

Husbands and Wives: Together at the Cross



SABBATH—AUGUST 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 5:21; Ephesians 5:25–27, 29; 2 Corinthians 11:1–4; Ephesians 5:28–30; Genesis 2:15–25.

MEMORY VERSE: “Husbands, love your wives the same as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. He died to make the church holy. He used the telling of the Good News to make the church clean by washing it with water. Christ died so that he could give the church to himself like [the same as] a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be holy and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other thing wrong in it” (Ephesians 5:25–27, ERV).



**When Jesus comes
into our hearts,
our lives change.**

IN EPHESIANS 5:21–33, Paul talks some more about how Christians must serve and care for each other. Then Paul gives advice to Christian wives (Ephesians 5:22–24) and then to husbands (Ephesians 5:25–32). Finally, Paul ends his talk with some advice for them both (Ephesians 5:33).

How do we, as Christians today, understand Paul's advice? We understand that God wants to make our friendships and family connections new. But Jesus wants to make us new first. This heart change will change all our family connections and friendships. Paul is excited about this change from the old life before Jesus (Ephesians 4:22) to the new life with Him (Ephesians 2:15). When Jesus comes into our hearts, our lives change. We give our lives to Jesus, and His Holy Spirit takes control of us (Ephesians 2:22; Ephesians 3:16; Ephesians 5:18–21; Ephesians 6:17, 18). We live for Jesus and obey Him (Ephesians 4:13, 15, 20–24, 32; Ephesians 5:2, 10, 17, 21–23). This new life is part of God's plan for the human family.

ADVICE TO WIVES (Ephesians 5:21)

What does Paul mean when he tells church members to serve or obey each other? How do we understand this idea? Read Ephesians 5:21 for the answer.

Christians must serve each other because of Jesus (compare Mark 10:42–45; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3, 4). Jesus' love for us is the reason we help other people. Our friendship with Jesus is the most important connection we have. When we put Jesus first, He helps us to know how to love and care for everyone else.

Paul also tells Christian wives to obey their husbands (also, read 1 Peter 3:1, 5). What does Paul mean when he says that a wife must obey her husband the same as Jesus? Ephesians 6:7 helps us answer this question. In this verse, Paul tells slaves to serve their masters as if they were serving Jesus and not men. Colossians 3:18, also, is helpful: "Wives, obey your husbands. This is what the Lord wants you to do" (NLV). So, these verses help us understand that Jesus is the most important Person. As Christians, wives must honor Jesus above their husbands if their husbands ask them to do something that Jesus doesn't want them to do.

In Colossians and Ephesians, we learn that Jesus, and only Jesus, is the Head or Top Leader of the church. The church is the same as Jesus' body (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). "A husband is the head of his wife, just as Christ is the head of the church. Christ is the Savior of the church, which is his body" (Ephesians 5:23, ERV). The church obeys Jesus. This example helps us understand how the wife must obey her husband. We must be careful not to misunderstand this verse. The Bible commands a wife to obey her husband. The Bible commands the husband to love and care for his wife. This command doesn't allow a husband to hurt his wife or hit her. The Bible isn't asking a wife to obey a husband who hurts her in any way.

Why is this advice about when to obey so important to remember? What if a husband is "a mean, nasty, loud, and controlling man who is full of himself? Then this man should never say that the husband is the boss, and the wife must do whatever he says. This man is not the Lord. This man doesn't know what the word 'husband' really means."—Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, page 117, adapted.



The Bible commands the husband to love and care for his wife.

THE CHURCH AS JESUS' BRIDE: PART 1 (Ephesians 5:25–27, 29)

Compare Ephesians 5:25–27, 29 with the story in Ezekiel 16:1–14. What parts of the story in Ezekiel does Paul share in Ephesians 5:25–27, 29?



Paul uses the word picture of a wedding or marriage to explain Jesus' love for the church.

In Ephesians 5:25–27, 29, Paul uses the word picture of a wedding or marriage to explain Jesus' love for the church. Jesus is the Bridegroom from heaven who:

1. Loves the church. The church is the same as Jesus' bride (Ephesians 5:25). We must always remember that Jesus loves us the same as a husband loves his wife.

2. Gives Himself as a wedding gift. In Bible times, the bridegroom "bought" the bride with a large amount of money and goods. This gift of money and goods was named the "bride price." Jesus paid the biggest price of all for the church because He died for us (Ephesians 5:25).

3. Bathes His bride. In Bible times, the bride's helpers and her female family members helped the bride get ready for her wedding. In Paul's picture story, the Bridegroom Jesus helps His bride get ready for the wedding! How? Jesus makes His bride clean and holy. He washes away her sin with water when she is baptized (Ephesians 5:26).

4. Remembers and says God's promise. Jesus also cleans His bride with the "word" (Ephesians 5:26). The "word" is a word picture for God's promise. Jesus makes this promise to the bride when He marries her (compare Ephesians 1:3–14; Ephesians 2:1–10). This promise is the same as the promise God makes to Christians when they give their lives to Him. Wedding engagements and promises in Bible times included contracts or written agreements. These contracts said how much the husband must pay and how much the bride would bring to the marriage from her family.

5. Gets the bride ready. When the bride is finally given to her Groom, she is very beautiful (Ephesians 5:27). Jesus not only washes the bride but also gives the bride clothes to wear and helps her get ready, too.

How does Ephesians 5:25–27, 29 help us understand the way that Jesus feels about us? Why is this thought so comforting?

THE CHURCH AS JESUS' BRIDE: PART 2 (2 Corinthians 11:1–4)

How does Paul use the word picture of a wedding to help Christians understand Jesus' love for them? When does Paul say that the bride is given to the Bridegroom? Read 2 Corinthians 11:1–4 for the answer.

In Ephesians 5:25–27, Paul says that Jesus is the One who gives the bride to Himself! In weddings during Bible times, the groom's best man or the bride's father gave the bride to the groom. But a groom never gave the bride to himself! Paul shows us a different picture. Jesus is the One who gives the church, His bride, to Himself.

Paul uses marriage as a word picture to help us understand this love that Jesus has for His church:

1. Engagement. Jesus offered Himself for the church as the “bride price” or the gift He needed to pay so that He could “marry” her. When Jesus paid this price, He became “engaged” to His bride, the church (Ephesians 5:25).

2. Getting ready for the wedding. As Bridegroom, Jesus continues to wash and clean His bride to get her ready for Himself (Ephesians 5:26).

3. The wedding itself. Jesus gets the bride ready because He wants to give her to Himself at the wedding (Ephesians 5:27). The wedding is a word picture or symbol of Jesus' second coming. At that time, Jesus will come to get His bride, the church, and give her to Himself (Ephesians 5:27; compare 2 Corinthians 11:1, 2; Colossians 1:21–23, 28).

In Bible times, weddings often included a nighttime parade (read Matthew 25:1–13). The groom and his wedding party met at the groom's house, where the new couple would live after they got married. Then the parade started. People in the parade carried lights. Other people played music. Everyone was happy and filled with joy. The crowd of people made their way to the home of the bride's father. The bride joined the parade at her father's house. Or sometimes she went out to meet the parade on the way to her father's house. The parade took the engaged couple to their new home. The guests joined them there for a weeklong feast. At the end of the week, the couple got married. At that time, the bride was given to the bridegroom in marriage.

Paul uses this word picture to help us understand the Second Coming. The long engagement between Jesus and His bride will end. Then they will celebrate the wedding.



Paul uses marriage as a word picture to help us understand this love that Jesus has for His church.

LOVE YOUR WIFE AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF
(Ephesians 5:28–30)

What reason does Paul use to encourage husbands to be loving and kind to their wives? Read Ephesians 5:28–30 for the answer.



**Jesus died for the church.
Jesus takes care of
her every need
(Ephesians 5:25–27).**

Paul gives us a list of rules for the Christian home (Ephesians 5:21–6:9). In Ephesians 5:28–30, Paul has a message for the husband who “hates his own body” (Ephesians 5:29, ICB, also, read Ephesians 5:28). A man who hates himself may start to beat and hurt his wife. In the Roman Kingdom during Paul’s time, the father of the family was very powerful. By Roman law, the father could punish or kill his wife, children, and slaves.

In Ephesians 5:25–27, Paul gives us the most powerful example of love: Jesus’ love for the church. This example gives husbands a new and different model to follow for how to love. Paul asks Christian husbands to love their wives in the same way (Ephesians 5:28) that Jesus loves His bride, the church. Jesus died for the church. Jesus takes care of her every need (Ephesians 5:25–27). Paul asks Christian husbands to stop behaving as non-Christian husbands behave and to match Christ’s love.

In Ephesians 5:28–30, Paul gives Christian husbands a new reason to love their wives: self-love. Paul says, “No person ever hates his own body” (Ephesians 5:29, ICB). Paul doesn’t want Christian husbands ever to beat or hurt their wives. So, Paul invites husbands to remember that they and their wives are joined together as if they were one person. If a Christian husband hurts his wife, he hurts himself. Most people who aren’t crazy don’t do that.

Paul says that Jesus is an example to both wives and husbands. What can you learn from Jesus about loving the members of your own family?

THE BIBLE'S MODEL FOR MARRIAGE (Genesis 2:15–25)

Study the story in Genesis 2:15–25 about how God made the skies and the earth. What happens in the story before the husband and wife are “joined” and “become one” (Genesis 2:24, ERV)?

In Paul’s advice to husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:31), he uses a quote from Genesis 2:24. As Paul talks about how life started, he also talks about the needs of Christian churches and the health of the families that belong to these churches. Paul believes Genesis 2:24 is good advice about marriage for all time. God made sex a part of marriage. Sex is a word picture or symbol for the way that the man and wife join and become one in marriage. Their hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits join together.

Paul uses Genesis 2:24 to help us understand better the love between Christian husbands and wives. When Paul chose a quote from Genesis 2:24, he selected a verse about marriage **before** there was any sin on earth. But we live on an earth filled with sin. Marriages today and in the past often show us ideas about women that are wrong. Some modern ideas about sex say that a woman should be under the full control of a man and serve him the same as a slave. But the Bible doesn’t teach this idea about sex. Paul says that in the beginning God made sex to be about a man and a woman becoming one body, heart, and spirit in marriage. At the same time, the husband doesn’t control the mind and body of the wife. The wife isn’t the husband’s slave. The Bible teaches that in marriage the husband and wife become the same as one body. So, Ephesians 5:21–33 and Genesis 2:24 are important Bible truths that teach us how husbands and wives should behave and love each other in marriage.

In Ephesians 5:32, Paul talks about a “secret truth” (ERV). This secret truth is the wonderful teaching that Jesus’ love for His church helps us understand Christian marriage, and Christian marriage helps us understand Jesus’ love for His church. When we compare Christian marriage to Jesus’ love for the church, we understand better how husbands and wives should love each other. We also understand better how much Jesus loves us!

How does Ephesians 5:33 help you understand the important rules in Ephesians 5:21–32? How can you follow these important rules in your marriage?



The Bible teaches that in marriage the husband and wife become the same as one body.



**Be loving and patient,
caring and nice
to each other.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Responsibilities of Married Life,” *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 7, pages 45–50, and “Mutual Obligations,” *The Adventist Home*, pages 114–120.

Ellen G. White tells husbands and wives to stop trying to control each other. She writes, “Don’t try to force each other to do what you want. You can’t do this thing and expect the other person to continue to love you. Be loving and patient, caring and nice to each other.”—*The Adventist Home*, page 118, adapted.

Ellen G. White talks about the meaning of Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22–24. She says, “People often ask the question, ‘Does a wife have freedom to choose what she wants to do in a marriage?’ The Bible says that the husband is the head or the leader of the family. ‘Wives, obey your husbands’ [Colossians 3:18, WE]. If Paul ended the command here, then we can say that most women would not want to be wives. . . . Many husbands stop at the words, ‘Wives, obey.’ But we must read to the end of the whole command Paul gives, which is: ‘Wives, obey your husbands. This is the right way to live when you belong to the Lord’ [Colossians 3:18, WE]. God wants the wife to respect and praise God always. The wife must serve and obey Jesus with her whole heart. Jesus is the only One she can serve and obey in this way. Jesus bought her as His own child. He paid for her with His life. . . . One Person is more important and powerful to the wife than the husband. That Person is Jesus. He is her Savior. The wife must serve and obey her husband as “the Lord wants [her] to do” [Colossians 3:18, NIV].”—*The Adventist Home*, pages 115, 116, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What if someone said that Ephesians 5:21–33 was old-fashioned advice and Christians no longer needed to follow it? How would you answer?
- ② How can the advice in Ephesians 5:21–33 help people who are in difficult marriages?
- ③ Think some more about the idea of how the husband and wife become “one body” in marriage. How does this idea help us better understand God’s plan for marriage? What must married couples do to protect marriage?

VISITING PRISONERS IN SPAIN

I love to work with prisoners. Everywhere I served as a pastor, I also worked for God in prisons. I first started this work in Colombia, where I was born. Now I continue this work in Spain.

For the past 20 years, I visited four prisons in Spain. One of these prisons included a prison for women in the Spanish capital, Madrid. The prison has 400 women. I waited three years before I was given permission to enter this prison. For the first time, in 2019, I was allowed to enter. I led worship from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. every Thursday. Only one woman showed up the first time. But she was very excited to be there and was willing to hear what I had to say.

I told the woman, “I’m very happy to meet you. I am filled with joy to come here. Let’s pray more people will join us.”

Together, we prayed that God would bring more people to our Thursday meetings. When I arrived at the 4th meeting, 10 women waited for me! Today, 60 women attend the meetings every week. The women who come to the meetings are as young as 22 and almost as old as 70. Our worship time is divided into three parts: (1) songs and prayer; (2) “Name Your Miracle,” which is personal story time, and (3) Bible study.

When I talk to the ladies, I always tell them to remember that God is their Father in heaven. I say, “God sees you as His daughters.”

In all the years I served as a pastor, I never saw worship and praise in a church as powerful as in the prisons. The women pray with all their hearts. They are so honest when they pray. Sometimes I wish my Sabbath meetings at church were as exciting as the Thursday meetings at the prison!

My time with the ladies is short. So, each woman writes her story about everything Jesus did for her before she comes to the meeting. Then the women bring their stories with them and give me what they wrote. Their letters are filled with praise about God changing lives. I have a big stack of letters now.

A group of church members also visits with the women and gives them Bible studies on weekends. A wall of glass separates the members from the prisoners. The church members aren’t allowed inside the prison. Only I am. But together, we are seeing many wonderful things happen. Several women gave their lives to Jesus. We also contacted their family members and are leading them to Jesus, too.

This story shows us Church Growth Task #2 of the “I Will Go” Plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Church Growth Task #2 is: “We will help the Adventist Church grow strong in new ways in large cities.” For more information, visit IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE
Story
by GABRIEL DIAZ



**“God sees you
as His daughters.”**

