

Gamma 11

Marriage in Christ

Ephesians 5:22-33

Section A

1. How is the verse about mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21 applicable to the marriage model when only the wife has been instructed to submit and not the husband ?

The mutual submission is the natural entailment of being filled with the spirit and marriage is the classic case of this principle which Paul brings up in the passage. The wife is to submit to the husband which means to surrender her rights to him in decisions in which they both cannot finally agree. Husbands are to submit to their wives in the sense of submitting their own personal interests and desires to the overriding concerns and desires of their wives in sacrificial love. The greatest example of a husband's submission is Jesus at the garden of Gethsemane where he agonised over his desire to avoid the pain of crucifixion and yet submitted to the will of God for the good of mankind. Hence many times husbands will not be at liberty to make decisions in their leadership for their own good but for the good of their wives so in that sense they are in submission too.

2. How has the presence of sin in man affected the marriage dynamic? Look at Genesis 3 : 16 and Gen 4:7 and can you see how that has affected how Paul instructs the husband and wife in this passage esp Eph 5:33?

In Genesis 3:16 we see the consequences of sin and the woman will have desire for the husband in the sense of having the desire and tendency to control the husband. The same word for "desire " is seen in Gen 4:7 when God warns Cain about the danger of sin crouching like a predator outside his door which "desires" him that is control him so that he will sin.

The second part of the verse clarifies this interpretation as it mentions the man will rule over his wife which is basically a reference to the eventual tyranny of men over women. Hence this sets the scene of the age of battle of the sexes played out in every marriage since the dawn of time. The natural tendency is for the wife to control her husband and his is to rule or subjugate her for his own selfish purposes. In the light of these two sinful tendencies Paul instructs the woman to submit which means curb the very natural temptation or tendency she has to control her husband and the husband to sacrificially love his wife and submit to her good over that of his

own going against his natural tendency to do the opposite. Hence this is appropriate instructions but by no means excludes the other obligations that are inherent in marriage of the need for the wife to love her husband as that is assumed.

4. What does the model of Christ and the church tell about the role of marriage in the life of the couple?

The Christ church model is a redemptive model where Christ ministers to the church Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In this kind of redemptive model we can then infer that the couple which are going to be imperfect by any measure although saved by the blood of Christ , their union should therefore be one where they help each other mature in this process of becoming all that God has intended them to be in holiness.

Hence marriage is now taken beyond the role of serving to meet each others purely physical or psychological needs to helping each other become the persons God had designed them to be.

5. What are the natural limits of the wife's submission to her husband ?

Submission is not necessarily obedience to everything ...if she is married to an unbeliever she cannot obey him if he forbids her to worship the Lord
Submission does not mean not thinking...God has given her the ability to think and have biblical values with which she can give feed back to her husband .
Submission does not mean avoiding the effort to change or influence the spouse
Submission does mean getting all of her spiritual strength through her husband
Submission does not mean acting in fear

6. How does Genesis 2 :18 help us understand the nature of a woman's submission and help to the husband?

The creation of man without the wife has indicated the incompleteness of man without his wife as the situation was described as “ not good” anticipating the creation of the woman. She is described as the “helpmeet”. In Hebrew “ezer”it means helper not in the sense of a person inferior to the man but because the terms is applied to God Himself it therefore implies that she has vital skills that he utterly lacks in that sense. She is a helpmeet that is fit for him for in the Hebrew “corresponds to” him hence the skills sets she possesses will be complementary to him so that together they form a complete unit for all the necessary skills to rule the earth as God's representatives. Practically, she is to help him in the sense of enabling him to come alongside with the kind of insights and expertise not to take over from him but to enable him to ultimately carry out his purpose from God. Taking over will

be controlling , domineering and the opposite to submission. Submission and helping is practically enabling just like a mother enables her young by teaching them mathematics to enable them to complete their homework but she does not do it for them.

7. How is the headship of the husband to be expressed in the marriage taking into consideration the issue of mutual submission?

The principle behind the marriage is that the husband is the leader or expressed as the head and hence it will mean that the wife will submit to the husbands will. On the other hand the husband is to love his wife like his own body and hence will make decisions that will be in her best interest and not his

8. Is there a difference to couples who enter marriage on the basis of the feeling of being in love as opposed to those who take it as a solemn covenant before God?

9. What do you think about the appropriateness of arranged marriages as to love marriages , why is there a difference in the divorce rates in both and what does it tell you about the nature of marriage and the most important ingredient in its long term survival

Case History

Case 1

Roland and Mariel were married for 3 years and had a child of 1 year of age. Roland worked as a corporate manager for IBM and Mariel was a vice president of the CIMB bank in KL. They were struggling with looking after the child as they had no in laws who lived near them and they both hated the idea of sending the child to day care centers because the last one they sent her to she came back with food poisoning and had to be hospitalised for a week. It was clear that one of them would have to give up their job to look after the child at least till the child got in to school. The child obviously preferred her mother but Mariel loved her job and it paid more than Roland's job and was very reluctant to give it up. Roland was rapidly climbing the corporate ladder and quitting now would more or less detail his future prospects.

They argued over who should stay at home but looking at the passage today can you suggest a biblical solution where there is sacrifice and submission?

Case 2

Jenny Lim married an unbeliever 10 years and felt guilty about the whole issue and did not step into church again since the marriage. For the past 6 months she rededicated her life to Jesus at the FBC Alpha course and soon expressed her desire for their two children to attend Sunday school and church. There was vigorous opposition from her spouse Craig. Who forbade them from setting foot in to the church and he told Jenny never to share the gospel to their children as well. Jenny struggled with the whole issue as on one hand she had to be a submissive wife and on the other the children were very keen to go to Sunday school and always asked her questions about Jesus. Her husband had instructed her to teach them that there was no God. She was also banned from going to FBC any more. Jenny also earned a very high salary from her job and Craig also warned her never to give a single cent to church.

What should Jenny do?

Case 3

Kirk and Karen had been married for the past 30 years and had 3 kids. The marriage had not been smooth. Karen was more aggressive than most women and she dominated most decisions around the house. Kirk was constantly fighting her and pointed out that in Ephesians that she should be submitting to him instead of bossing him around, although admittedly he was a bit of untidy slob with infuriating habits. He resented being told off and she lacked any kind of tact. They were both unhappy and found solace in friends they found in church. Then Karen had an affair with another gentleman from church and he sort of understood her needs and was a very rich man, very tidy and was the opposite of what her husband was. She felt she was in love again and no amount for warnings from her children could dissuade her from spending time with the man. Kirk too found solace in the arms of his secretary and was happy. They considered divorce because she could not submit to him and he could not sacrifice for her.

What do you think? Is there enough basis for divorce here?

What can they do?