Issues

## 1. Context

It may seem obvious to suggest that we should start with context, but despite our best evangelical intentions, there are two temptations which can distract us from this. We might describe them as the temptation to play “Proof Text Trumps” and the temptation to treat all the Household Codes the same.

### 1.1. Proof Text Trumps

The rules of the game are as follows. The Complementarian quotes Ephesians 5:22 to show that wives must submit to their husbands. The Egalitarian responds with Galatians 3:28, “There is neither male nor female.” The Complementarian trumps this with Genesis 1-3, arguing that there is a creation order.<sup>1</sup>

In one sense, they are right to set the question within the wider Biblical narrative. Ephesians 5 has its place within God’s unfolding revelation. However, even as we turn up these references, we find that each one raises questions of its own. For example:

- Can we infer hierarchy from chronological order in Genesis 1-2? What about the animals that are created before Adam?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> They might argue this via 1 Timothy 2:12-14.

<sup>2</sup> So, for example, Bilezikien rejects this argument, insisting that to read hierarchy from order is to impose laws of primogeniture backwards onto a different historical context. He goes on to point out that God makes the animals before man. George Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles. What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place In Church and Family* (2d ed. Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker, 1985), 30. However, the Complementarian argument is perhaps a little more subtle than that. Firstly, because presumably any interest in chronological order would be species/class specific. Complementarians are clearly not arguing that plants and animals stand higher in status than humans. A helpful example would be the monarchy. I am older than Prince William but he will be King, not me. We are only interested in chronological order with regards to the Royal Family! Secondly, the Complementarian argument relies on the overall thrust of the narrative, bringing all aspects together, rather than treating each aspect in isolation. So, for example, Ortlund brings together the naming of the human race after Man, creation order and woman being made for man to suggest male headship. Raymond C Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 1991), 98-102.

- What is the status of a helper? Whilst some have interpreted this function to suggest that Eve is subordinate to Adam, others note that God himself acts as Israel's helper.<sup>3</sup>
- Is Gen 3:16 positive or negative; a statement of consequences or a permanent punishment?<sup>4</sup>
- How does the New Creation and its now - not yet character affect male-female relations?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “ezer can refer to anyone who provides assistance, whatever their relationship to the one whom they aid.” Richard S Hess, “Equality With and Without Innocence,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordon D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 86. Thus, it is argued from the Egalitarian point of view that as God acted as the helper of his people, the help could equally come from one who is superior in ability, authority, etc. This is not to argue that woman is the superior, but rather to rule out implicit male superiority in the concept of woman as helper. Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 85. Meyers goes on to argue that we must look at the context to determine who is designated superior in the relationship of helper to helped. In the case of Genesis 2, “the answer is neither of the possibilities.” Instead, we have someone “opposite to,” “corresponding to,” “parallel with...,” “on a par with...” Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 85. Complementarians, maintaining a distinction between equality of nature and role, argue that helper does suggest some form of role subordination. Once again, this is about seeing all the factors coming together and reading Genesis 1-3 in the light of 1 Timothy 2. Furthermore, Ortlund argues that even in those cases where the stronger party acts as the helper, by putting themselves at the disposal of the other's needs, they in fact subordinate themselves to the other. He comments, “So it is with God. When he helps His people, He retains His glorious deity but (amazingly!) steps into the servant role, under us, to lift us up.” Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 104.

<sup>4</sup> There has been significant discussion on this point because on the one hand, the idea of “desire” or “urge” (תשוקה) is portrayed as positive in Song of Songs 7:11, but has negative connotations in Genesis 4:16. Genesis 4:16 most closely parallels Genesis 3 in structure. There the parallel is between sin's desire for Cain and his need to “rule” or “master” (גזל) it. Thus, rule in Genesis 4 has a positive connotation. Some commentators therefore see Genesis 3 as showing a struggle between men and women, with each attempting to control the other. In other words, God describes a negative consequence of The Fall (whether he is describing a consequence of prescribing a punishment is itself a moot point). Others consider this to be an act of grace. Even in the consequence of God's punishment and the painful consequences of sin, God ensures that the creation order continues. See particularly, Susan T Foh, *Women and the Word of God. A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phil.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 67-69, Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 182 and Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1. Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1987), 82. I am inclined to agree with Wenham that, because the term is rare, “certainty is impossible.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 82. However, I would be reluctant to follow an interpretation that takes us down a “Battle of the Sexes” line. The idea of such a battle appears to be a particularly modern understanding of the male-female relationship. (Fraise identifies “the idea of a battle of a conflict between the sexes as a problem to be solved” as a 19<sup>th</sup> Century idea linked to a growing focus on people as individuals. Geneviève Fraisse, “A Philosophical History of Sexual Difference” in *A History of Women in the West Volume IV Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* (Ed. Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 73.)

<sup>5</sup> This links closely to our discussion at n4. If Genesis 3:16 “describes rather than prescribes” the situation post Fall, then whilst the consequences of the Fall might continue as we live in the “Now-Not Yet” phase of history, this does not mean that we cannot work for the alleviation of those conditions, just as we seek to overcome thorns, thistles and pestilence with pesticides and so forth or just as we alleviate pain in child birth. Ruth A Tucker, *Women in the Maze: Questions & Answers on Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 51. Tucker sees the rule or domination of women by men as a negative consequence of sin and goes on to comment on Watt's Hymn, “Joy to the



So we need to look at each text within its own context to ensure that we have understood it correctly before we set it in its wider context.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, we must beware the risk of imposing questions onto a text which the original material was not intended to answer. For example:

- If Genesis 1-3 is primarily about origins and human rebellion setting up the question of how God will redeem and restore his creation, then to what extent should we expect it to answer questions about hierarchy?<sup>7</sup>
- If Galatians 3 is primarily soteriological, then to what extent can sociological and ecclesiological implications be inferred from it?<sup>8</sup>

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World.” “It occurred to me recently, while singing that lovely carol, that the verse would be just as appropriate – perhaps more so – if, instead of ‘Nor thorns infest the ground,’ the second line read, ‘Nor rule by man abound.’ Tucker, *Women in the Maze*, 54. On this view, the soteriological implications of Galatians 3:28 must also have social consequences.

<sup>6</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> So Ortlund does well to use highly cautious language when he says, “God’s naming of the race ‘man’ *whispers* male headship.” (Italics mine) Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 98. Some may see even the suggestion of a whisper on this specific point contentious and wish to debate the etymological questions further. At this point, I would simply suggest that his label of a whispering might be attached to his overall argument regarding what Genesis 1-3 says about male/female roles.

<sup>8</sup> So for example, Longenecker argues that, “Certainly the proclamation of the elimination of divisions in these three areas should be seen first of all in terms of spiritual relations: that before God whatever their different situations, all people are accepted on the basis of faith and together make up the one body of Christ. But these three couplets also cover in embryonic fashion all the essential relationships of humanity, and so need to be seen as having racial, cultural and sexual implications as well.” Richard N Longenecker, *Galatians* (WBC, 41. Dallas, Tx.: Word, 1990), 157. He believes that this “is how the earliest Christians saw them – admittedly not always as clearly as we might like, but still pointing the way toward a more Christian personal and social ethic.” Longenecker, *Galatians*, 157. The Complementarian approach tends to follow Luther in arguing that, “In the world, and according to the flesh, there is a great difference and inequality of persons, and the same must be observed, for if the woman would be the man, if the son would be the father, the servant would be the master etc., there would be nothing but confusion of all estates and all things. Contrariwise, in Christ there is no difference of persons, but all are one.” Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians: Modern English Edition* (Abridged. Grand Rapids, MI.: Fleming H. Revell, 1998), 232. Thus from an Egalitarian perspective, Ephesians 5:21ff is framed and controlled hermeneutically by Galatians 3:28, whereas, the reverse appears true from a Complementarian perspective whereby we need to qualify our understanding of Galatians in the light of Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3. There is, of course, a wider discussion here: note the conditional nature of our comment in the main body of the text of “if Galatians 3 is primarily soteriological...” This assumption may be challenged from a New Perspective point of view so that Fee argues that, “The driving issue in Galatians is not first of all soteriology but ecclesiology: who constitute the people of God in the new creation brought about by the ‘scandal of the cross’ (Gal 6:11-16)?” Gordon D Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26-29,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 173. This further highlights the complexities of the hermeneutical as well as exegetical task in front of us. Personally, I am sceptical about how helpful this approach is. Indeed, I would argue that Fee is making too fine a distinction between the soteriological and ecclesiological question. After all, the answer to “Who is in” from an orthodox point of view would be “those who are saved.” Just as the traditional principle of *extra*

## 1.2. Household codes<sup>9</sup>

There are a number of New Testament texts which deal with the husband - wife question. Often, they form part of a structured approach to household relationships looking at husbands and wives, parents and children, slaves and masters.<sup>10</sup>

The temptation here is to assume that they all say essentially the same things and therefore the authors had the same purpose when dealing with them in each situation. So for example, in trying to understand why Paul tells wives to submit, we might turn to 1 Peter 3:1-2 and conclude that the purpose of submission is evangelistic within a culture that prizes a submissive attitude in women.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, it is helpful to be aware of the wider context and to note the general agreement in structure and context between the household passages. Indeed, one would expect to see agreement rather than contradiction. However, we should be cautious about assuming a uniform purpose. To illustrate why, we should take a closer look at the New Testament Household codes.

There is such a strong similarity between the codes found in Ephesians, Colossians, Titus and 1 Peter that a number of commentators have suggested a common secular source drawn from the Aristotelian Household code. The argument runs that Peter and Paul were partially conforming to the hierarchical conventions of the period in order to appease more conservative elements within Roman society to gain a hearing for the Gospel. However, the instructions are modified by uniquely Christian teaching

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*ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church, no salvation) suggests the reverse is also true; “Who is saved” can to some extent be answered with “those who are in.”

<sup>9</sup> Commonly referred to under the German term *haustafel*. See e.g. Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 519.

<sup>10</sup> See Col 3: 18-4:1; Eph 5:22-6:9; 1 Pet 2:12-3:7; Tit 2:1-9.

<sup>11</sup> So, in personal correspondence, David Instone-Brewer argues on the basis of 1 Peter 3:2, “I conclude that early Christian wives and slaves chose subjection in order to help evangelism. If they had rejected Aristotelian guidelines because of their theology of equality, this would have been regarded as being immoral and would have caused the gospel to be ‘scandalised’ (sic).” (Email, 22/10/09). I respect David’s careful scholarship. He has done a lot of work on the historical context of women in the New Testament. I also acknowledge that his suggestion is made tentatively as a hypothesis within the context of an academic discussion. However, I am concerned that such conclusions might be drawn lightly within the context of popular debate.

about mutual love and respect which both limit the force of the injunction at the time and provide the seed thoughts for future re-interpretation.<sup>12</sup>

O'Brien provides a word of caution to this approach noting that,

There is little agreement, then, on the source of the New Testament household codes. Even Andrew Lincoln admits that although discussions about household arrangement in the Greco-Roman world may have influenced Christians to take up this topic, there is no single model on which the Christian codes are directly dependent.”<sup>13</sup>

Whether or not the authors were relying on a single written source, commentators have rightly drawn our attention to the structural similarities between the texts. However, these similarities also serve to highlight the differences. In particular, we note that Ephesians 5 provides the longest treatment on the subject, that it is significant in its special treatment of the husband's responsibility to love, that it is unique in relating the marital relationship to Christ and the Church and that Ephesians places a special emphasis on the “One Flesh” nature of marriage in Genesis 2.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, our priority must be to understand Ephesians 5:22ff in its own context. This of course will limit our conclusions. What we say here can only be provisional outside of the context of a detailed study of all the texts. It means I will have to make some assumptions about what the other texts are saying.<sup>15</sup> However, this is a

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<sup>12</sup> See Craig S Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 185. See also Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 357. David Instone-Brewer goes so far as to suggest that we treat the common material as extra-biblical – quotes from sources (e.g. all Cretans are liars, 1 Cor arguments etc.) So, the unique thing is what Paul does with it. We learn about mutual submission and love (email correspondence, 22/10/09). David's suggestion led to an interesting discussion about the nature of extra biblical material when used within the context of Scripture. David has published our discussions at <http://ntbackground.blogspot.com/2009/10/re-fwd-husbands-and-wives-in-ephesians.html>. (accessed 07/01/2010).

<sup>13</sup> Peter T O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 407. Cf. Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 358-9.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Lincoln, *Ephesians* 353.

<sup>15</sup> I would ask readers to appreciate that I have spent some time with the other texts and will try to show why I think something in the footnotes is particularly pertinent, but bear with my assumptions for the time being. I will also try not to pin too much on an interpretation that rests too heavily on controversial assumptions relating to other passages.

reasonable approach within good hermeneutical practice and doesn't exclude the possibility of reaching truthful conclusions.<sup>16</sup>

So what is it that Ephesians 5 specifically has to say on marriage within its own immediate context? An important clue can be found within the syntax of the text.

### 1.3. Syntax and Context

Ephesians 5:22 does not contain the verb 'submit' except in one or two manuscripts.<sup>17</sup> The verb is supplied in English from verse 21. Even in verse 21, we have a participle and not the finite form of the verb so that a literal translation of the two verses might be represented as

“...submitting to one another, wives to husbands as to the Lord.”

So in order to understand how verse 21 functions within the wider context, we need to identify the type of participle used here. It is sometimes the case that a participle can function as an independent verb but as Wallace says, “In general it may be said that no participle should be explained in this way that can properly be connected with a finite verb.”<sup>18</sup> So this will be our last resort.

Alternatively, a participle can act as a finite verb through the rule of attendant circumstances. In that case, the participle might take on the imperatival force of the earlier instruction to “be filled...” However, attendant circumstance participles are usually found where both main verb and participle are in the aorist tense, whereas

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<sup>16</sup> On both the problem and the possibility of reaching truthful conclusions, see D.A Cason, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 121. See also Grant R Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> “On the one hand, several early witnesses (P<sup>46</sup> B Clement<sup>1/2</sup> Origen Greek<sup>mssacc.</sup> To Jerome Jerome Theodore) begin the new sentence without a main verb, thus requiring that the force of the preceding ὑποτασσόμενοι be carried over. On the other hand, the other witnesses read either ὑποτάσσεσθε or ὑποταστέσθωσαν after either γυναίκε. or ἀνδράσιν. A majority of the committee preferred the shorter reading, which occurs with the succinct style of the author's admonitions and explained the other readings as expansions introduced for the sake of clarity, the main verb being required especially when the words Αἱ γυναίκε stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson.” Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Repr. 2ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2000), 541.

<sup>18</sup> Zerwick, *Biblical Greek*, 127. Cited in Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 650.

both are present tense here. The participle tends to precede the main verb and is more likely to be found in narrative text than other genres. So Wallace concludes, “attendant circumstance participles are rarely, if ever found in a construction such as the one in this text.”<sup>19</sup>

This means that the participle is most likely dependent upon a main verb. It comes at the end of a list of participles, all of which appear dependent upon the injunction to “be filled with the Spirit.”<sup>20</sup> Syntactically, two options are possible. The first is a participle of means.<sup>21</sup> However, this is unlikely.

Means fits well with the grammar of the passage...But it may not fit well with the theology of the Pauline epistles –i.e., it would be almost inconceivable to see this text suggesting that the way in which one is to be Spirit filled is by a five-step, partially mechanical formula!<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, we are most likely dealing with a Participle of Result.<sup>23</sup> In other words, submission along with thankfulness and singing is, “the way in which one measures his/her success in fulfilling the command of 5:18” (this is Wallace’s suggestion for all participles from v19-21.)<sup>24</sup>

This has led commentators to describe Ephesians 5:21 as a “hinge verse.”<sup>25</sup> It both completes the idea of being filled with the Spirit and introduces the new topic of submission.<sup>26</sup> The syntax of verse 21 means that we must treat the instructions on submission as being intimately connected with what has gone on before.

Christians are to imitate God by living lives of love which will mean conduct associated with light, not darkness and with Spirit filled self controlled as opposed to

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<sup>19</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 644.

<sup>20</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 399.

<sup>21</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 629.

<sup>22</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 639.

<sup>23</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 639.

<sup>24</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 639.

<sup>25</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 399. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365.

<sup>26</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 399.

drunken irresponsibility. And so loving lives are made possible by the Spirit's enabling and lives of submission.

In other words, the household code in Ephesians is not some semi detached piece of advice. Rather, it belongs within the body of teaching found in the whole letter and so to understand what "wives submit to your husbands" and "husbands love your wives" means, we must understand the purpose and message of the whole letter.<sup>27</sup>

#### 1.4. Ephesians Themes

Identifying the purpose of the letter may itself prove difficult. Ephesians itself falls into the controversial category. It is one of those letters identified by many scholars as of doubtful authorship even though a number of conservative scholars are willing to recognise it as Pauline.<sup>28</sup> Not only that, but just as 5:22 lacks a verb, so 1:1 lacks a destination.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, whilst scholars such as Arnold have attempted to identify the message of Ephesians as relating to the problem of idol worship and fear of the spirit world, with particular reference to the cult of Diana, we should treat with caution any theories imposed from external assumptions about geography, history or the author's theology.<sup>30</sup>

However, it is possible to identify some key themes that dominate within the letter. In particular, we note the following:

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<sup>27</sup> Andreas Köstenburg and David Wayne Jones, *God marriage and family: Rebuilding the biblical foundation* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 66.

<sup>28</sup> In the sense that Paul himself is the actual author, not just that it is Pauline in tone. Personally, I am happy with Pauline authorship and do not think that this will affect our outcome one way or the other. Therefore, rather than the rather clumsy form "The Author," I will refer throughout to "Paul" as the author. For Paul as author, see O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 57. For pseudographical although "Pauline" authorship, see Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 33. See also Best, who argues that Paul is probably not the author, particularly on the basis of his exposition of Ephesians 5 and 6. As we shall see later on, Best is of the opinion that the *Haustafel* "does not display Paul's awareness of the real situation of believers." Ernest Best, *Ephesians*, 98.

<sup>29</sup> Best, *Ephesians*, 36.

<sup>30</sup> See generally, Clinton E Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians in Light of its Historical Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). O'Brien recognises that spiritual warfare is an important theme within Ephesians, but not the theme that best explains the purpose of the letter. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 54. Lincoln thinks that Arnold's theory requires too great a dependency upon Ephesians itself being the primary destination of the letter. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxxxi.

- The reality of Spiritual Warfare (1:19-23; 3:10; 6:10-20).
- The headship and rule of Christ (1:19-23; 2:11-22; 4:8; 5:5; 5:23).
- Christian Unity in Christ (2:11-22; 4:3; 5:2; 5:23).

So we can best sum up Ephesians' message as follows: because Christians await the eschatological hope that Christ will unite everything in him, triumphing over his enemies, therefore, they should live in the light of this hope as a new community, united in him and for him.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst the letter does present Christ as triumphing and ruling so that the idea of authority is clearly present,<sup>32</sup> he does this by way of grace and Love. These are the very things the Church is to imitate by showing unity within the body. So as saved and united in and for Christ, the Church is a witness both to human and spiritual authorities. This is all made possible by being filled with the Spirit.

## 1.5. Implications

Our conclusions about context will have some important implications for how we apply the text. Whilst it is too early to draw out firm conclusions, we may note the following implications which will guide our study.

Firstly, Paul has a greater eschatological context in mind than the immediate historical and geographical context of Greco-Roman culture. We see this in the way that the

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<sup>31</sup> O'Brien comments, "Cosmic reconciliation and unity in Christ are the central message of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians." O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 58. "Christ is the one in whom God chooses to sum up the cosmos, the one in whom he restores harmony to the universe." O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 59. "In Ephesians, God is shown to be in controversy with the powers which represent 'the things in heaven'. They are presented as rebellious towards him, but also as influencing humanity in the same direction. (2:2-3). He has, however, won the decisive victory over the powers by raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to a position of unparalleled honour and universal authority (1:19-22)." O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 61. Lincoln says, "Broadly speaking, the letter was intended to reinforce its readers' identity as participants in the Church and to underline their distinctive role and conduct in the world. In reminding the readers of their identity and roots, the writer tells them that they are part of a universal Church, one new humanity out of Jew and Gentile...the movement they are part of is not just another cult. It is linked with God's previous working within Israel and is a decisive stage in the completion of his work in Christ. Indeed, ultimately it is rooted in his electing purposes from before the formation of the world...The readers are to be proud of such an identity and such a calling and are to live them out. They are to have an awareness of God's global or cosmic purposes, but are then to act locally in a way that is appropriate to this community's unique role in the world. They should not, therefore, simply accommodate themselves to surrounding values." Lincoln, *Ephesians*, lxxxvi.

<sup>32</sup> We will develop this point later.

Household code is immediately followed by advice about engaging in Spiritual warfare. This is a battle “...not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness.”<sup>33</sup> This, combined with 3:10 which tells us that “through the church, the wisdom of God...might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places,” suggests a wider audience than the pagan contemporaries of local Church members, wherever the letter was intended for. It is no wonder then that this “submission” requires the filling of the Spirit. This means that we cannot treat the text as simply being culture bound advice; it must have some trans-cultural force.

Secondly, we note that the Christ who is head (1:22; 5:21) is triumphant, exalted and reigning. All things are under his rule (1:22-23) and we the church exist for his glory (1:12). We will revisit this in greater detail in chapter 3, but the preliminary implication is that we cannot completely separate out the idea of headship from that of power, authority and rule. So within the context of Ephesians, we must face carefully but honestly the implications of Paul describing the husband as “head”.

Thirdly, because of the particular emphasis on the husband’s loving role in imitation of Christ in Ephesians 5 and the wider context with its emphasis on grace, (2:8) peace and reconciliation (2:13-16) and unity, (4:3) we should be careful about putting too much emphasis on the ideas of authority and (hierarchical) order. Whilst those themes are present within the letter, the applicatory emphasis is on love and unity. So that is where we might expect the emphasis to be with regards to marriage. Whatever our view might be about Complementarian or Egalitarian understandings of marriage, our focus when looking at a Christian marriage should not be on how order works in the marriage, but on how there is unity. Christian marriages should be “one flesh” marriages.

As Köstenburg says,

Marriage is set within the larger context of God’s end time restoration of all things under the headship of Christ, which includes the bringing together of all

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<sup>33</sup> Eph 6:12 (NRSV).



things, including believing Jews and Gentiles, in the body of Christ, the church.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Andreas Köstenburg, and David Wayne Jones. *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 66.

## 2. “Submit to one another”

Our understanding of Paul’s instructions to husbands and wives will be influenced by how we understand the phrase ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλληλοί. Here we have two apparently strong concepts.

ὑποτασσόμενοι is the present participle of ὑποτασσω which means, “To cause to be in a submissive relationship, to subject, to subordinate.”<sup>1</sup> In the passive voice, it means that the subject of the verb will “become subject”<sup>2</sup> or “subject oneself, be subjected or subordinated, obey abs.”<sup>3</sup>

Ἀλληλοί is “the reciprocal pronoun”<sup>4</sup> and has the idea of “each other, one another, mutually.”<sup>5</sup>

How do these two work together? Some might argue that they do not, that they form an oxymoron. You cannot have reciprocal subordination because the word itself contains the idea of hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> Two options have been suggested for resolving the tension.

### 2.1. Option 1

This is a key argument for the egalitarian approach. Bilezikian argues ὑποτασσω normally “means to make oneself subordinate to the authority of a higher power...except where its meaning is deliberately changed by a modifier such as in verse 21 of our text...mutual submission rules out hierarchical differences. Being subject to one another is only possible among equals.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> BDAG, 1042a. Cf. Rom 8:20, Phil 3:21, Heb 2:5, Eph 1:22, Psa 8:7.

<sup>2</sup> BDAG, 1042a.

<sup>3</sup> BDAG, 1042a. Rom 13:5; 1 Cor 14:34, Eph 5:22, Col 3:18

<sup>4</sup> BDAG, 46a.

<sup>5</sup> BDAG, 46a.

<sup>6</sup> This is O’Brien’s position, which will be discussed in more detail below. Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 402-403.

<sup>7</sup> George Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles. What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place In Church and Family* (2d Ed. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1985), 154.

In other words, the meaning of the verb is controlled by its object. Rather than having the strong sense of subordinating oneself to a higher authority, it suggests mutual regard for others, treating all as better than oneself, having an attitude of humility.

Indeed, Marcus Barth goes so far as to argue that the verb in and of itself need not communicate the idea of hierarchy. He uses the following example:

On occasion the rare noun hypotaxis is used to express one of the specific meanings of the verb hypotasso, that is the taking of a position in a phalanx by a military unit. In the latter case there is no thought of inferiority or servility among those who subordinate themselves.<sup>8</sup>

So in the Ephesian context, the verb need not suggest submission to authority but rather, it is about the ordering of equals within the church for the task of mission.

Lincoln also places the emphasis on mutuality, arguing that,

There are similarities with the earlier paraenesis in 4:2,3, where ‘bearing with one another in love’ stands parallel to ‘making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit.’ and in 4:30 where it is clear from the context that what grieves the Spirit are the words and deeds of believers that are disruptive of communal life.<sup>9</sup>

This means that, “The call to mutual submission ‘demands readiness to renounce one’s own will for the sake of others, i.e., ἀγαπή, and to give precedence to others.’”<sup>10</sup>

Bilezikian thinks that the whole passage is about giving ourselves up for the sake of others as Christ did to the Church and the Church does in response to him.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday. 1979), 709.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 365.

<sup>10</sup> G Delling, “ὑποτάσσω,” TDNT 8[1972] 45. Cited in Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365.

<sup>11</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 164.

In other words, the idea of mutuality controls and weakens the force of the command to “submit” so that Sampley thinks that “Submit to one another” “cancels out the specific instructions to submit and to obey in the household codes that follow<sup>12</sup> and Marshall, linking the phrase with the command for husbands to love their wives, says that “mutual love transcends submission.”<sup>13</sup>

## 2.2. Option 2

A number of Complementarians agree that the two words sit uneasily together. However, they take the opposite approach, arguing that the verb qualifies the object so that ἀλλήλοῖ means “To anyone in the Church who is entitled to your submission.”

<sup>14</sup> So for example, O’Brien says,

A different interpretation recognizes that v.21 is a general heading...The particular ways in which Christians are to submit to others are then specified...It is not mutual submission that is in view...but submission to appropriate authorities.”<sup>15</sup>

He argues that,

None of the relationships where the verb appears is reversed...The word does not describe a ‘symmetrical’ relationship since it always has to do with an ordered relationship in which one person is ‘over’ and another ‘under’.<sup>16</sup>

With regards to Barth’s suggestion that the verb ὑποτασσω does not necessarily require the idea of authority, he notes that, “In the forty or so New Testament

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<sup>12</sup> Sampley. Cited in Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 366.

<sup>13</sup> I.H. Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordon D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 194.

<sup>14</sup> See especially O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 402-403. See also see Clark, *Man and Woman*, 74-76. Cited in Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365. Christopher Ash suggests that, “The idea of mutual subordination arose only as an ‘exegetical tactic commonly employed by those wishing to mitigate the hierarchialism of the subsequent passage,’” (citing Perriman) although he notes that the whole paragraph it completes refers to “mutual behaviour” and suggests that we cannot completely remove that sense from the verse. Christopher Ash, *Marriage, Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 311.

<sup>15</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 401.

<sup>16</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 402.

occurrences the verb carries an overtone of authority and subjection or submission to it.”<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, he goes on to suggest that “The pronoun ‘one another’ is not always fully reciprocal.”<sup>18</sup> So for example, he argues that “Revelation 6:4, ‘so that men should slay *one another*’ cannot mean that each killed the other at precisely the same time as he or she was killed.”<sup>19</sup>

O’Brien agrees with Sampley that it is possible to treat “Submit to One Another” as the heading for what follows. However, rather than the heading subverting or limiting the instructions that follow, in this case, the instructions explain what is meant by submitting to each other.

### **2.3. A Third Way?**

O’Brien’s thesis is highly persuasive. On the face of it, it is difficult to envisage submission without hierarchy. There is, however, one problem with his argument and that is that as Best notes, “so far as I can discover no one had thought of solving the difficulty in this way until the rise of the feminist movement, and it is not therefore an obvious solution.”<sup>20</sup>

For example, when you look at Calvin’s treatment of Ephesians 5, we find him commenting

Now a man may think it strange at first glance that he should say that we ought to be subject to one another. For it does not seem fitting that a father should be subject to his children, the husband to his wife, or the magistrate to the people whom he governs, or even that they also who are equal in status should be subject one to another. But if we examine all things well, we shall

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<sup>17</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 399.

<sup>18</sup> So for example, he argues that whilst Eph 4:25; John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom 1:12 can be understood as reciprocal, Rev 6:4, Gal 6:2 and 1 Cor 11:33 cannot. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 403.

<sup>19</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 403.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 516.

find that St. Paul has not without reason put all Christians under this subjection.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Calvin argues that husbands, fathers and masters do submit to those under them, in the sense that they do not have absolute power over them and are not to dominate them for selfish purposes. Rather, under God, they have responsibilities for the care and welfare of those in their charge. In that sense, Calvin does allow the imperative to be qualified by the people it is applied to. So for him, mutuality in marriage looks like this:

Now then, if a wife be cross-grained and cannot find in her heart to bear the yoke, although she does wrong to her husband, yet God is still more outraged. And why? Because it is his will that that bond should be inviolable.... We see then that in so doing she sets herself against the majesty of God. On the other hand, when a man will insist on lording it after his own liking and fancy, despising his wife, or using her cruelly and tyrannically, he shows that he despised God and defies him openly. For he ought to know for what purpose he was created, what the state of marriage is, and what law God has set in it.<sup>22</sup>

This goes against Ash's assertion that "The idea of mutual subordination arose only as 'an exegetical tactic commonly employed by those wishing to mitigate the hierarchalism of the subsequent passage.'" <sup>23</sup> Indeed, even Ash concedes that "To evacuate verse 21 completely of mutuality might seem to reduce its force in Paul's argument."<sup>24</sup> Tellingly, he acknowledges that not only is there a "strong general association of *allelon* with mutuality" but also "'submitting to one another' comes at the end of a series of participles about entirely mutual behaviour."

So, O'Brien's argument requires further analysis. On reflection, I am not convinced that the examples he gives with regards to ἀλλήλοι are asymmetrical.<sup>25</sup> For example,

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<sup>21</sup> John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians* (Rev. Rpr. Trans. Arthur Golding. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1979), 560.

<sup>22</sup> Calvin, *Ephesians*, 565.

<sup>23</sup> Citing Perriman. Ash, *Marriage*, 310.

<sup>24</sup> Ash, *Ephesians*, 311.

<sup>25</sup> I am grateful to Peter O'Brien who took time whilst lecturing at Oak Hill to discuss his exposition with me in person. I respect that his argument is a strong one given the consistent meaning of

it would be possible for two people to kill each other at exactly the same time. But in any case, mutuality does not require chronological reciprocity. For example, whilst I may not bear your burden at the same time as you bear mine, if I help you when you are in need and then you help me at a future time, this is still within the scope of mutual support.<sup>26</sup>

However, if there is a historical argument for mutuality that predates feminism and fits within a Complementarian framework, then this would also challenge one of the key egalitarian presumptions that mutual submission must subvert hierarchical submission because historically Complementarians have been able to fit the concept within their framework. It is worth noting that within the popular context, preachers will make Complementarian applications whilst assuming mutual submission. For example, I remember Philip Hacking arguing that wives could submit to their husbands in the home, exactly because their husbands had already submitted to them in the church.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, I would argue for a third option, namely that Ephesians 5 does teach mutual submission, but within a Complementarian context. This means that to some extent, “one another” does qualify “submit” but not in the sense of an absolute qualification. Rather, the force of the verb will depend upon the exact people whom it has in mind.<sup>28</sup>

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ὑποτασσω within the New Testament and should not be set aside lightly. However, his argument does depend upon the assumption that “one another” can be interpreted within a non-reciprocal framework. I also would note that Peter does assume a mutuality in terms of humility and service between husband and wife and within the congregation, even though he would not argue that from this text. (Personal conversation with Peter T O’Brien, 16/03/2010).

<sup>26</sup> Marshall cites “be Slaves to one another” Gal 5:1 as another example of such mutual concern. Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage.” 197.

<sup>27</sup> Philip Hacking was Vicar of Christchurch Fulwood and founding chairman of Reform, a conservative grouping within the Church of England which has campaigned against the ordination of women to the priesthood. I attended Christchurch as a student between 1992-1995 and recall him preaching on this subject.

<sup>28</sup> We will develop this point in Chapter 3.

### 3. Wives Submit (v22-24)

#### 3.1. Two Views

We now get into the body of Paul’s instruction to wives and husbands. So what does he mean by “wives submit” and why does he require it? As we have seen already, Egalitarians treat any requirement for wives to be subordinate and husbands to lead as a temporary cultural requirement.

They argue this on the basis that, firstly, there is a similarity between the instruction to wives and that to slaves. Slaves are told to obey their masters. This was the cultural norm at the time but is now recognised as unjust. Whilst marriage itself is good, so not abolished like the institution of slavery, some of its cultural forms are now considered unjust and may be abolished too.

Secondly, there is difference in “vocabulary”. Wives are told to “submit” (ὑποτασσω), slaves to “obey” (ὑπακούω). So even at that time, Paul makes a qualitative difference between wives and slaves. Thus submission is not about obedience in this context and should rather be understood in terms of respect (v32) and mutual regard for each other (v21).<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, Paul sets a restriction on submission. Wives submit because their husband is “head” – but he is only head in the sense that Christ is head of the Church. The word κεφαλη should mean “source,” not “authority” in this context.

Complementarians disagree, insisting that this is a timeless requirement for husbands to take the lead in marriage with wives taking the subordinate role. This argument rests on three key responses to the Egalitarian argument.

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<sup>1</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday. 1979), 714.



Firstly, the similarities between “wives” and “slaves” are overplayed. There are distinctions so that we cannot directly compare the abolition of slavery with the question of wifely submission.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the distinction between ὑποτασσω and ὑπαχούω is overplayed. Submission is a genuine response to order and authority in the relationship; it is not merely ‘respect’ or ‘mutual regard.’<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, Paul is not introducing a restriction in verse 23. The phrase ὡς και ὁ Χριστὸς is comparative, not restrictive. Wives are to submit “in everything.” Headship carries the idea of authority.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.2. Another look at the text**

In this section, we will revisit the passage in order to address the arguments more fully and reach our own conclusion about what the text is saying.

#### **3.2.1. “Wives to husbands”**

This is the first of three pairings which appear to follow the Aristotelian pattern which says that, “of household management there are three parts – one is the rule of a master over slaves, another of a father, and the third of a husband.”<sup>5</sup>

The Egalitarian argument, then, is that this is part of a cultural approach. Keener argues that the household code must be understood in the light of the status of women at that time.<sup>6</sup> Greco-Roman culture respected modesty in women. Traditionally, fathers and husbands had extensive powers over children and spouses including the

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<sup>2</sup> See discussion below.

<sup>3</sup> Harold W Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 734-735. See further discussion below.

<sup>4</sup> Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 412. See discussion below.

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*. Cited in Don Browning, “The Problem of Men,” in *Does Christianity Teach Male Headship? The Equal-Regard Marriage and its Critics* (Ed. David Blankenhorn, Don Browning & Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Craig S Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), 134.

power of life and death.<sup>7</sup> There were honour killings for adultery, but men could get away with a greater level of sexual promiscuity. However, around the time that Paul was writing, substantial changes were underway among a class of “new women.” Many of them were able to establish greater social, legal and financial freedom for themselves. Often, this new-found freedom went hand in hand with sexual liberation.<sup>8</sup>

Keener takes the view that:

Members of the Roman elite suspected Christians like several other non-Roman religions of subverting Roman family values. By upholding what was honorable in Roman values, the Christians could try to protect themselves from undue persecution and from misunderstandings of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

This was cultural advice, however, and other factors such as the concept of mutual submission, limitation of the husband’s headship and the command to love acted as an Egalitarian subversion of the traditional order in marriage just as in slavery.<sup>10</sup>

However, there are two problems with this. First, it begs the question that if there was at least some movement towards Egalitarianism, then why did Paul not side more clearly with the radicals? After all, he could have clarified the distinction between social equality and sexual licentiousness to the satisfaction of social conservatives.

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<sup>7</sup> So the Father was referred to as “paterfamilias.” As Grubbs notes, “If a woman’s paterfamilias died or emancipated her, she became legally independent...but she could never have legal power (*potestas*) over anyone other than herself.” Judith Evan Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (London: Routledge, 2002), 18. Note the power of “life and death” was held specifically by the father, not the husband. “Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*, 21. See also, Jane F Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (Indianapolis: Indianapolis University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 133. Keener’s view fits with Balsdon’s comment that, “In the last fifty years of the Republic, when we have plenty of contemporary evidence – for good or ill – in the smart, corrupt society of Rome itself, the New Woman has arrived. Her interests lie outside the four walls of her home. In politics, she is a power in her own right. She is perhaps the centre of notorious scandal.” JPVD Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Rpr. London: The Bodley Head, 1963), 48.

<sup>10</sup> See my comments on William Webb and the Redemptive Movement Hermeneutical Approach, in the Introduction, page 11 n19.

Furthermore, elsewhere, Paul is prepared to face controversy over the social implications of the Gospel.<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, there are significant differences between how Paul approaches the case of women and that of slaves. For wives and children, their willing submission is treated as good in itself, pleasing to the Lord and bringing its own reward.<sup>12</sup> For slaves, it is less the case that the act itself is pleasing to the Lord; more that by submitting, even in hostile situations, they are able to please and serve God.<sup>13</sup> It is not that there is a direct reward or promise; rather, it is that God will ensure a reward.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, I am not convinced by the redemptive movement argument.

### 3.2.2. “Submit”

On Paul’s shift of vocabulary from “submit” (5:22) to “obey” (6:1, 5), Marcus Barth comments,

In the teaching of Aristotle and his pagan and Christian followers, as also in 1 Peter 3:6, the subordination expected of the wife is called (or equated with) obedience. This is not the case in Eph 5. While for many authors, perhaps at times even for Paul, the verbs ‘subordinate oneself’ and ‘obey’ were

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<sup>11</sup> In particular, consider the discussion in Galatians about sharing table fellowship between circumcised and uncircumcised. See especially Galatians 2:11-21.

<sup>12</sup> Eph 5:22; 6:1, 3; Col 3:18, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Eph 6:8; Col 3:23-25. In the case of the slave, the act in itself is not “fitting in the Lord”. This particularly stands out in Colossians. Instead, the slave acts knowing that the Lord sees and rewards even though the master does not. See Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 205.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, I am tempted to suggest that Paul goes further in his opposition to slavery in Ephesians 6 than is first assumed. The normal framework for understanding this seems to go something along the lines of: Slavery is a bad thing and it’s a sad thing that Paul wasn’t able to announce its abolition, so in the meantime he asks slaves to obey until slavery is abolished. This means that we try to make a link between this relationship and the employer/employee relationship. However, if God is showing no partiality between slave and master and if he will repay the one who does good work, then hasn’t that had a major effect on the relationship? Isn’t Paul coming close to telling Christian slaves and masters to act as though the relationship is between free men? The slave willingly serves his master, knowing that even if his master treats him unfairly, then God will make sure he gets his pay (see Eph 6:8 and Col 3:24). If I am right, then one might be able to say that God has already abolished slavery. Some masters will not recognise this, but God will ensure that you receive your proper pay. If that is right, then Eph 6 is timeless, because it is about the way we relate to those who are in authority over us, whether just or unjust, not just about the now abolished institution of slavery.

synonyms, this cannot be demonstrated for the *Haustafel* in Eph 5-6. Only children and slaves are told to ‘obey’ (6:1, 5).<sup>15</sup>

So Barth thinks that what is in view is the willingness of someone of “high standing” in their own right to forgo their own rights in order to help an equal.<sup>16</sup> Barth may have a point here. His concern is to show that submission is not about “blind obedience” by an inferior. He is also right to ask why Paul varies his vocabulary. However, we should be cautious about making too much of the distinction between the words. Whilst they do not have exactly the same semantic range, “obedience” is included within the definition of ὑποτασσω. Furthermore, as Hoehner observes,

First the term ὑποτασσω historically has the idea of a subordinate role of one individual to that of another... Second, Paul and Peter also use the term ὑποτασσω ‘be subject for the slaves in their household codes... Furthermore, when Peter... instructs wives to be ‘subject’...he illustrates this subordination by Sarah’s obeying.<sup>17</sup>

However, even if the lexical distinction is not as marked as suggested, as Best argues,

ὑποτασσω ... is the more inclusive, covering a great many situations in each of which its precise meaning needs to be gathered from the context. Subordination within a chain of command in the army is different from a similar concern in the civil service.<sup>18</sup>

So then there is a difference between how a wife submits and how a slave or child submits. Whilst that difference may not be seen specifically in the lexicon definitions of the two verbs, the switch in vocabulary does slow the reader down, inviting them to

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<sup>15</sup> Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 714.

<sup>16</sup> Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 714. See also Keener who comments “To ‘submit oneself’ could mean to ‘give in’ or ‘cooperate’ and need not mean obey; the closest thing Paul gives to a definition of the term in this context, in fact is the word ‘respect’ in 5:33 where he plainly summarizes his whole exhortation to wives.” Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives*, 168.

<sup>17</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 734 – 735.

<sup>18</sup> Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 533.

observe the different nature of the parties involved. How a wife relates to her husband is different to how a slave relates to his master.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2.3. “As to the Lord”

There is general agreement among commentators that this means that a wife’s submission to her husband is one of the ways that she submits to Christ.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2.4. “Because the husband is head”

The next major issue is the meaning of the word κεφαλή. Complementarians assume that the word contains the idea of authority. Egalitarians disagree, arguing that this is to impose a modern usage of the English word onto the koine Greek.

The argument against “authority” is that in the main Lexicon on classical and koine Greek, Liddle-Scott, “authority” is not listed as a possible meaning. In normal Greek usage, the word might be in the sense of the literal body part or metaphorically to refer to the source of something or its extremity.<sup>21</sup> In Greek thought, it was the heart, not the head that was seen as the seat of the intellect and thus the controlling organ of the body.

Therefore, scholars have argued that κεφαλή in Ephesians is referring to Christ (and thus the husband) either in terms of him being pre-eminent or the source of life. So, for example, Bilezikian prefers the translation “fountainhead.”<sup>22</sup> So one is encouraged to think in terms of wives in that context as poorly educated, often much younger than their husband, socially and economically dependent upon him. Submission made

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<sup>19</sup> It is important to recognise here that even where the same word is used, there is still a distinction between the relationship of son to father and slave to master (c.f. Romans 8:15). It might be helpful here to think about the way in which the tone of a Hebrew imperative can change depending upon the parties involved from a harsh command through to a polite request.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 412, Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 368, Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 294.

<sup>21</sup> Berkley Mickelsen & Alvera Mickelsen, “What Does Kephālē Mean in the New Testament?” in *Woman, Authority and the Bible* (Ed. Alvera Mickelsen, Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 99. See, George Henry Liddell and Robert Scott: *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Repr. Revised and Augmented by Henry Stuart Jones and Robert McKenzie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 162.

sense in terms of placing yourself in such a way as to receive the benefits of the marriage.<sup>23</sup>

However, Grudem disagrees with this interpretation. He has carried out an extensive survey and concluded, first that the singular form of the word never refers to a “source.”<sup>24</sup> So for example, he notes that,

All the articles and commentators depend on only two examples of *kephalē* in ancient literature: Herodotus 4.91 and Orphic Fragments 21a, both of which come from more than four hundred years before the time of the New Testament and both of which fail to be convincing examples: Herodotus 4.91 simply shows that *kephalē* can refer to the ‘end points’ of a river – in this case the source of a river, but elsewhere, the mouth of a river –and since ‘end point’ is a commonly recognized and well attested sense of *kephalē*, we do not have convincing evidence that ‘source’ is the required sense here. The other text, Orphic Fragments 21a, calls Zeus the ‘head’ of all things but in a context where it is impossible to tell whether it means ‘first one, beginning’ (an acknowledged meaning for *kephalē*) or ‘source’ (a meaning not otherwise attested).<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, he provides examples from Greek literature where the head is regarded as the controlling organ within the body.<sup>26</sup> Thirdly, he suggests that it is a mistake to

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<sup>23</sup> See e.g. I.H. Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordon D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 199.

<sup>24</sup> See his original study. Wayne Grudem, “Does κεφαλή, mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,836 Examples.” *Trinity Journal* 6 (1985): 38-59. This was a response to Stephen Bedale, “The Meaning of κεφαλή in the Pauline Epistles.” *Journal of Theological Studies* 5 (1954):211-215. He argues that Bedale fails to provide examples, from the Septuagint of κεφαλή meaning “source” and that Bedale has misapplied the category of “things” to people in his article. Grudem, “Does κεφαλή, mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature?” 43. He develops the argument further in his appendix to *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* where he responds to criticisms of his earlier articles. Wayne Grudem, “Appendix 1: The Meaning of *Kephalē* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991). (see below).

<sup>25</sup> Grudem “The Meaning of *Kephalē*,” 425-426.

<sup>26</sup> “Plato (5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> C BC), describing the parts of the human body, wrote of the head which is the most divine part and which reigns (δεσποτέω) over all parts within us.” *Timaeus* 44.D. Cited in Wayne Grudem, “Does κεφαλή, mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature?” 42. Also “Plutarch (AD 46-120)...explained why the words *soul* (ψυχή) and *head* (κεφαλή) can be used to speak of the

rely only on Liddell-Scott. Whilst the lexicon does cover koine Greek in the New Testament period, its focus is on classical literature.<sup>27</sup> Grudem argues that it is right to look to a specialist lexicon such as Bauer to discover the New Testament usage.<sup>28</sup> He argues that a study of the word's usage in its context within the LXX and the New Testament does point to the meaning "authority over."<sup>29</sup>

In response, it has been argued that although Grudem does identify some examples of κεφαλη meaning "head," these form a minority of the references even within the LXX.<sup>30</sup> Those cases relate to the translation of the Hebrew "rosh" and even then, it is not always translated with κεφαλη when it has the sense of authority.<sup>31</sup> If this is the case, then that raises the question as to whether Paul's readers as Gentiles would have recognised its usage here.

I would argue that he does intend that meaning. My reasoning is as follows. Firstly, Paul himself moved between Jewish and Greek circles. His own use of the LXX would have made him aware that such a metaphor was possible. Secondly, NT writers were happy to take other Greek words and develop their meaning within the context of Christian theology.<sup>32</sup> Thirdly, readers would have had to think carefully about what a non-literal meaning of the word meant. To do this, they would have had to use the clues available to them within the letter.

The key point of reference, then, is Ephesians 1:22-24, where Christ's headship over everything is set in the context of his exaltation and rule over all other authorities and powers. Whilst Cervin prefers to relate this to pre-eminence rather than authority,<sup>33</sup> I

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whole person: 'We affectionately call a person 'soul' or 'head' from his ruling parts.'" Plutarch, *Table Talk*, 692.D4. Cited in Wayne Grudem, "Does κεφαλή, mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature?" 42.

<sup>27</sup> Wayne Grudem, "Does κεφαλή, mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature?" 47.

<sup>28</sup> This has been referred to as the "battle of the lexicons." (A "Christianity Today" news heading, cited in Tucker, *Women in the Maze*, 127).

<sup>29</sup> Grudem "The Meaning of *Kephalē*," 426.

<sup>30</sup> Richard S. Cervin, "Does Κεφαλη, mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal." *Trinity Journal* 10 (1989): 96.

<sup>31</sup> So for example, αρχών appears to be the preferred translation when *rosh* clearly refers to leadership. Cervin, "Does Κεφαλη, mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature?": 96.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. logos and mystery.

<sup>33</sup> Cervin, Richard S. "Does Κεφαλη, mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal.." *Trinity Journal* 10 (1989): 112.

would argue that submission to someone who has pre-eminence means recognising that with that exalted position comes power and authority.<sup>34</sup>

### 3.2.5. “As Christ is head of the Church”

Barth sees this as having restrictive force so that

the ‘husband’s’ function as ‘head’ is modeled after (and limited by) the measure of Christ’s headship. Thus not an absolute, but only a very qualified role as ‘head’ is attributed to man.<sup>35</sup>

There are two problems with his interpretation. Firstly, his interpretation of ὡς και as “only in so far as” is a minority report. The majority of commentators take its natural meaning to be “as also” so that it sets up a comparison.<sup>36</sup> Secondly, Barth assumes that the word κεφαλη here excludes the sense of “having authority over” which, as we have already discovered, is not the case.

So Christ’s relationship to the church provides a pattern for the relationship between husbands and wives. A wife then can willingly submit to her husband. However, there is a difference.

### 3.2.6. “Even so...”

Verse 24 is slightly unusual in that it starts with an adversative conjunction. Ἀλλά can have an emphatic usage<sup>37</sup> and translations such as the NIV take it that way.<sup>38</sup>

However, the consensus view is that it is adversative. In that case, it relates only to v23b; Christ the head is also the saviour of the body.<sup>39</sup> Paul is not suggesting that a wife’s submission comes in response to her husband acting as her saviour. However,

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<sup>34</sup> So in Eph 1, Paul links Christ’s headship with his rule over creation and suppression of his enemies.

<sup>35</sup> Barth, *Ephesians 4-6*, 614.

<sup>36</sup> See e.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 368.

<sup>37</sup> BDAG, 45b.

<sup>38</sup> So that the translation reads “Now...”

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 372. See also, O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 416.



she is still to submit. This would seem to further counter the suggestion that headship and submission is to do with life source and mutual dependence.

Additionally, the conjunction reminds us that as with ὑποτασσω, the idea of headship will be qualified by its referents. As John Chrysostom observed in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century,

we must not try all things by like measure in respect of ourselves and of God, though the language used concerning them be similar; but we must assign to God a certain appropriate excellency.<sup>40</sup>

This means that the way the husband exercises headship is different to how Christ exercises headship. We will explore this further in chapter 4.

### **3.2.7. “In Everything”**

The wife’s submission is ἐν παντι (‘everything’). Does this mean that she is there to serve her husband’s every whim or that he has a right to interfere in all aspects of her life? Must she seek his approval before making any decision? Is this a command liable to lead even to physical and emotional abuse? This is such an important question that we have dedicated a whole section to Control, Protection and Abuse in our chapter on application.

### **3.3. Putting things together and in context**

We have argued previously that there is a transcultural aspect to the household codes – this is seen here in that the wife’s submission to her husband is modelled on the Church’s relationship to Christ. There is something timeless about this.

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<sup>40</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians* (Trans. Talbort W. Chambers, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), XXVI (Chambers: 150). He was referring to 1 Cor 11:3 and his concern was with how we respond to the heretics who treat “the head of Christ is God” to mean that the son is “under subjection.” Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, XXVI (Chambers: 150). Of particular pertinence to our study is his observation that, “had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as thou sayest, he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather of a slave and master. For what if the wife be under subjection to us? It is as a wife, as free, as equal in honor. And the Son also, though he did become obedient to the Father, it was as the Son of God, it was as God. For as the obedience of the Son to the Father is greater than we find in men towards the authors of their being, so also His liberty is greater.” Chrysostom, *Homilies on First Corinthians*, XXVI (Chambers: 150).

This sits within the context of Ephesian eschatology, Christ is bringing all things together in submission to himself. The Church is his declaration to hostile authorities that this is happening. So, the wife, in micro, displays in the marriage what the Church declares in macro to the spiritual powers and authorities.

This is not to say that the wife's submission equates to Christ's subjection of others. At no point is the husband instructed to subjugate his wife. Her submission is voluntary, self-willed. In other words, whilst there is, as we have argued, a leadership order within the marriage, the wife's submission is primarily a demonstration of the unity that God brings as she seeks to be of one mind with her husband. That is why it is to be "in every sphere"<sup>41</sup> because, as we shall see in chapter 5, her submission is for the purpose of becoming "one flesh."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 417.

<sup>42</sup> Eph 5:31.

#### 4. “Husbands Love...” (v25 – 30)

The instruction to husbands could be seen as the key, radical point within Paul’s instructions.<sup>1</sup> Paul devotes more space to this instruction than to the other aspects of the Household Codes<sup>2</sup> and the command to love supplies a surprising twist.

After the exhortation to wives to submit, with its depiction of husbands as heads, what might well have been expected by contemporary readers would be an exhortation to husbands to rule their wives.<sup>3</sup>

It may seem ironic then that more attention is given in the debate to what wives should do. This is perhaps to be expected, since whilst in Paul’s time “Husbands love” would have been the more controversial, in our time, the reverse is true. However, whilst even in this study greater space has been given to verses 22-24, it is worth considering the level of attention that should be given to the second part of the instruction in preaching and teaching.

##### 4.1. “Love...just as Christ...”

This parallels with οὕτως καὶ in v25. Christ’s love for the church functions as an example for the husband in a similar way to how The Church’s submission to Christ functions for wives.<sup>4</sup> We may also note a parallel with “as Christ is head of the church” in v23. The status and the responsibility of the husband are both set in comparison to Christ’s relationship to his Church.

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<sup>1</sup> This is David Instone-Brewer’s view, as he argued in conversation and through email correspondence with myself. (Email Correspondence 22/10/2009 and 23/10/2009). See also the discussion published at <http://ntbackground.blogspot.com/2009/10/re-fwd-husbands-and-wives-in-ephesians.html>. (accessed 07/01/2010). See also Marshall’s reference to “love-patriarchism” in I.H. Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 194.

<sup>2</sup> Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 418 – 419.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 373. “Exhortations to husbands to love their wives are found outside the NT, but they are fairly infrequent... It is noteworthy though that ἀγαπᾶν does not occur in Greco-Roman household codes in setting out the husband’s duties... In any case, he makes it distinctive by radicalizing the love for which he calls, as he models it on that of Christ for the Church.” Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 418.

This confirms two things. Firstly, our caution about treating the wife's responsibilities as a cultural requirement was wise. Both husband and wife act in the light of Christ and the Church. To diminish the transcultural nature of either is to upset the balance in the passage.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, it confirms our argument that ὡς καὶ in v23 is restrictive in force. Christ's love and his headship are comprehensive in scope; so too the husband's.

#### 4.2. "And gave himself"

His love, then, is self giving, sacrificial and costly.<sup>6</sup> As with slaves, in 1 Peter, we find that Christ's substitutionary atonement provides a model for Christian behaviour. Implicitly, this love is grace based, not contingent upon the wife's response, just as Christ gave himself willingly and freely for his church.<sup>7</sup> The husband's imitation of Christ is a specific example of the love required of all believers to each other.<sup>8</sup>

Christ gave himself in order to sanctify and cleanse the church. As we have already seen, the parallel between Christ and husband is not exact. The husband is not the wife's saviour.<sup>9</sup> However, the husband is to be like Christ in two ways. Firstly, he is to show costly, gracious love.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, because his purpose is to see his wife presented in all her beauty and glory, he acts out of concern for her needs and reputation.<sup>11</sup> This is not completely selfless. We note that Christ presented the church to himself. Also, the husband's motivation here is not just Christ's example, but his own benefit.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 418. cf. also Francis W Beare and Theodore O. Wedel. "The Epistle to the Ephesians Introduction and Exegesis," in *The Interpreters' Bible*. (Ed. George Arthur Buttrick. Vol X. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1953), 719.

<sup>6</sup> It is this phrase, rather than the use of ἀγαπή which emphasises this. Contra Wilson who draws a distinction between phileo and agape. *Reforming Marriage*, 26.

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:8.

<sup>8</sup> See Eph 1:4; 3:17; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2. O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 419.

<sup>9</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 378.

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

<sup>11</sup> O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 424.

<sup>12</sup> Pace Barth who sees Christ's love as unique in that, "He loves his beloved only for her own sake. He seeks no other or higher reward than her alone. His love incorporated in his bride is an end in itself. The Messiah has set out and will not rest until she appears before him glorious and free of defect. He says and wants to say forever, 'How lovely you are!'" Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday. 1979), 676. Whilst there is a sense in which Christ's love for his Church is selfless, even his love rightly works to his own glory (Ephesians 1:10; 22).

### 4.3. “Whoever loves his own wife – loves himself”

The phrase echoes Lev 19:18.<sup>13</sup> However, the image here is even stronger than that of Leviticus where God’s people are told to love their neighbours as themselves. As O’Brien says,

Husband and wife, then, are regarded as one person, a single entity.

Accordingly, the husband’s obligation to love his wife as his own body is not simply a matter of loving someone else just like he loves himself. It is in fact to love himself.<sup>14</sup>

Marital love is self love. Just as the Church is Christ’s body, so too the husband and wife are united as one. Here, we see how the κεφαλή imagery employed earlier serves a greater metaphorical purpose. The body imagery here sets up the Genesis 2 quote in verse 30: the two are one flesh.<sup>15</sup>

This means that the husband’s role is defined in terms of responsibility. He is to cherish and nourish her, to care for her. She should find her emotional and physical needs met in him.<sup>16</sup> This means that we are right to talk in terms of “mutual submission” because it is self giving, selfless service to the wife. In the same way that Christ’s atonement involved him taking the form of a servant, so too the husband takes on the role of servant to his wife.<sup>17</sup>

However, the vocabulary shift – from “submit” to “love” – suggests asymmetry in the relationship. The way in which he submits to her is different to the way that she submits to him.

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<sup>13</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 427.

<sup>14</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 427.

<sup>15</sup> Verse 29a provides the transitional bridge from “body” to “flesh”. O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 427.

<sup>16</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 424.

<sup>17</sup> Phil 2:5-8.

## 5. “This is a mystery” (v31-33)

We now come to the climax of the instruction to husbands and wives. These verses hold the whole instruction together and show how Christ’s relationship to the church is the basis for the marriage relationship. As we noted earlier, Paul has been building up to this point by introducing body and flesh language in v29-30.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1. “For this reason”

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 where the narrator adds his own comment to the story of the first marriage. God had made woman from man so that she was a suitable partner to him. Therefore, from now on, this would be his primary relationship.<sup>2</sup>

Unusually, Paul provides the citation without a standard introductory formula. The words ἀντὶ τούτου taken from within the citation serve as an introduction to the point of the quote in their own right.<sup>3</sup> This suggests that “the opening words, *for this reason*, dovetail neatly into Paul’s argument.”<sup>4</sup> Paul sees a direct causal relationship between the nature of marriage and “the immediate antecedent” of the quote; namely, “because we are members of his body.”<sup>5</sup>

So, in Paul’s mind, there is now a second basis for marriage. Just as Genesis shows the institution to be rooted in creation, so Paul argues that it is based on new creation, the relationship of Christ to the Church.

### 5.2. “A man will leave his father and mother”

Note that it is the man who “leaves” rather than the woman which seems to go against the grain of patriarchal cultures where the wife would join the husband’s clan. This leads Wenham to suggest that in its Genesis context, “forsaking mother and father is

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 427.

<sup>2</sup> Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1. Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1987), 70.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 380.

<sup>4</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 429.

<sup>5</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 429.

to be understood in a relative sense, not an absolute sense.”<sup>6</sup> It is not about physically leaving parents as much as a break in the nature of the bond between parent and son.

Paul’s reaffirmation of this break would have had significant force in a culture where often, “the wife remained in the power of her father.”<sup>7</sup> Paul’s argument goes against this approach. Whilst his understanding of the relationship is not one of “subjugation to their husband,”<sup>8</sup> he is clear that the priority relationship is husband to wife, not adult child to parent.

### **5.3. “And become one flesh”**

This is the point that we have been building towards. “One Flesh” includes both sexual union and all that it entails. Elsewhere, Paul uses the phrase to describe fornication with shrine prostitutes, so in and of itself it does not necessarily imply the permanent, wholesome state of marriage.<sup>9</sup> However, within the context of a positive portrayal of marriage, there is a wonderful picture of intimate, exclusive unity.

This is important because, as we have seen, there is an Ephesian focus on unity. God’s purpose in Christ is to bring all things together under his rule. Marriage portrays a picture of this in miniature.

### **5.4. “This is a mystery”**

What is meant by ‘mystery’ and what does the phrase refer to? O’Brien notes that three interpretations have been suggested.

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<sup>6</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71. Whilst the primary meaning of the word used by Paul, καταλείπω refers to place “to cause to be left in a place, leave (behind)” or “to depart from a place, with implication of finality.” BDAG, 520b. BDAG does offer too alternatives which might allow one to reconcile the Greek used by Paul with Wenham’s interpretation of the Hebrew. καταλείπω can also have the sense of “to cease from some activity,” or “to cause to be left to one’s own resources.” BDAG, 521a.

<sup>7</sup> J.P.V.D Balsdon, *Roman Women: Their History and Habits* (Rpr. London: The Bodley Head, 1963), 45. There seem to be two Roman approaches to marriage – on the one hand, traditionally marriage meant that wife was “bound... in subjugation to their husband.” Balsdon regards this as being universally the situation up until the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC when increasingly marriages took the form described above. Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 45.

<sup>8</sup> Balsdon, *Roman Women*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Cor 6:16.

1. “Mystery refers to *the marriage relationship*.”<sup>10</sup>
2. “The mystery is the union of Christ and the Church.”<sup>11</sup>
3. “The mystery refers to the relationship between Christ and the church as a typology of marriage.”<sup>12</sup>

The first approach is popular within Roman Catholic sacramental theology. “The Vulgate rendered the Greek word as ‘sacramentum’, and Catholic dogma holds that the institution of marriage conveys grace.”<sup>13</sup> More generally, some protestant theologians argue that, “The relationship between Christ and the church is incidental to this thrust, and any parallels with the relationship between husbands and wives are merely illustrative.”<sup>14</sup>

The problem with this approach is that, “the term in Ephesians usually connotes a truth that was previously hidden and has now been revealed. This is hardly true of marriage itself, even as a sacrament.”<sup>15</sup>

The second interpretation focuses on the relationship between Christ and the Church.<sup>16</sup> For example, Irenaeus and Augustine referred to Christ recapitulating Eve’s creation from and union with Adam.<sup>17</sup>

O’Brien argues that such an approach does provide helpful insights because Paul clearly does have Christ and the Church in mind here.<sup>18</sup> However, it is limited

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<sup>10</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 430.

<sup>11</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 431. See e.g. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 381.

<sup>12</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 432.

<sup>13</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 430.

<sup>14</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 430. Best leans towards this approach. He is suspicious of typological approaches because “AE was probably not Paul and even if he was a Jew we cannot assume he had a detailed knowledge of Hebrew; he draws all his OT quotations from the LXX.” Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 556. So to some extent, the interpretation given rests on assumptions about authorship. As I have stated earlier, I personally do not have a problem with Pauline authorship of Ephesians. However, even if the author is not Paul, then it is reasonable to assume that the Author of Ephesians (AE) is someone with access to the Pauline corpus and a good grounding of Paul’s theology with all its typological connotations.

<sup>15</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 431.

<sup>16</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 431 – 432.

<sup>17</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (The Anchor Bible. New York: Doubleday. 1979), 722.

<sup>18</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 431 – 432.



because, “it fails to take into account the correspondence between marriage and the Christ-church relationship throughout the paragraph.”<sup>19</sup>

So O’Brien prefers the third option. “The mystery refers to the relationship between Christ and the Church as *a typology of marriage*.”<sup>20</sup> I think he is right to do so because this gives the best account of the flow of the text. As we have seen above, his citation of Genesis 2 “dovetail[s] neatly” out of his previous commentary on Christ’s relationship to the church. There is a strong causal link between the heavenly marriage and the human institution.

So the mystery revealed is the way in which that causal link works. The model seems to be constructed as follows. Adam and Eve’s union can now be understood as a type for Christ’s relationship to the Church, which is consistent with the theme in redemptive history of God as the husband of his people Israel. The type is fulfilled in Christ. However, the typology goes a stage further because Christ and the church are themselves a better model for human marriage.<sup>21</sup>

So the relationship is intertwined, as indeed we have seen throughout the passage through the constant use of link words and phrases such as οὕτως, ὡς and καθὼς. Our understanding of the marriage relationship is rooted in our understanding of the Gospel.

### 5.5. “Each of you”

The use of πλὴν in verse 33 can have a concluding force. This would mean that the idea isn’t so much “however...”<sup>22</sup> as though there is an abrupt disjunction from the preceding argument. If that were the case, then we might be tempted to see the preceding argument as being focused solely on the spiritual relationship. But as Bauer makes clear, it can have the force of “breaking off a discussion and

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<sup>19</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 432.

<sup>20</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 432. See also Barth, who whilst emphasising the focus on Christ and the Church, notes that, “The secret sense discovered in Gen 2:24 does not prevent Paul from also taking the literal meaning seriously and applying it to the ethical discussion under application in Eph 5.” Barth, *Ephesians*, 734.

<sup>21</sup> O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 434.

<sup>22</sup> Contra the NIV’s rendition of v33.

emphasizing what is important.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, verse 33 concludes the argument, emphasizing what Paul wants the reader to take away from the discussion. As Lincoln comments,

The writer reminds his readers that the exalted depiction of marriage in light of the relationship of Christ and the Church is meant to serve the purpose of practical exhortation.<sup>24</sup>

So Paul summarises his practical advice. Husbands are to love their wives and wives are to “fear” their husbands. The word “fear” is translated as “respect” in a number of versions and commentaries. Is this correct?<sup>25</sup> I wonder whether our understanding of the word “respect” in modern English might soften the force of the injunction. After all, as Lincoln notes, this is meant to be modelling the Church’s view of Christ. In verse 21, the NRSV translates the same word as “reverence” with respect to the Lord. This is perhaps helpful to our understanding. This is not cowed, frightened submission but a respect seen in loyalty which is tied into the nature and value of his role as husband. I agree with Lincoln’s summary;

Since the fear of Christ (v21) is the believers’ appropriate response to his overwhelming love and power, the wife’s fear is her appropriate response to her husband’s headship exercised in self-sacrificial love.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> BDAG, 826b.

<sup>24</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 383.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Best, *Ephesians*, 559.

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 384.

Part 2  
Application to Contemporary Contexts

## **II. Introduction to Part 2**

In Part 1, our exposition of Ephesians 5:21-33 demonstrated that Paul's instruction to wives to submit to their husband as head and for husbands to sacrificially love their wives transcends culture. These instructions should be followed today. However, this position is moderated by two further points that we have established. Firstly, we have said that the way in which these instructions are to be followed will be conditioned by cultural circumstances. Secondly, we have argued that whilst submission and headship are present in the chapter so that 'order' is important, the primary application of Ephesians 5:21-33 is found in the last few verses. The focus of the passage is not on hierarchy but unity.

We now turn to consider how our findings will affect the practical realities of family life. In part 2 we will apply Ephesians 5:21-33 to three issues: work, decision making and domestic abuse.

## 6. Wives and Work

In this chapter, I will argue that not only does Ephesians 5:22 allow wives to work, but they may also take the role of lead wage earner. I am arguing on the basis that our exegesis has demonstrated that whilst “headship” and “submission” are transcultural requirements, their expression is culturally contextualised, so that:

The wife’s submission and the husband’s headship are not intertwined with the stereotyped roles as homemaker and breadwinner. The headship of the husband exists no matter what his occupation is, because God has established it. The wife’s attitude may be submissive no matter what her occupation.<sup>1</sup>

By setting out my thesis in such stark terms, not only that wives can work but that they may have the lead earner role, I am seeking to emphasise the point that not only is it permissible for wives to work, but that this often can be a positive application of Ephesians 5 rather than a mere concession to human weakness.

I note that even amongst Complementarians there is generally some allowance for women to work outside of the home, even if that permission appears at times to be reluctantly given. To argue that wives may be the main wage earner is, however, unusual.<sup>2</sup> Knight is more typical of the Complementarian position, arguing;

Therefore it is important in marriage and the family for a man to realize his responsibility as the primary breadwinner and to assume that responsibility willingly and gladly. It is equally important for a woman to realize her responsibility as the primary one to care for the children and the home, as these verses indicate, and as Proverbs 31... also indicates.<sup>3</sup>

This conjures up a particular idealistic picture of the wife remaining at home, cooking, cleaning and raising the children whilst the husband heads off to work. The

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<sup>1</sup> , Susan T Foh, *Women and the Word of God. A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phil.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1979), 187.

<sup>2</sup> Foh’s statement above is the only one I have found from a Complementarian stand point.

<sup>3</sup> See also Titus 2:5. George W Knight III, “The Family and the Church: How should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood work Out in Practice?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 1991), 348.

assumption then is that apart from the aberration of feminism, this has been the norm. So, we need to set out the case against this assumption.

### **6.1. Argument 1 –The Historical perspective**

A survey of the history of women and work shows that even before the Industrial Revolution, women were often to be found in the workplace. As Fraise observes,

The woman worker came into extraordinary prominence during the nineteenth century. She of course existed long before the advent of industrial capitalism, earning her keep as a spinner, dressmaker, goldsmith, brewer, metal polisher, buttonmaker, lacemaker, nursemaid, dairymaid or houseservant in the towns and countryside of Europe and America.<sup>4</sup>

This is not to suggest that women have enjoyed some long history of social and economic equality with men. Even at the same time women were taking on responsibility alongside men for running family businesses with their husbands, or when they died,<sup>5</sup> we find that in the 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> Century, daughters were still denied the right to inherit<sup>6</sup> and women were denied access to the trade guilds.<sup>7</sup>

The point remains, however, that even within a hierarchical society, the role and power of women has been more variegated than sometimes our mythology assumes. This works against the two extremes of romanticised history; there was neither the Complementarian golden age suggested above, but neither was there the great heroic feminist struggle for the right to work sometimes assumed at the other end of the spectrum.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Joan W Scott, "The Woman Worker," in *A History of Women in the West Volume IV Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* (Ed Geneviève Frasse and Michelle Perrot. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 399.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Prior, "Women and the Urban Economy: Oxford 1500-1800" in *Women in English Society 1500-1800* (Ed. Mary Prior. Repr. London: Methuen, 1986), 103.

<sup>6</sup> Prior, "Women and the Urban Economy," 108.

<sup>7</sup> Prior, "Women and the Urban Economy," 96.

<sup>8</sup> Kirsten Birkett, *The Essence of Feminism* (The Modern Beliefs Series. Kingswood, NSW.: St Matthias Media, 2000), 106.

Now, of course, these arguments from history may simply be examples of human rebellion against God’s perfect order, so let’s have a look at the wider picture of women and work in the Bible.

## **6.2. Argument 2 –The Biblical perspective**

When setting out our methodology, we noted the dangers of leaping straight to the wider context, not least the particular exegetical problems that each example raises. There is a point at which we do need to set our own passage within its canonical context and so we do so now, whilst proceeding cautiously. I have selected three passages which I believe will help inform our application of “wives submit” to the question of women and the workplace. They are Genesis 2:18-25, Proverbs 31:10-31 and Titus 2:5.<sup>9</sup>

### **6.2.1. Genesis 2**

In Genesis 2, woman is made as man’s helper. Whilst we have already noted that the implications of this in terms of the Egalitarian – Complementarian debate are disputed, there are some observations we can make.

Firstly, there is consensus that whatever this might mean in terms of role subordination, Genesis 1-2 teaches equality of nature. Eve is not a different creature – her “helping” should not be equated with being enslaved like some beast of burden.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, God’s purpose in creating Eve can be seen within the context of the passage. God says that it is not good for Adam to be alone. This is not simply about loneliness; rather, the statement comes within the context of Adam’s work and

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<sup>9</sup> I have included a translation and sentence flow for each of the additional passages referred to in this section as appendixes to this dissertation. In addition, I have listed the relevant commentaries and monographs consulted in the bibliography. Please refer to the Introduction for discussion on some of the interpretative issues affecting our understanding of the key passages.

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Christopher Ash, *Marriage: Sex in the Service of God* (Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 2003), 120, Raymond C Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 1991), 101 and Dorothy Patterson, “The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 1991), 372-373.

worship.<sup>11</sup> Note that this is about worship as well as work. There are two reasons for saying this. Firstly, the “work” words are also “worship” words linked to temple activities.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, the immediate context is God’s command regarding the Tree of Knowledge. God sets a test for Adam. Will he trust and obey him? So Eve is there to help Adam to trust and obey. In other words, although the passage is about aloneness and help, not about loneliness and company per se, it is about much more than functional support. Eve is there as a companion who will know Adam. Intimacy is an important aspect of this.<sup>13</sup>

Such observations mean that whilst women clearly do contribute specifically in the area of child rearing, we should not limit our understanding of women’s role to that.<sup>14</sup>

### 6.2.2. Proverbs 31

First of all, we need to establish the relevance of this particular proverb to our study. The question of relevance could depend upon the purpose of the Proverb. Is this passage to be read in praise of an actual person, or the ideal wife, or is it in fact a metaphor for wisdom and nothing to do with practical family life?<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ash, *Marriage*, 121.

<sup>12</sup> עָבַד appears in Deut 4:19 and Num 3:7-8 giving, the sense of serving God through religious duty and especially through priestly tabernacle service. שָׁמַר is used in Numbers 1:53 with the idea of guarding the tabernacle from intruders. Man is to serve/worship and protect/guard. The two words come together again in the priestly duties (Numbers 3:7-8). Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1. Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1987), 67.

<sup>13</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

<sup>14</sup> Cf Gen 3:16-17.

<sup>15</sup> Longman says, “The description is an ideal and should not be used as a standard by which to measure and critique women.” (Tremper Longman III *Proverbs* (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, Wisdom and Psalms. Grand Rapids, M.: Baker Academic, 2006), 540.) To some extent, whether or not this is an achievable ideal depends on the meaning of verse 18. Does this mean that she works exceptionally long hours well into the night? Waltke thinks that a more likely explanation is that this is a reference to the prosperity that comes with her productivity. Rich people sleep with the lights burning, not in total darkness. (Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs Chapters 15-31* (NICOT. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 526-527.) On the other hand, Perdue and Murphy lean towards the woman here being a metaphor for wisdom. “The poem on ‘the woman of worth’ provides a striking inclusion to the book of Proverbs, which opens with poems dealing with Woman Wisdom in chapters 1, 8, and 9 and now concludes with the concrete example of the wise woman in an Israelite or Jewish house-wife and mother, who, while admittedly wealthy, engages in the sapiential virtues of care, hard labor, wisdom, and the fear of Yahweh.” (Leo G Perdue, *Proverbs* (Interpretation. Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox, 2000), 279. See also Roland Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC 22. Nashville, Tenn.: Nelson, 1998), 246.). However, Wolters sees this is a form of heroic hymn in praise of the ‘valiant woman’. He bases his conclusion on observed similarities with Psalm 112 on which he comments, “Psalm 112 is universally classified as a wisdom psalm, yet it is a kind of mirror image of its twin, Psalm 111, which is usually classified as a hymn. It too, is a perfect alphabetic acrostic, contains a list



I would argue that even if the Proverb is not about an actual person who has achieved all of these things then it is still relevant to our question. Even if it is intended to praise wisdom, then its imagery is still rooted in a particular picture of family life and no matter how idealistic, the image drawn is still intended to be a positive one so that if we find descriptions of women operating in the economic arena and taking leadership responsibilities, those are positive, not negative images.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, I would argue that the imagery here is particularly relevant to the Ephesians 5 context because, on the one hand, the “valiant woman’s” description sits firmly within the context of submission

This woman is described predominantly from the perspective of others, particularly her husband... This type of woman is one who makes husband, children and household happy.”<sup>17</sup>

However, the way that she achieves this is through being economically powerful and industrious. As Longman comments, “the description of the woman is permeated with allusions to her strength and also often uses explicitly military terminology to describe her.”<sup>18</sup>

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of praiseworthy deeds (including compassion and liberality), and culminates in the theme of the fear of the Lord.” (Al Wolters, *The Song of the Valiant Woman: Studies in the Interpretation of Proverbs 31:10-31* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001), 5.) He goes on to argue that, “There is no reason to restrict the term ‘hymn’ to songs in praise of God. Historically at least, the Greek hymns applied to poetry ‘in praise of gods or heroes’.” (Wolters, *The Song of the Valiant Woman*, 6.) Waltke agrees, noting the parallel with Ruth who also was a ‘valiant woman.’ He argues that, “Had the author intended an identification with figurative Woman Wisdom, it is unlikely that he would have referred to her as a ‘valiant wife,’ which denotes a real woman in its other occurrence (12:4)” (Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31*, 519.) So, the jury is out in terms of the commentators. I would suggest that we need to distinguish between how the Proverb functioned in its original form and its canonical role. Thus, its original and most basic interpretation may be seen as praise of a valiant woman. However, it may have an additional function within the canon as an inclusio pointing to Wisdom’s qualities.

<sup>16</sup> Ruth A Tucker, *Women in the Maze. Questions & Answers on Biblical Equality* (Downers Grove, Ill: Inter-varsity Press, 1992), 75.

<sup>17</sup> Longman, *Proverbs*, 540. See also Waltke’s comment on v15 that “a lioness hunts food by night, but not an aristocratic woman! The figure connotes that in keeping with her character she puts the well being of the household before her own comfort.” Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31*, 524.

<sup>18</sup> Longman, *Proverbs*, 540.

The result is that the husband is able to focus on other affairs and become involved in public life. He is not completely absent from the picture but certainly trusts her enough to absent himself from these economic decisions.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.2.3. Titus 2

The verse sets submission to husbands within the context of the wife's role at home. Does this place the wife's focus solely on domestic concerns? It is worth noting here that unlike in Ephesians, the instructions to young wives are set against the background of how the Gospel will be seen by others. What is expected for that specific cultural context may vary from what is required in a more general context.

Even in this context, however, it is unlikely that Paul is setting an overly restrictive condition upon women. To help our understanding here we need to take notice of a textual variant which will affect our interpretation of the verse so that the emphasis could be on wives staying at home or being busy at home. The preference of most scholars is towards the latter.<sup>20</sup>

The idea is that the wife has responsibilities towards the keeping of a happy home, but that this is not her exclusive realm. So Stott comments,

It would not be legitimate to base on this word either a stay at home stereotype for all women or a prohibition of wives being also professional women. What is rather affirmed is that if a woman accepts the vocation of marriage, and has a husband and children, she will love and not neglect them. J.B. Phillips'

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<sup>19</sup> On v11, Murphy suggests that, "The mention of her husband seems almost casual: he serves only to underscore her excellence." "The husband's trust in her is manifested by the relative absence of any significant mention of him in the poem, except for his lounging at the city gates, v23, and praising her, vv28-29." Murphy, *Proverbs*, 246. I think that this is to overplay the husband's absence. Firstly, because the suggestion is not so much that he is "lounging" as that his trust in her enables him to take a significant role in city life. Secondly, because the nature of the wisdom literature suggests that we need to read the book of Proverbs as a whole, the wife's role is emphasised here: elsewhere, the focus is exclusively on husbands and sons. See Waltke, *Proverbs 15-31*, 519.

<sup>20</sup> The choice is between οἰκουρους and οἰκουργους. In terms of the decision of the committee responsible for the UBS Greek text, Metzger comments, "Instead of the word οἰκουρους ... A majority of the Committee preferred the latter reading because of superior external support, and because it was regarded more probable that an unusual word should have been altered by copyists to a well known word, than vice versa." Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Repr. 2ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2000), 585.

word ‘home lovers’ sums up well what Paul has in mind. What he is opposing is not a wife’s pursuit of a profession, but ‘the habit of being idle and going about from house to house.’<sup>21</sup>

### **6.3. Argument 3 -A response to the wider concerns about women and work**

In our third argument, we look at a particular concern raised by some Egalitarians with regards to wives going out to work. Dorothy Patterson sums up these concerns brilliantly:

When a wife goes to work outside the home, often her husband and children go through culture shock. Suddenly the husband has added to his vocational work increased family assignments. He is frustrated over the increase in his own assignments and guilty over his wife’s increased fatigue and extended hours to keep up at home.<sup>22</sup>

Douglas Wilson goes so far as to argue that the husband is failing as a leader and failing to love his wife properly when he sends her to work.<sup>23</sup>

Feminist dogma, engineered by ungodly men, has managed to maneuver (sic) multitudes of women into the workforce outside the home. But this has not changed how men and women relate to one another at all. It cannot. Even though the workplace has far more women in it, the authority of men is still firmly intact. With the rhetoric of equality, women have been duped into working outside the home; they have taken a second job and then have been unable to get their husbands to share the load of the first one.<sup>24</sup>

This accusation is important to our study. Does a husband allowing his wife to work equal a failure to love? Is he placing an additional burden on her? The reality is that

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 5:1 and Tit. 1:11 on “house to house.” John R.W. Stott, *The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press: 1996), 189.

<sup>22</sup> Patterson, “The High Calling of Wife and Mother in Biblical Perspective.” 375.

<sup>23</sup> Note this is the extreme position where wives are in effect not permitted to work at all. However, I would suggest that it is these concerns that underline the generally cautious approach to women and the workplace found amongst many Complementarians.

<sup>24</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, Id.: Canon Press, 2005), 31.

this is all too often the case. From the other side of the debate, Egalitarian writers such as Tucker refer to wives working a second shift, taking on the domestic chores after returning home from their paid employment. She comments,

This is unfair not only to her but also to the family – and to the marriage relationship. How many women really desire sexual intimacies after working a second shift?<sup>25</sup>

There is, however, as Tucker notes, an alternative solution to the problem whereby the husband takes a greater share of the work in the home and greater economic prosperity enables to the employment of other resources and help in the home, whether that's through automated equipment or employing people to help with housework and childcare.<sup>26</sup> Clementina Black observed one group of families the 19<sup>th</sup> century who benefited from two incomes in this way, commenting that,

Such women are nearly always conspicuously competent and are marked by an independence of mind... Almost invariably their houses are well kept and the family accommodation adequate.<sup>27</sup>

The other side to Wilson's argument about a lack of love is that it might be argued that a husband who refuses to allow his wife to use her talents and skills in the workplace demonstrates a lack of trust for her or recognition of her gifts and crushes her spirit. This too is a bad witness.

#### **6.4. Making the decision to work**

We have argued that a wife's submission is for the purpose of becoming one with her husband in the service of God's will.<sup>28</sup> This being so, the important questions about work will not so much be seen in the external roles taken on<sup>29</sup> as in the underlying

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<sup>25</sup> Tucker, *Women in the Maze*, 237-28.

<sup>26</sup> Tucker, *Women in the Maze*, 237-238.

<sup>27</sup> Clementina Black, "Introduction," in *Married Women's Work* (Ed. Clementina Black. 1915. Repr. London, Virago Press, 1983), 7.

<sup>28</sup> See especially Chapters 3 and 5.

<sup>29</sup> See the quote from Foh above.

motives and attitudes that the couple exhibit as they reach a decision about the question of work.

Indeed, it is possible to assume that we have obeyed Ephesians 5 by taking on traditional roles, but if the husband is harsh or abdicates responsibility and the wife is embittered, disgruntled with life and acting out of a sense of compulsion, then real love and submission are not present. These things are about a heart attitude. So attempting to apply Ephesians 5:21ff outside of the conventional norms challenges us to think about the state of our hearts. What are our real motives? What is the genuine state of our relationship?

This does mean that there are some wrong reasons for wives taking paid employment. Whilst wise stewardship requires that we think about the economic implications for family life and support of Gospel work, it is wrong to make the decision because of material insecurity – either the desire for more or the fear that God will not meet our needs.

Another wrong motive is picked up by Kirsten Birkett. Birkett notes that the motive for women to find paid employment within feminist thought is the desire for freedom or independence from the perceived drudgery and slavery of home life.<sup>30</sup> She cites feminist author Simone de Beauvoir who argues that, “As long as there is restriction on a person, be that financial, social, family or whatever, that person is not living a true life to themselves.”<sup>31</sup> Birkett comments,

This is what de Beauvoir refers to as transcendence-getting beyond the mundane inanities of day-to-day life, having the freedom to dream and live out dreams, be more than just a survivor and become someone who truly lives.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Birkett, *The Essence of Feminism*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Birkett, *The Essence of Feminism*, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Birkett, *The Essence of Feminism*, 64. I think that Birkett has particularly in mind de Beauvoir’s comment that, “Since the husband is the productive worker, he is the one who goes beyond family interest to that of society, opening up a future for himself through co-operation in the building of the collective future; he incarnates transcendence. Woman is doomed to the continuation of the species and the care of the home – that is to say immanence.” Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949. Repr. Trans and Ed. H. M. Parshley, Hammondswoth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1984), 448. This is important because if Birkett is right, existential philosophy is behind feminism and if so, then

So feminism sees women as having an existential need for freedom and independence. It is possible to view paid employment as a means of achieving this.

However, as we have seen, unity not independence is the norm within Christian marriage. This means that the decision should be for the greater good, not personal benefit. Her decision to work must be aligned with her husband's priorities which themselves should be aligned with Christ's. In other words, will her decision to work act to further the gospel?

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potentially even if not self consciously, may undergird Egalitarian thought. I do not mean that Egalitarians are Existentialists, but that they may have imported Existential thinking to their approach.

## 7. Decision Making

How do we couples make decisions in the light of Ephesians 5:21-33? If wives submit to their husbands, does that mean that, as the head, he is responsible for all decision making? Must she give in to him when there is an argument?

What then about our wife from the previous scenario? Her ability to command a superior wage to her husband may well reflect greater intellectual capability and a temperament suited to decision making. What if she has also been a Christian for longer, knows her Bible better and is generally seen as more spiritually mature? We may identify three main approaches to the question.

### 7.1. Egalitarian

This position focuses on mutual submission and assumes that any hierarchical overtones in the household codes were cultural.

Balswick and Balswick argue that too often in marriage we view power as 100 units shared between the couple 50-50 and so it competed over.<sup>1</sup> Husbands attempt to win control by dominating, whilst wives, often encouraged by marriage books, learn to manipulate the decision.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, they recommend, “equal partnership marriages...based on ‘mutual empowerment.’”<sup>3</sup> Decision making is something done together requiring listening, compromise and putting the other’s interests first until a shared decision is made.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Judith K Balswick and Jack O Balswick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos), 2004), 450.

<sup>2</sup> “The not-too-subtle intent of many women’s books is to teach wives how to manipulate their husbands in order to get what they want. This approach views the husband as the weak link because the subordinate wife can easily outsmart him. She is taught to use sex to get her way.... By merely disobeying him or refusing sex, or showing little interest in the relationship, she brings his masculine ego into question. At this point, his power is effectively reduced to zero, leaving him alone and desperate.” Balswick and Balswick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” 451.

<sup>3</sup> Balswick and Balswick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” 452.

<sup>4</sup> Balswick and Balswick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” 452.

The philosophical and theological necessity of this approach is set out by Groothuis. She argues that if wives are not active and equal in decision making, then we cannot claim that they are equal in nature with their husbands.<sup>5</sup> She argues that because women are excluded from leadership in the home and the church, this means that male qualities are characterised in terms of leadership, strength and rationality.<sup>6</sup> Female responsibilities such as child rearing require qualities shared with all female creatures in the animal world; thus women are denied qualities and responsibilities that distinguish them as human.<sup>7</sup>

I find Groothuis' analysis suspect. It isn't decision making and leadership that distinguishes humans from animals. If that were so, then many men who lack leadership responsibilities and intellectual capability would also be seen in some sense as less human. Furthermore, there are significant, observable distinctions between the way that a female animal raises its young and human home making and child nurturing activities.

However, we should not lose sight of one of the strengths of the Egalitarian approach. It is telling that both Christian and secular marriage courses and books highlight how conflict arises in marriage because of our tendency to be selfish and point score.<sup>8</sup> Balswick's comments about point winning are instructive and remind us that the focus in Ephesians is on unity.

We are left with one question though. What happens when a quick decision is needed and an impasse is reached?

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<sup>5</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role": Exploring the Logic of Woman's Subordination," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordon D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos), 2004), 304.

<sup>6</sup> Groothuis, "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role," 308.

<sup>7</sup> Groothuis, "Equal in Being, Unequal in Role," 309.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Nicky and Sila Lee, *The Marriage Book: How to Build a Lasting Relationship* (London: Alpha, 2000), 109. See also Sarah Litvinoff, *The Relate Guide to Better Relationships*. London: Vermilion, 1991, 87 – 89.



## 7.2. Hard Complementarian<sup>9</sup>

This approach focuses on headship and submission. It assumes that there is no such thing as mutual submission.

In this scenario, husbands are responsible for making the decisions. So, for example, Wilson notes that “headship” functions indicatively and not imperatively in Ephesians 5. The husband is not instructed to “be the head.” He is the head. The question is whether he will be a good head or a bad head. As we have seen before, for Wilson, failing to lead is failing to love.<sup>10</sup> He refers to this as “nice man syndrome.” The husband may be seen as gentle and caring, but in fact, whenever he abdicates his leadership responsibility, (for example by refusing to make decisions<sup>11</sup>) he leaves her frustrated.<sup>12</sup>

This hierarchical approach may at times be softened by the suggestion that when making decisions, husbands are to listen, take advice, delegate.<sup>13</sup> However, decision making remains firmly their responsibility. They are to take account of the family’s needs and make wise decisions.<sup>14</sup>

The problem with Wilson’s approach is that husbands are “nowhere told, ‘Exercise your headship!’”<sup>15</sup> O’Brien’s point is emphatic. The husband’s model is Christ. Whilst the full eschatological picture does show Christ with all authority and power, crushing his enemies, the focus of the love parallel is seen in Christ’s incarnation and his willingness to humble himself.

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<sup>9</sup> I am essentially following Balswick and Balswick’s categories here where they distinguish between “hard patriarchy” and “soft patriarchy.” Balswick and Balswick, “Marriage as a Partnership of Equals,” 449.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Reforming Marriage* (Moscow, Id.: Canon Press, 2005), 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 81.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 77.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. George W Knight III, “The Family and the Church: How should Biblical Manhood and Womanhood work Out in Practice?” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood. A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem. Wheaton, Il.: Crossway, 1991), 349.

<sup>14</sup> Knight, “The Family and the Church,” 349.

<sup>15</sup> Peter T O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 419.

Indeed, we might reverse Wilson's thinking and argue that leadership is about love. The leader takes the initiative in being the first to act sacrificially for the needs of the other. He sets the agenda and the tone of the relationship.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, I do not think that the husband should overrule where there is an impasse. He should be patient, keep loving, keep caring, even if that means for a time that things do not work out as he thinks they should.

However, Wilson does make a helpful point by connecting headship with a responsibility that cannot be relinquished. He says,

Now a godly husband may decide, after taking his wife's concerns into account, to do things 'her way.' But in a godly home, as soon as he does this, it becomes his decision. He is entirely responsible for it. Once the decision is made, it is his decision. If his wife tries to blame herself for how it all turned out, he should restrain her. 'No, dear. This is all my doing.' It may have been her idea in the discussion, but in a biblical home, it was his idea to *do* it.<sup>17</sup>

This does portray the husband as loving and protecting his wife. By taking responsibility, he does two things. He protects her from carrying blame and he minimises the potential for conflict. This is the sort of empowering leadership that frees people to make decisions.

### **7.3. Soft Complementarian<sup>18</sup>**

Like the Egalitarian position, this approach places the emphasis on mutual submission but still see a place for headship. Husbands do have leadership responsibilities; so, for example, Huggett envisages a scenario equivalent to that of the chairman having the casting vote.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 419.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 82.

<sup>18</sup> See note above on the "Hard Complementarian" approach.

<sup>19</sup> Joyce Huggett, *Two Into One? – Relating in Christian Marriage*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981, 51. Note that in such a case it isn't about one being better than the other. After all, if she was

One church pastor I spoke to talked about mutual submission meaning that, “lose-lose becomes win-win.” The husband and wife both put the other’s needs first and, as a result, both benefit. Again though, he saw the husband as head having ultimate leadership responsibility.<sup>20</sup> Another pastor comments that, “There is mutual submission and final submission.” This means that there are many shared decisions and decisions that the wife takes responsibility for and a loving husband will allow her to make decisions even when he disagrees sometimes. However, he has responsibility for shaping the spiritual tone and agenda of the marriage.<sup>21</sup>

#### **7.4. Response**

I believe that the third position is closest to what we have discovered to be the implications of Ephesians 5, with some modifications.

The casting vote approach might be a little simplistic and lead to the assumption that marital decisions are made in isolation. However, we have seen that the household codes must be read in context. In Ephesians 5, both the broader context of unity and the immediate context portraying the life of a spirit filled community discourage an isolationist view. Decisions are made not only in submission to husband and wife but also to one another in the church. There is a place for receiving help from others, especially the godly advice of elders in the church.

I agree that the responsibility for setting the tone is important. In that regard, husbands should not hide behind the spiritual maturity question. We may be temperamentally or intellectually unsuited to certain aspects of decision making, but spiritual maturity is not a fixed state characteristic outside our control. We are responsible for growing in maturity and, in the immediate context, we see that being filled with the Spirit is an imperative. Therefore, husbands should take responsibility for their spiritual state and seek to grow. As they do so, they can set the tone to

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the more capable, then even a wise leader would let her make the decision. It is when there is an impasse of equally guided, equally gifted people that the problem arises.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Jenkins, Pastor of Christchurch Baldock, Hertfordshire. I interviewed a number of pastors face to face and via email as part of my research. Where permission has been given, I have cited them by name and included their responses as Appendix 12. See Appendix 12. Section V.12.1.)

<sup>21</sup> Wesley Aiken, Pastor of Rochester Baptist Church, Medway, Kent. (See Appendix 12. Section V.12.2.)

married life both by their example of sacrificial love and by reminding the family about their priorities as Christians.

This means that headship and submission impact the content as well as the process of decision making. The wife, as helper, is not submitting to her husband's arbitrary demands: she is relinquishing any claim to an independent agenda for self advancement and joining herself to his agenda. However, that agenda has already been set for him as it is God's agenda reflected in the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission.

Finally, we have seen in our exegesis of Ephesians 5 that whilst headship and submission are present, these are means to an end. The primary focus of the passage is on unity: becoming one flesh. This means that when an outsider observes the couple making decisions, their attention should not be captured by the way that he leads and she submits. Rather, what they should see is that the two are together, of one mind in the decision. Our aim should be to grow together so that instead of protracted discussion to reach decisions, we instinctively know and share the other's will on a matter.

## 8. Protection and Abuse

### 8.1. The Problem

So far, our scenarios have assumed a reasonably positive family situation. We have considered to some extent the husband's responsibility when his wife is unwilling to submit to his leadership in decision making, but what happens when the context turns more sinister?

Violence and abuse in the home is an issue that cannot be ignored in a study such as ours. Whilst for various reasons it is difficult to establish exact figures about the prevalence of abuse, we know that it is a problem both in the church and wider society.<sup>1</sup>

A number of scholars and practitioners are concerned that a Complementarian interpretation of Ephesians 5 may be used to justify a wife "meekly" accepting not just inconsiderate behaviour, but also domestic violence and rape.<sup>2</sup> In one study on Domestic Abuse, Carolyn Heggen reflects,

In my early years as a therapist, I was surprised and saddened that many of the perpetrators of sexual abuse and domestic violence I counselled professed to

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<sup>1</sup> The problem revolves around two issues. Firstly, how do we define domestic abuse? To restrict the definition to physical assault alone is clearly too restrictive and does not recognise the long term consequences of emotional abuse. However, defining emotional abuse is trickier. Where do arguments finish and abuse start? Most experts are, however, clear that the category should be interpreted widely. For example, Berry says, "Domestic violence is not limited to physical battery but may include other forms of abuse as well... Susan Forward P.H.D. has described abuse as, '...any behaviour that is intended to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation and verbal or physical assaults... It is the systematic persecution of one partner by another.'" Dawn Bradley Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook* (Los Angeles, CA.: Lowell House, 1998), 1. On this basis, we note from the same book that, "In April 1994...there [were] 4 million reported instances of domestic violence in the United States." Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, 6. Meanwhile, in the UK, Mooney comments that based on her survey of families in North London in 2000, "Whether it is defined as mental cruelty, threats, actual violence with injury or rape, it has occurred to at least a quarter to a third of all women in their life time." Jane Mooney, *Gender, Violence and the Social Order* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 161. The second problem is that much of what we would count as domestic violence goes unreported because it happens behind closed doors and, "Victims often feel misplaced shame or guilt at being a victim. Some are constantly told by their abusers that they bring the violence upon themselves, and eventually this message becomes internalized." Jane Conway, *Domestic Violence and the Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998), 9.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. I.H. Marshall, "Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*. (Ed. Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and Gordan D. Fee. Leicester: Apollos, 2004), 192.

be Christians. I was particularly confused by the many perpetrators who claimed to see no conflict between their behaviour and their Christian beliefs. Some even justified their behaviour by citing biblical passages and religious principles.<sup>3</sup>

She identifies four religious justifications for abuse:

- “God intends that men dominate and women submit.”<sup>4</sup>
- “Woman is morally inferior to man and cannot trust her own judgement.”<sup>5</sup>
- “Suffering is a Christian virtue and women in particular have been designed to be ‘suffering servants.’”<sup>6</sup>
- “Christians must quickly forgive and be reconciled with those who sin against them.”<sup>7</sup>

These excuses or justifications suggest two important issues. Firstly, can men legitimately use the concept of “headship” to justify physical violence against women? Secondly, does submission require women to stay within an abusive relationship and endure violence?

So this is an issue we cannot ignore. Even if the problem was not present in the church, we would have to reflect on how our teaching is heard by new Christians coming from abusive contexts. But it is a real problem within the church as well. A US survey by James and Phyllis Alsdurf of 5000 protestant pastors in the 1980s identified that,

Of those who did respond, four fifths indicated that they had confronted wife abuse in the ministry and had counselled a woman who had been physically abused by her husband. One-third of the pastors had counselled six or more

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Holderread Heggen, “Religious Beliefs and Abuse,” in *Women, Abuse and the Bible*. (Ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R Beck. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1996), 15.

<sup>4</sup> Heggen, “Religious Beliefs and Abuse,” 16.

<sup>5</sup> Heggen, “Religious Beliefs and Abuse,” 19.

<sup>6</sup> Heggen, “Religious Beliefs and Abuse,” 22.

<sup>7</sup> Heggen, “Religious Beliefs and Abuse,” 24.

women. Three fifths of them had counselled a victim during the six months immediately preceding the questionnaire.<sup>8</sup>

## **8.2. Response**

### **8.2.1. Ephesians 5 does not encourage abuse**

We must not lose sight of the fact that the context of Ephesians 5:22 is the husband's love and care for his wife and the purpose is that they are becoming one. So a proper use of Ephesians 5 language, even within a hard Complementarian context, does not justify abuse because the Ephesians 5 husband's aim is for the wife to realise her true beauty and potential.<sup>9</sup>

We should not be surprised that people misuse the Bible. We can identify a number of factors present that seem to increase the likelihood of abuse, but we should not forget that the underlying issue is sin and this has always resulted from the misuse of Scripture.<sup>10</sup> Our response must be to ensure that Scripture is taught clearly and accurately.

### **8.2.2. Submission does not mean accepting abuse**

Submission and abuse are not equivalent. Firstly, because, as O'Brien explains, the command is for "free and responsible persons" so that it "can only be heeded voluntarily, never by elimination or breaking of the human will much less by means of servile submissiveness."<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, because this service is "as the Lord" then "wives are not to be subordinate in matters that are sinful or contrary to God's commands."<sup>12</sup> I would interpret this broadly to include such situations where she is the victim and the sin can be prevented by recourse to law. So ἐν παντί does not mean that she is to meet her husband's

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<sup>8</sup> Conway, *Domestic Violence and the Church*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> Conway, *Domestic Violence and the Church*, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Conway, *Domestic Violence and the Church*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Peter T O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester: Apollos: 1999), 411 – 412.

<sup>12</sup> (cf. Acts 5:29), O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 418.

every whim.<sup>13</sup> It means that the scope of her voluntary submission is not limited to particular aspects of life. As O'Brien says, "In this sense it is all encompassing and is not, as some have suggested, restricted to sexual matters or some other special sphere of their relationship."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, because this is her voluntary act, it is not dependent upon the husband reciprocating with love. That is his responsibility.<sup>15</sup>

We are still left with a problem. Ephesians 5 appears to deal with the ideal scenario where husband and wife love and submit after the pattern of Christ. Best thinks that, "Our text provides an idealized picture of husbands and wives which only a male author could have depicted, or left unchanged if he drew it from a traditional HT."<sup>16</sup>

This means that this passage does not tell us what to do when things go wrong. It does not answer questions about whether or not she should leave him, when to leave and whether this should be on a permanent or temporary basis. However, I do not think that this is as big a problem as it first appears. We cannot expect one text to take the weight of all possible scenarios. There is a wider body of teaching on marriage and divorce and also on suffering. It is important that we recognise that teaching about submission and headship after the pattern of Christ must be distinguished from teaching about suffering unjustly. If a wife chooses voluntarily to remain in a potentially abusive relationship, she does so because she is willing to suffer, not because she is willing to submit.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eph 5:24.

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 417.

<sup>15</sup> O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 418.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (ICC. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), 538.

<sup>17</sup> So I would argue first that texts about a husband's responsibility to his wife to provide for her and the possibility of divorce where he fails to provide for her are relevant to the discussion, noting that the subject of divorce remains controversial. (See Ash and others). In terms of suffering, one would need to consider the wider Biblical data on persecution, suffering for doing good and responding to harsh masters. The data on Paul's response to unjust treatment at Philippi suggests that being prepared to suffer does not preclude recourse to the protection of the Law. Given that the Law in most western countries provides protection for the victims of domestic abuse, I think that Pastors should proactively encourage wives to resort to the Law. Even though it is possible that she may choose instead to forgive and even to suffer, my presumption would be towards emphasising the legal recourse available, especially given the phenomena of Learned Helplessness where many battered wives chose to "cope" rather than "escape." Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, 37-38. "A woman who appears to have control over a situation – a car in the driveway and an unlocked door – but who has been 'trained' to believe that she does not have choices is more likely to cope than escape." Berry, *The Domestic Violence Sourcebook*, 38.



### 8.2.3. Biblical marriage is there to protect the couple

Wilson makes the telling point that wives are asked to submit to their husbands, not to men in general.<sup>18</sup> Marriage should protect against wider tyranny in society. So for example, whilst most counsellors are concerned about the harmful affects of jealousy in marriage, there is a godly jealousy which means that a husband will honour and protect his wife.<sup>19</sup>

Earlier, we noted the benefits of mutual submission within community. The couple are never isolated in their relationship. However, there is exclusiveness to marriage as reflected by the leaving and cleaving of verse 32 which protects against over interference, even by parents and in – laws.<sup>20</sup>

Ephesians 5:22-33 provides vital instruction on the cultivation of a godly marriage relationship where the husband may be head of his wife, but the focus is on mutual submission in love. Domestic abuse contradicts both the spirit and letter of the passage. The wider Biblical material gives guidance on what to do when the spirit of Ephesians 5 is not present in a marriage.

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<sup>18</sup> Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 97.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 97.

<sup>20</sup> See Nicky and Sila Lee, *The Marriage Book: How to Build a Lasting Relationship* (London: Alpha, 2000), 205 – 216.

### **III. Conclusion**

#### **III. 1. Summary of Findings**

In Part 1, we argued for what might be described as a “Soft-Complementarian” interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33. We argued that:

The household code needs to be understood within its immediate context – the letter to the Ephesians. This pushes us towards a trans-cultural application of the passage because the wider context is that the church is a witness to God’s great eschatological plan to bring order and unity in, through and for Christ. Marriage is modelled on and is a picture of Christ’s relationship to his church.

Husbands and wives are called to “mutual submission.” We submit to one another in Christ. Husbands are called to love their wives and to offer costly sacrificial service to them. This would have been counter-cultural for Paul’s readers.

Headship refers to authority and leadership. There is order within marriage. Although wives know that they are of equal value to their husbands, they are to submit voluntarily as part of their worship to God. This is counter cultural for modern readers.

The primary focus in Ephesians 5 is on unity. Husbands and wives are “one flesh.” They should be working towards becoming of one mind on all matters within their marriage.

In Part 2, we considered the practical outworking of this interpretation with regard to three scenarios. We argued that whilst there is order within marriage, this does not mean that the husband is responsible for making every decision. However, he should, by his example, set the tone of the relationship and create a framework for godly decision making. Headship and submission mean that husbands and wives are not working towards independent goals. Rather, they are working towards a single purpose; the fulfilment of God’s creation purposes as expressed in the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission. Therefore, where it serves this purpose, it is not

only permissible but is right and proper that a godly wife will enter the workplace and even become the lead earner in the marriage. We saw that godly marriages are based on love and involve voluntary submission. Such marriages should not be abusive or controlling but should instead provide protection against outside abuse and control.

### **III.2. Concluding Remarks**

I used to assume that a Christian marriage will be a faithful witness to Christ if the order of husband as head and wife submitting could clearly be seen. Now I would say that whilst those components remain vital to a healthy marriage, the actual witness to others is more to be seen in the unity of mind and purpose of a Christian couple as they are now “one flesh.”

**[14,825 Words]**

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<sup>1</sup> See also Appendix 12 where the notes from conversations with a number of pastors on their approach to marriage counselling are included.

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## **V. Appendices**

## V.1. Appendix 1: Translation of Ephesians 5:21-33

<sup>21</sup> And you will submit<sup>a</sup> to one another in fear of Christ, <sup>22</sup> wives to<sup>b</sup> their own husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For a husband is head of his wife as also Christ is head of the Church, he is the saviour of the body. <sup>24</sup> Even so,<sup>c</sup> as the Church submits to Christ, in the same way the wives [should submit]<sup>d</sup> to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself on behalf of her <sup>26</sup> in order to sanctify her with the cleansing of water by the word <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the glorified church to himself, without spot or wrinkle so that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands ought to love their own wives as their own body. Whoever loves his own wife, loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no-one ever hated his own body but he nourishes it and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the Church, <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “Because of this, a man will leave his Father and his mother and be united with his wife and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery; and I am<sup>243</sup> speaking about Christ and the Church. <sup>33</sup> So then,<sup>e</sup> you also, every one of you, each should love his wife in the same way that he loves himself, and the wife ought to fear her husband.

### Notes

<sup>a</sup> ὑποτασσομενοι is possibly a temporal participle but we have taken it to be a participle of result. This would fit with the flow of consequences seen to result from being filled with the Spirit. Although, syntactically, it could be a participle of means, this would suggest a mechanistic approach to being filled with the Spirit out of keeping with the Pauline emphasis on grace found in the epistle.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>b</sup> The majority of manuscripts lack the verb “submit” here. However, it is implicit and supplying it smoothes the reading of the text.

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<sup>243</sup> Or “but I am...” The important thing is that the construction is intended to emphasise that Paul himself is drawing this conclusion (cf. Matt 5). It is not intended to show contrast with what has gone before.

<sup>244</sup> On this point, see, Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 639.

<sup>c</sup> The Greek here is ἀλλά, so it could be emphatic<sup>245</sup> as in the sense of “Now” (NIV). However, more likely it carries an adversative force, referring only to the last clause of the previous verse.<sup>246</sup>

<sup>d</sup> The words “should submit” once again are absent from the Greek text and included for the sense of flow.

<sup>e</sup> πλήν can have a summing up force (e.g. “in any case”).<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> BDAG, 45b.

<sup>246</sup> Andrew T Lincoln, *Ephesians* (WBC42. Dallas, Texas: Word, 1990), 372.

<sup>247</sup> BDAG, 826b.

## V.2. Appendix 2. Ephesians 5:21-33 Sentence Flow<sup>248</sup>

21  
Ἐποτασσομένοι ἀλλήλοις  
22 ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,  
αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν  
23 ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,  
ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἐστίν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς  
24 ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,  
αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος·  
ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ,  
οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν  
25 ἐν παντί.  
Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας,  
καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν  
καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς,  
26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγιάσῃ  
καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος  
ἐν ῥήματι,  
27 ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,  
μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων,  
ἀλλ' ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος.  
28 οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες  
ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα.  
ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα  
29 ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ.  
γάρ οὐδεὶς ... ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν  
ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν,  
καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν,

<sup>248</sup> Finite verbs, Participles, Infinitives, Imperatives, Subjunctives, Christ/Lord, The Church, likewise/Similarly/as/in the same way/Just as

30

ὅτι μέλη ἔσμεν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.

31

ἀντὶ τούτου

καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα

καὶ

προσκολληθήσεται

πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ,

καὶ

ἔσονται οἱ δύο

εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

32

τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν·

δὲ

ἐγὼ ... λέγω

εἰς Χριστὸν

καὶ

εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

33

πλὴν καὶ

ὕμεις οἱ καθ' ἓνα,

ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα

οὕτως

ἀγαπάτω ὡς ἑαυτόν,

δὲ

ἢ ...γυνὴ

ἵνα

φοβῆται τὸν ἄνδρα.



### V.3. Appendix 3. Ephesians 5:15-20

<sup>15</sup> Watch therefore how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Because of this, do not become foolish but make sure you know what the Lord's will is. <sup>18</sup> Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit <sup>19</sup> with the result<sup>249</sup> that you will speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, you will sing and praise the Lord in your heart, <sup>20</sup> you will give thanks for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to our God and Father, <sup>21</sup> and you will submit to one another in the fear of Christ.

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<sup>249</sup> I take the participles in this text to be result participles rather than participles of means. See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 639.

V.4. Appendix 4. Sentence Flow Ephesians 5:15-21<sup>250</sup>

15

Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς  
πῶς περιπατεῖτε  
μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι

ἀλλ’

16

ὡς σοφοί,

ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν,  
ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν.

17

διὰ τοῦτο  
μὴ γίνεσθε ἄφρονες,  
ἀλλὰ  
συνίετε  
τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου.

18

καὶ  
μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνω,  
ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἀσωτία,

ἀλλὰ  
πληροῦσθε

19

ἐν πνεύματι,

λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς  
[ἐν] ψαλμοῖς  
καὶ  
ᾠμοῖς  
καὶ  
ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς,

ᾄδοντες

καὶ

ψάλλοντες

τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ,

20

εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε  
ὑπὲρ πάντων  
ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ  
τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί.

21

ὑποτασσόμενοι<sup>251</sup> ἀλλήλοις  
ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

<sup>250</sup> Indicative Finite verbs, Participles, Infinitives, Imperatives, Subjunctives,

<sup>251</sup> Note the participles are present, nominative, in this particular case passive, in the other cases active.

## **V.5. Appendix 5. Genesis 2 &3 Translation**

### **V.5. 1 Genesis 2:15-25**

<sup>15</sup> Then Yahweh God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it <sup>16</sup> Yahweh God commanded the man saying; “You may freely<sup>a</sup> eat from all the trees of the garden <sup>17</sup> but you may not eat from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, because on the day you eat from it you will surely die.”

<sup>18</sup> Then Yahweh God said “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make for him a helper who compliments him.”<sup>b</sup> <sup>19</sup> Then Yahweh God formed from the ground all the domestic animals<sup>c</sup> and all the birds of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them and whatever the man called the living creatures, that was their name. <sup>20</sup>The man called and named all the wild animals, all the birds of the air and all the domestic animals but there wasn’t found a helper for man who complimented him. <sup>21</sup> So Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and he slept. Then he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. <sup>22</sup> Then Yahweh God formed the rib which he had taken from the man into woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said “At last this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. This one is called woman because this one has been taken from man.” <sup>24</sup> Because of this, a man will forsake<sup>d</sup> his father and mother and cling to his wife and they will become one flesh.

<sup>25</sup> Now the two of them were naked, the man and the woman, and they were not embarrassed.

### **V. 5.2 Genesis 3:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> To the woman He said “I will greatly increase your toil and your pregnancy, in pain you will bear children and you will long for your husband but he will rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> Then to the man he said “Because you listened to the voice of your wife...”

## Notes

<sup>a</sup>“Freely” following Wenham’s translation of **אכל תאכל**. The infinitive absolute followed by the second person singular infinitive providing emphasis on the “permissive nuance” (alternatively “You may surely eat”).<sup>252</sup>

<sup>b</sup>**עזר כנגדו** As Wenham comments, “The compound prepositional phrase ‘matching him,’ [insert Hebrew] literally, ‘like opposite him’ is found only here. It seems to express the notion of complementarity rather than identity.”<sup>253</sup>

<sup>c</sup>**כל־חית השדה** Literally, “beasts of the field.”

<sup>d</sup>Not a literal abandoning. The wife often joined her husband’s household.<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> See Gordon J Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC 1. Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1987), 47.

<sup>253</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

<sup>254</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71.

## V.6. Appendix 6. Genesis 2:15-24 Sentence Flow

15 וַיִּקַּח יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הָאָדָם

וַיַּנְחֵהוּ בְּקֵדְרוֹן

לְעִבְדָּהּ

וּלְשִׁמְרָהּ:

16 וַיִּצַּו יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל־הָאָדָם

לֵאמֹר

מִכָּל עֵץ־הַגֵּן אֲכַל תֹּאכַל:

וּמֵעֵץ הָדָעַת טוֹב וְרַע לֹא תֹאכַל מִמֶּנּוּ

כִּי בְיוֹם אֲכַלְךָ מִמֶּנּוּ

מוֹת תָּמוּת:

17

18 וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים

לֵאמֹר

הִיזֵת הָאָדָם לְכַדּוֹ

אֲעֲשֶׂה־לּוֹ עֹזר כַּנְּגֹדוֹ:

19 וַיִּצַּר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאָדָמָה כְּלִי־חַיִּת הַשָּׂדֶה

וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

וַיָּבֵא אֱלֹהֵי־הָאָדָם

לְרֵאוֹת

מִה־יִקְרָא־לּוֹ

( וְכָל

אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא־לּוֹ הָאָדָם נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה

הוּא שְׁמוֹ):

20 וַיִּקְרָא הָאָדָם שְׁמוֹת לְכָל־הַבְּהֵמָה

וּלְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם

וּלְכָל חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה

( וְלָאָדָם לֹא־מָצָא עֹזר כַּנְּגֹדוֹ):

21 וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים תְּרַדְמָה עַל־הָאָדָם

וַיִּישָׁן

וַיִּקַּח אֶחָת מִצַּלְעָתָיו

וַיִּסְגֵּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתְּנָהּ:

22 וַיִּבֶן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַצֶּלַע

אֲשֶׁר־לָקַח מִן־הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה

וַיָּבֵאָהּ אֶל־הָאָדָם:

23 וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם

זֹאת הִפְעַם עִצָּם מִעֲצָמַי

ובשר מבשרי  
לזאת יקרא אשה  
כי מאיש לקחה זאת:

24 על־כן יעזב איש את־אביו ואת־אמו

ודבק באשתו

והיו לבשר אחד:

25 ויהיו שניהם ערומים האדם ואשתו

ולא יתבששו:

## V.7. Appendix 7. Proverbs 31:10-31

10. A strong woman (woman of strong/good/excellent character) who can find?  
She is worth far more than rubies.
11. Her husband's heart trusts her and he wants for no treasure.
12. She does him good and not evil, all the days of his life.
13. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands.
14. She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from far away.
15. She gets up whilst it is still dark and sets food for her household and what is required (portions/tasks/work) for her (servant) girls.
16. She considers a field and buys it. With the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
17. She girds herself with might and strengthens her shoulder. (She works out?)
18. She can tell that her trade is profitable. Her lamp does not go out at night.
19. She takes the distaff in her hand, she holds the spindle in the palm of her hands,
20. She spreads out her hands to the needy (She is open handed to the needy/Generous), she reaches out her hand to the poor.
21. She does not fear for her house when it snows because all her household are dressed in scarlet.
22. She makes a bed-covering; she is clothed in fine line and purple.
23. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits with the elders of the land.
24. Linen garments she makes, and sells them, she supplies belts to the merchant.
25. Strength and dignity clothe her, she laughs at the days to come.
26. She speaks wisdom (opens her mouth with) and faithful instruction (or the law of kindness/goodness) is on her tongue.
27. She watches carefully the ways of her house and does not eat the bread of idleness.
28. Her children rise and bless her, her husband and he praises her.
29. Many are the daughters who do great things, but you surpass them all.
30. Charm is deceitful and beauty like vapour but the woman who fears Yahweh is to be praised.
31. Give to her the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

## V8. Appendix 8. Galatians 3:21-29 Translation

<sup>21</sup> Then is the Law contrary to God's promise? By no means! For if a law had been given which was able to make alive, then righteousness would be from Law. <sup>22</sup> But Scripture locked us up under sin so that the promise resulting from<sup>a</sup> Christ's faithfulness<sup>b</sup> might be given to those who believe. <sup>23</sup> Before Faith came, we were closely guarded, kept locked up until the coming faith would be revealed, <sup>24</sup> so that the law was our guardian/supervisor until Christ so that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under supervision/a guardian. <sup>26</sup> For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup> For whoever has been baptised into Christ has put on Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there isn't even male and female,<sup>c</sup> for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> This means that if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

### Notes

<sup>a</sup>ἐκ treated as cause or means here. <sup>255</sup>

<sup>b</sup>Assumes the subjective genitive here. I am not denying the concept of "faith in Christ as Pauline" –see but , noting that the argument for subjective genitive seems marginally stronger and faith in Christ could be clarified by using εν as in verse 26. <sup>256</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Not only do we have "male and female" instead of "man and woman" but also the pattern is broken. We go from "neither/nor" to "There isn't/are". I have tried to reflect the changes in the Greek in my translation my translation which attempts to reflect the changes in the Greek by rendering the statement, "There is neither nor...there is neither nor...there isn't even..."

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<sup>255</sup> See Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 371.

<sup>256</sup> See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 116 and also verse 26.



## V.9. Appendix 9. Galatians 3:23-29 Sentence Flow Greek<sup>257</sup>

21

οὖν  
Ὁ ... νόμος  
κατὰ τῶν ἐπαγγελιῶν [τοῦ θεοῦ];  
μὴ γένοιτο.

γὰρ  
εἰ ... ἐδόθη νόμος  
ὁ δυνάμενος  
ζωοποιῆσαι,

ὄντως

ἐκ νόμου  
ἂν ἦν ἡ δικαιοσύνη·

ἀλλὰ  
συνέκλεισεν ἡ γραφή τὰ πάντα  
ὑπὸ ἁμαρτίαν,

ἵνα  
ἡ ἐπαγγελία  
ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ  
δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.

23

Πρὸ  
δὲ  
τοῦ ... ἐλθεῖν τὴν πίστιν  
ὑπὸ νόμον  
ἐφρουρούμεθα  
συγκλειόμενοι  
εἰς τὴν μέλλουσαν πίστιν ἀποκαλυφθῆναι,

24

ὥστε  
ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν  
εἰς Χριστόν,

ἵνα  
ἐκ πίστεως  
δικαιωθῶμεν·

25

δε  
ἐλθούσης ... τῆς πίστεως  
οὐκέτι  
ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν  
ἔσμεν.

26

γὰρ  
Πάντες ... υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε  
διὰ τῆς πίστεως  
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

27

γὰρ  
ὅσοι ...

<sup>257</sup> Finite verbs, Participles, Infinitives, Imperatives, Subjunctives, Optatives

εἰς Χριστὸν  
ἐβαπτίσθητε,  
Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.  
28

οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἰουδαίῳ  
οὐδὲ

Ἑλλήνι,  
οὐκ ἐνὶ δοῦλῳ

οὐδὲ  
ἐλεύθερῳ,  
οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσενι

καὶ  
θηλυ·  
γὰρ

πάντες ... ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστε  
ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.  
29

δὲ  
εἰ ... ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ,  
ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ,  
κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν  
κληρονόμοι.

## V.10. Appendix 10. Titus 2:3-5. Translation

<sup>3</sup>Older women likewise should be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not addicted<sup>a</sup> to much wine. They should be teachers of good <sup>4</sup> so that they may encourage the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup> to be self controlled, pure, <sup>b</sup>busy at home,<sup>b</sup> good<sup>c</sup> and submissive to their own husband. This is so that God's word will not be maligned.<sup>d</sup>

### Notes.

<sup>a</sup>The Greek word here is δεδουλωμένης, the perfect, passive, accusative participle of δουλόω, "to enslave." This is a vivid description of what addiction entails.

<sup>b-b</sup>The question here is whether οἰκουργους is to be preferred or the more common οἰκουρους as attested in a number of variant manuscripts.<sup>258</sup> The former has the idea of 'working at home,' but "does not require a woman to work only at home."<sup>259</sup> This is less restrictive than the latter which has the sense of "Staying at home."<sup>260</sup> This would suggest that the wife's duties were confined to the domestic sphere. When determining the United Bible Society Text, "the majority of the committee preferred" οἰκουργους "because of superior external support, and because it was regarded more probable that an unusual word should have been altered by copyists to a well known word, than vice versa."<sup>261</sup>

<sup>c</sup>Note "ἀγαθὰς, 'good' could modify, 'working at home'... This would disrupt the pairing of terms, as would the next phrase. ἀγαθὰς could stand on its own, meaning 'kindly, benevolent' in this context, referring to the young woman's kind treatment of those in her household."<sup>262</sup> If the former approach is taken then the idea is that she is "to be an efficient homemaker."<sup>263</sup> However, for the reasons set out by Mounce we prefer the former translation.<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46. Nashville Tenn.: Nelson, 2000), 406.

<sup>259</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 411.

<sup>260</sup> BDAG, 700.

<sup>261</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Repr. 2ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2000), 585.

<sup>262</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

<sup>263</sup> Towner, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, 1-2 Timothy & Titus* (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series. Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 1994), 238.

<sup>264</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 412.

<sup>d</sup> In this context, wifely conduct is set in the context of how it is perceived by onlookers and the implications for the Gospel. It seems appropriate in this instance to treat the instructions as particular advice as they relate to the cultural context of a specific Christian community. However, we should not read this reason across to every instance of a household code in the New Testament.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> See discussion with David Instone-Brewer (Page 43n1).

## V.11. Appendix 11. Titus 2:3-5. Sentence Flow<sup>266</sup>

3

πρεσβύτιδας ὡσαύτως  
ἐν καταστήματι ἱεροπρεπεῖς,  
μὴ διαβόλους  
μὴ οἴνω πολλῷ δεδουλωμένας,  
καλοδιδασκάλους,

4

ἵνα σωφρονίζωσιν τὰς νέας  
φιλόανδρους εἶναι,  
φιλοτέκνους

5

σώφρονας  
ἀγνάς  
οἰκουργοὺς  
ἀγαθάς,  
ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν,  
ἵνα μὴ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ βλασφημη

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<sup>266</sup> Finite verbs, Participles, Infinitives, Imperatives, Subjunctives,

## **V12. Appendix 12. Interviews with Pastors and Practitioners**

I am very grateful to several pastors, theologians and counsellors who have given up their time to discuss their approach to Marriage Guidance with me. Where they were willing, I have cited them within the body of the dissertation and included my notes from the discussions here. I hope that these transcripts in and of themselves will be as beneficial to the reader as they were to me.

### **V.12.1. An Interview with Christopher Jenkins: Pastor, Christchurch Baldock**

#### **Introduction**

This interview was conducted on October 9<sup>th</sup> 2007 with Christopher Jenkins, Pastor of Christchurch Baldock, an independent church affiliated to the FIEC. The purpose was to identify Christopher's approach to Marriage Preparation in order to critically evaluate it. There now follows the notes taken at the interview consisting of the five questions that I asked him and my notes based on the responses he gave.

#### **1. What are the key things you would want to cover in a Marriage Preparation?**

1. The Gospel – Christian marriage requires an understanding of this
2. Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ
3. Male Headship – Servant Leadership
4. Expectations – what are your expectations of
  - a. money
  - b. career
  - c. home
  - d. children?

Printed courses are available to cover these things –e.g. Good Book Company

On Headship:

Would teach through Ephesians 5:21-25

“Marriage provides a picture of our relationship to Christ”

It reflects the Trinity 1 Corinthians 11:3

Headship and equality both exist in the Trinity

Marriage works like this

Equal parties but the man has a function of headship

Responsibilities included in this

- a. provision
- b. protection
- c. leadership
- d. ensure wife is flourishing

- a. provision

Ensure the family is provided for. He can delegate this to his wife – but not to sponge from her – or drive her into the ground.

- b. protection

Culturally it remains more acceptable for a man to speak out to defend his wife than vice versa – and the latter can make him look weak.

There are other ways that the wife does care for/protect him – e.g. filtering phone calls to ensure priorities come through and not overworked.

- c. leadership

- d. Ensure the wife is flourishing

Physically

Mentally

Spiritually – is she growing – having a quiet time etc.

Leadership involves training the children.

Wife as helper – not a demeaning role – it is what God designed her for.

Key is submitting to one another – not “lording it over your wife.”

## **2. What is the Purpose of Marriage?**

To fulfil God's design

To work together for the glory of God in the world –Gen 1:26 multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, rule over it.

Work for God's glory – this is what is implied by tilling the soil.

Provide a picture of the relationship of Christ to the Church.

Companionship/parenthood/sex.

The fundamental purpose is serving God together –not children.

However one way we do it is by having and raising children.

Parenthood is the second greatest privilege in the world.

God wants godly parents bringing up godly children.

So it is perhaps selfish to deliberately choose not to have children.

There may be underlying issues such as fear etc – children may be the presenting issue here.

## **3. What advice would you give on Conflict Resolution/ communication?**

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Die to yourself.

Live for your spouse.

We provide “a radical Christian critique of the popular notions of conflict resolution.”

“Self denial – not win-win. We are into ‘lose lose’ where both parties are willing to lose. Paradoxically, both parties then win.”

The husband should lead in this.

## **4. What advice would you give on Communication?**

Christian framework – God is trinity – they talk to one another.

Follow the model of this perfect relationship.

Talk honestly with each other –men are often the worst at this.



## **5. In what cases would you not marry a couple?**

Where a man has left his wife for another woman, definitely not. Where clearly guilty of adultery.

If a couple are divorced but guilt is not clear then would let them remarry.

Would counsel a Christian not to marry a non-Christian but if they insisted would conduct the service as it is better for them to marry than to live together.

## **6. Would your advice to non Christians differ?**

Same in essence – but I would expect less of them.

You would want them to be converted and to radically re-orientate their thinking, but failing this, you would want to modify their worldview.

## **V.12.2. An Interview with Wesley Aiken: Pastor, Rochester Baptist Church, Kent**

### **Introduction**

Below are the responses that Wesley Aiken, pastor of my home church in Rochester gave to the same questions that I asked Christopher Jenkins. I asked some supplementary questions that arose out of my study and also from the answers that Jenkins gave. Wesley's response was provided by email 16/06/2009.

### **Part A**

#### **1. What are the key things you would want to cover in a Marriage Preparation?**

- Communication
- Past influences which shape the couple's view of marriage
- Husband/wife roles
- Ways of maintaining a loving relationship

- Work/life/Church balance.

I do cover other things which can be dealt with at other times (unless I felt they needed to be dealt with before marriage). Two of the most important would be sex and finance.

To be honest, I don't generally use any different passages for marriage than one would use for general Pastoral counselling. The two exceptions are the Ephesian passage and those dealing with the role of men and women e.g. Corinthians.

My view is that it is much better to counsel biblically rather than turn from one passage to another. I don't feel that even the Ephesian passage was primarily written as counselling material for those getting married. It is part of parcel of a general Christian living passage.

## **2. What is the Purpose of Marriage?**

Ah, I differ very much from Christopher Ash on this.

I am not listing these in order of priority (don't think I could do that).

- Companionship/fulfilment in a relationship
- Best relationship within which to rear children
- I do believe it is for the good of society
- You will see I am sticking with the Anglican prayer book on this one.

## **3. What advice would you give on Conflict Resolution/communication?**

- Firstly, do you want to love one another and stay together? If the answer is not sure or no then I don't know even how to try.
- Find out what each thinks is at the heart of the problem – sex, flirtation, lack of communication (whatever) and work on one thing at a time. By one thing I really mean that. I'm not thinking of communication being one thing – I mean

one little thing within communication. So there could be quite few sessions on this.

- I wouldn't work on it unless both do all that is asked.

#### **4. What advice would you give on Communication?**

Some need to be taught how to do this again. Unfortunately, by the time someone like me gets involved one partner has cut off and nothing can be done.

#### **5. In what cases would you not marry a couple?**

If I definitely thought it just wouldn't work or too soon (has happened a few times). I say definitely, because there have been times when I have gone ahead when I was uncertain. I don't think I should get to the stage where I start dictating to couples whether to marry or not.

#### **6. Would your advice to non Christians differ?**

No.

### **B. Supplementary Questions**

#### **1. Would you use Ephesians 5 as part of marriage preparation?**

Comes in under husband/wife role but wouldn't form the major part of the session. However, you've now got me thinking – maybe I should make it the main part.

#### **2. Would you use Ephesians 5 when counselling those experiencing difficulties in their marriage?**

I don't think so. In fact never have. At least not at the start. The problem is that couples wouldn't hear its message at the start. They are starting much further back than that. They are generally not talking, so Eph 5 would be lost on them. Dave the problem as sadly you will find – Bible believing, evangelical, reformed (give them whatever name you like) generally pay no attention to the Bible in a conflict situation. This is ever so sad. I think you know what I mean.

**3. Some commentators argue that the reference in Eph 5:21 to “submitting to one another” means that there should be “mutual submission” between husband and wife, so that there is a sense in which the husband loving his wife acts as a form of submission. What is your take on this?**

Both are true, there is a mutual submission, but there is also a ‘final’ submission (I have just thought of this phrase now). This is where one partner (the husband) has to make a decision which affects the general ‘direction/tone/nature/direction’ of family life.

A simple personal decision is where Rebecca and I will talk about purchasing something. She might want to do something different from me. I come to the conclusion that it is best (and the loving thing to do) to let her have the item. However, if we had to deal with one of our children on a disciplinary matter then Rebecca would have accepted that I had the final say – assuming we differed on the matter. Also, although we talked about us coming to Rochester (which was a major upheaval for Rebecca) in the final analysis it was my decision whether we came or not. I have met quite a few church leaders’ wives who are appalled by this. Surely this is a cause for concern.

**4. What do you think is meant by the word κεφαλή (“head”) in Ephesians 5:23 (Commentators differ on whether the word has the idea of “source,” “pre-eminence” or “authority”)?**

Do we really have to choose between the two? I feel that in the context it has more to do with authority (although I don't like using that word). What about loving considerate leadership?

**5. Do you think that the instruction for wives to submit is applicable to contemporary marriage contexts or would you say that it had a specific application to the culture of the original recipients?**

Yes it is applicable, but as described in point 3 above.

Dave, you are dealing here with a major Pastoral issue, not so much in marriage but in the Church in general. The young women are bombarded with the feminist ethos and it's getting more and more difficult to hold the line. Then other women get a real buzz out of positions of authority at work that while they pay lip service to Eph 5, but in reality it is meaningless in their marriage and the Church. But then I get a little concerned from another point of view. Could it be that our new found understanding of a woman's role in the Church is simply a sop/appeasement to the current thinking?

I know we are all using suitable language to make it appear that we are being Biblical, but the reality is different.

**V12.3. An Interview with the Rev. David Green: Curate, St Philips and St James, Walderslade, Chatham**

**Introduction**

David Green is the Curate at a church in Medway . He is also an old University friend of mine. David trained for Ordained Ministry at Ridley Hall, Cambridge. Whereas Wesley Aiken and Christopher Jenkins are more likely to self identify with the Complementarain position, David trained within an Open Evangelical context. Open Evangelicals tend towards an Egalitarian position.

**Part A**

**1. What are the key things you would want to cover in a Marriage Preparation?**

I think the crucial thing in Marriage Preparation is to facilitate discussion about a number of key areas - children, finances, career hopes, other hopes and dreams. With a Christian couple, of course, ministry and mission come into play as well. I am always shocked but never surprised by how few couples have had serious discussions about such things. I am also keen to facilitate and cover a 'de-Hollywoodising' of marriage; moving people beyond romantic notions of love (not that romance isn't important) to a deeper level that doesn't show love and marriage at the end of the film ending on their wedding day but rather showing this is where it begins with work, grace and forgiveness, honesty, being able to listen to the other, genuine care for the other and a laying down of oneself for the other.

## **2. What is the Purpose of Marriage?**

I think the Common Worship Pastoral Introduction sums it up well. It's given by God, to be a creative relationship for the mutual upbuilding of the two individuals and as the place in which children are to be raised. It also has a 'community' edge to it - a marriage is not done in isolation from the community and, thus, the community also have a role. Both receiving from the blessing of the marriage but contributing to it by support and recognition.

## **3. What advice would you give on Conflict Resolution/ Communication?**

Be honest about the issue, be prepared to listen to the other person's honesty (which is often very hard to hear) and be prepared to consider whether they are right and you are wrong!

## **4. What advice would you give on Communication?**

Keep doing it! It's absolutely crucial. You have to find ways to make time for it. I tend to offer the example of my own marriage where my wife and I have 'pink' nights, so named because they get highlighted in the diary with a pink marker. They are 'date' nights of a kind - doesn't mean we go out necessarily but we spend the evening together and nothing is more important than that it doesn't happen or is replaced in the diary.

## **5. In what cases would you not marry a couple?**

I think my only concerns on this front relate to remarriage of divorcees. As per CofE guidelines, if the relationship I am being asked to bless and confirm in marriage was the cause of a previous marriage break-up, then I can't and won't do that.

## **6. Would your advice to non Christians differ?**

No. I think the advice holds true regardless of faith. There might be some 'additions' in relation to Christians - ministry and mission as I've said already, praying together is crucial etc. I'd also probably couch things in different terms for different audiences but that is to do with helping them understand. I find little point in quoting endless Scripture to non-Christians who have no context for comprehension. I will use it with them, but not to the same degree as I would with a Christian couple.

## **B. Supplementary Questions**

### **1. Would you use Ephesians 5 as part of marriage preparation?**

With Christians, yes. With non-Christians, no. I would make the same point with non-Christians, but without recourse to Scripture. The reason for that is because Paul's argument is built upon Christian images and theology which the non-Christian doesn't understand. Wives are subject to their husbands because Christ is the head of the church – what does that mean to a non-Christian? Similarly, husbands are to love their wives as Christ laid himself down for the church - again, what does that mean to the non-Christian?

### **2. Would you use Ephesians 5 when counselling those experiencing difficulties in their marriage?**

Possibly but I'm struggling to see what circumstances it would be a useful thing to do. If they were a Christian couple where the wife and/or husband were clearly

not fulfilling their part of this model and it was a major reason in the difficulties then yes, but that's a pretty limited number of the overall number you might see in this regard.

**3. Some commentators argue that the reference in Eph 5:21 to “submitting to one another” means that there should be “mutual submission” between husband and wife, so that there is a sense in which the husband loving his wife acts as a form of submission. What is your take on this?**

I agree wholeheartedly. Ephesians 5.21-33 is not written in a vacuum and needs to be read in the context of the whole of the letter. In the preceding passage, the Christians are exhorted to live as children of light and to be careful how they live. The text then pivots on verse 21 - it is both a conclusion to the previous passage and a set-up to verse 22 and following. The imperative command in verse 21 is made apparently indiscriminately to both men and women and Paul then works out what that means for both genders... women subject to their husbands, husbands laying themselves down for their wives. It seems to me that this interpretation is also consonant with the entire New Testament where notions of servanthood, of surrendering oneself for the good of others, of taking up one's cross are the marks of discipleship. I find it deeply anachronistic to try and teach Christians that yes, you are to serve and not consider your own needs before the needs of others and to die upon your own cross in order to follow Christ but then say, except of course in marriage where the women have to submit to the men only. I don't see how that can possibly be consistent with the gospel.

At the very least, even if you find that hard to stomach, we have to take seriously the seriousness of the language Paul uses for men. We are to lay our lives down as Christ did – i.e. dying, sacrificed on a cross, for our wives. To me that sounds like an even higher commitment to servanthood and the surrendering of oneself for another than the wives are asked to make for their husbands.

**4. What do you think is meant by the word κεφαλή. (“head”) in Ephesians 5:23 (Commentators differ on whether the word has the idea of “source,” “preeminence” or “authority”)?**



As I understand it, scholarship is very much divided on this issue at the moment with ‘source’ as a late-coming but very possible interpretation. I have to say I think the difference immaterial as to whether it means ‘source’ or ‘head’ as in ‘top/authority’. Ultimately, those that put a great deal of stress on one single word in this passage might like to think again whether that’s a decent ratio of balance given that one word (head) against an entire paragraph built on the idea of death and self-sacrifice is possibly not a balanced way to approach the passage.

**5. Do you think that the instruction for wives to submit is applicable to contemporary marriage contexts or would you say that it had a specific application to the culture of the original recipients?**

Yes I believe it applies today – providing also you say that husbands also are called as disciples of Christ to lay themselves down as well for their wives. If you are saying wives submit and men are the bosses in marriage relationships then no, I don’t agree with that. But that isn’t about original culture and context. I would hope that my interpretation is consistent with the original interpretation and comprehension of this passage by the Ephesians who first read the letter. If it did not mean that to them then I’m wrong – and I would need to revise my view.

## V. 13. Appendix 13. Scenarios

Here is the full list of scenarios that I identified which could be affected by our understanding of Ephesians 5. In the study itself, we only looked at three particular issues. The reader may wish to follow up some of the scenarios below applying the approach taken within the dissertation.

### A. Earning Power

1. Can both husband and wife work?
2. Can the wife earn more than the husband?
3. What advice to a couple...?
  - a. Who cannot afford a mortgage/rent on his income alone?
  - b. Where she can potentially earn more than him?
  - c. Where he is unable to find work (e.g. economic climate, disability etc)?
  - d. What happens if they have children?
4. What should they do if she is offered the opportunity to advance her career through promotion?
5. What happens if she is asked to work increased hours...?
  - a. Resulting in tiredness?
  - b. Resulting in lost appetite for sex?
  - c. Household chores are not being done?
6. She wishes to/or is asked to relocate to work (and she does not want to)?
7. He wishes to/or is asked to relocate to work (and she does not want to)?
8. She has to work weekends/Sundays?
9. She has a long commute?
10. Her work puts her in life threatening situations?
11. She is encountering problems/ making difficult decisions at work which she then tells her husband about?

### B. Wife has greater Intellectual capabilities/Bible knowledge

1. Who leads family devotions?

2. What should she do if she thinks that her husband has a faulty understanding of an aspect of Biblical teaching?
3. Her husband makes a decision which her Biblical reflection suggests to her is requiring disobedience to God's Word. For example, he requests her to work/shop on a Sunday and she regards this as a contravention of Sabbath Law. He asks her to act to prevent further children for what she regards as selfish reasons and against the creation/cultural mandate. (I'm choosing examples where there may be disputes/disagreement within the Church).
4. The couple disagree on a practical matter to which she has greater expertise. For example, she has specialist knowledge in child discipline – either through training as she has been a school teacher or at home she is the one most frequently disciplining the children and knows what does and doesn't achieve results.

C. She is more Spiritually mature

1. What does a wife do when her husband is failing to lead prayers/Bible Study?
2. Her husband makes a decision which will harm spiritual growth
  - a. E.g. Move to a Church where Bible Teaching is poor?
3. Is this even an acceptable category – i.e. should either partner ever sit back and accept that the other is more spiritually mature – is this too wide a blanket category?

## **V.13. Appendix 13. Notes on Preaching the Haustafel in Eph 5:21-6:9**

### **Part 1**

Think about the context of the passage

Think about the purpose of the book – unity in Christ

How does this passage contribute to that?

Pictures in daily life of Christ's lordship and our submission

Pictures of unity

Our lives as witnesses in micro to what God is doing in macro – in the Church and the cosmos

### **Part 2**

Objections and specific application now

Hasn't slavery been abolished?

Doesn't this make women unequal?

### **Application**

I do think husbands have a specific responsibility –because they are meant to picture Christ.

I don't think this means that they always have to take the lead in every situation – a pattern not a hard and fast rule

They certainly are not to demand it!