**The Mystery of Christian Marriage**

**Study on Ephesians 5:22-33**

***22Wives, submit (subordinate yourselves) to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is itself its Savior. 24Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit (subordinate themselves) in everything to their husbands.***

***25Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her with the washing of water with the word, 27so 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. 28In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30because we are all members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 31This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 32However, let each of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***

1. **The Problem of Sexual Politics in Marriage**
2. Marital disorder by self-seeking demands that undermine self-giving love

* A frustrated wife nags her husbands and shows disrespect for him in public for failing to demonstrate his interest in her and love for her
* A frustrated husband withdraws into silence and punishes her by becoming undemonstrative with her.
* Both become more demanding and less willing to give of themselves to each other.

1. Result: sexual and marital sabotage

* Insistence on rights and self-fulfillment
* Personal and sexual dissatisfaction

1. Questions to men and women

* What kind of husband would you be happy to accept as your head and submit to him as your head?
* What kind of wife would you be happy to sacrifice yourself for and give yourself unreservedly to?

1. **Christ as the Model for Marriage and its Celebrant**
2. Allusion to God as the matchmaker and celebrant in the primal marriage of Adam and Eve in Gen 2:22-24

* God’s presentation of Eve to Adam
* Adam’s response

1. Comparison of Christ’s role with the preparation of a bride for her husband

* Normal self-preparation of bride for her wedding in the ancient world
* Bathing of body with perfumed water
* Clothing with bridal gown
* Application of makeup to cover spots, wrinkles and blemishes
* Application of expensive perfume
* Decoration with expensive jewelry
* Her presentation to her husband as lovely bride
* Christ’s preparation of his unworthy bride in baptism for union with him
* His transformative, self-sacrificing love to make her lovely and take her as a fit partner for him
* Washing with water in baptism to cleanse her from the sin
* Clothing with his purity and righteousness
* Adornment with his holiness and glory
* Result of that transformation: unblemished and lovely in his eyes
* The purpose of his presentation of her to himself
* Acceptance and approval
* Appreciation and admiration
* Demonstration of his love and regard for her

1. **God’s Order for Marriage**
2. Teaching on Christian marriage rather than marriage in general

* Mystery: invisible spiritual dimension
* Two sides
* Disclosure of Christ’s relationship with the church
* Reflection of his relationship with the church

1. Marriage as a divinely instituted order

* Order for the reception and transmission of God’s blessing
* Order from the one flesh union with a spouse in marriage and Christ in baptism
* Order of love rather than power in marriage: prevention of sexual politics
* Order that reflects Christ’s relationship as the bridegroom of the church with the church as his bride
* The order of headship and subordination for its proper operation
* Unexpected order: address of wives before husbands
* Summary in 5:33: **let each of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**
* The headship of the husband as Christ’s representative: maximal demands
* Duty of care rather than domination and oppression
* Taking the initiative in exercising demonstrative love
* Sacrificial self-giving rather demanding and taking
* Treating her like his own body: inseparable from him
* Nurturing of her: note reversal
* Cherishing her: appreciation for her as she is
* The subordination of the wife: minimal demands
* Subordination as voluntary fitting in with God’s order for marriage
* Why no mention of loving him and caring for him
* Acceptance of husband as Christ’s representative
* Reception of what Christ offers to her through him
* Respect for her husband as one flesh with her
* A new way for wives and husbands to regard each other by seeing them as they are in Christ

1. Questions for Consideration and Discussion
2. Does Paul’s teaching on subordination in marriage sanction the sexual abuse of wives in marriage?
3. How does this God-given order of headship and subordination diminish marital abuse and prevent sexual politics from damaging and destroying a marriage?