

Going Deeper with the Sermon

Kevin Ephesians 5:21-33 part 2

“submit to one another out of reverence to Christ”

There are only two questions that human beings have ever fought over, all through history.

1. *How much do you love me?*
2. *Who's in charge?*

Everything else is somehow manageable. But these two questions of love and control undo us all, trip us up, and cause war, grief, and suffering. This is where we are heading. We are going to talk about men and women, about love and control. Eph 5

Last study we reflected upon mutual submission ... about giving way to one another. As the followers of the crucified one we are called not only to look to our own interests, but also look to the interests of others. So what does that look like in marriage ... **Eph 5:21-33**

By establishing the principle of mutual submission as the context Paul is creating a safe place in which to think about this stuff. But we also need to add two other principles established in Genesis to define the Biblical parameters of any discussion concerning men and women.

1. Equality ... Gen 1:26-28 ... men and women were equally reflectors of the image of God and equally responsible for the earth.

History sadly has not reflected the scripture in this:

- *Aristotle* ... “females are imperfect males, accidentally produced by the fathers in-adequacy or by the malign influence of a moist south wind.”
- *Josephus* (Jewish historian) ... “the woman is inferior to the man in every way.”

The domination of women by man is due to the Fall, not to the creation. As we turn to the NT we see the sexual equality established by creation but perverted by the Fall is re-covered by Jesus.

2. Complementarity ... Gen 2:18-22 ... men and women are equal but different ... *Peter Lombard* (1157 – Bishop of Paris) – “Eve was not taken from the feet of Adam to be his slave, nor from his head to be his lord, but from his side to be his partner.”

v20 ... suitable helper ... helpmate ... one alongside

As men and women we are different and as such fulfil different but complimentary roles. The point is we need each other. Yet, because men and women are different, the ways in which we need each other must be different too. This brings us to Eph 5.

John Stott ... “When we investigate male and female roles we must be careful not to acquiesce uncritically to the stereotypes which our particular culture may have developed, let alone imagine that Moses brought them down from Mt Sinai along with the Ten Commandments. This would be a serious confusion of Scripture and convention.

We need to also acknowledge the existence of a theological debate within the evangelical world concerning the roles of men and women in ministry and family.

This has become a discussion revolving around the word ‘head’ ... kephale.

Two camps have been battling it out for years and a third has more recently joined the fray.

1. Chief ... headmaster ...
2. Source ... head waters of a river
3. Head ... head and the body ... relationship

In the NT Christ in His relationship to the church is all these. He is the head over the church, He is the source of the church and he enjoys a relationship with the church.

However, I’m not convinced that battling over a particular word helps us find a way forward. But in our attempt to understand what Ephesians is saying concerning the roles of men and women we need to ensure that whatever conclusion we reach concerning Paul’s use of the word ‘head’ that it remains compatible with the Biblical principles of equality, complementarity and mutual submission.

Secondly ... We need to remind ourselves that the word ‘authority’ is never used in the NT to describe the husband’s role, nor ‘obedience’ the wife’s. Such language and the attitudes of hierarchical subordination it reflects are more consistent with the Jewish Talmud or the Koran.

- **Jewish Talmud** ... Barclay ... In Jewish law a woman was not a person, but a thing. She had no legal rights whatsoever; she was absolutely in her husband’s possession to do with as he willed.
- **Koran** ... Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other ... As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them.

So is there a way forward? I would agree with Stott when he writes ... the husband’s headship of his wife is a headship more of care than of control, more of responsibility than of authority. I support such a position because it respects equality, complementarity and mutual submission, because it acknowledges the possible meanings of head and most importantly it takes us to the heart of the passage.

23 ... 25-27 ... Christ is the head of the church in the sense that he is its Saviour. The essence of his headship is his sacrificial love for her.

28-30 ... These guys didn’t know about the central nervous system. They didn’t think of the head’s relationship to the body as we do in modern neurological terms. They thought more in terms of the head’s integration and nurture of the body.

Men step up and be responsible. Take care of your wife as an equal. Love and nurture her. Sacrifice for her.

Wives submit ... give way ... and (33) respect ... choose to comply ... avoid degrading or insulting ... treat with consideration

Questions for reflection

1. Do you agree with Kevin’s premise statement that the two questions that humans have fought over is how much do you love me? And who’s in charge? If so how do we see it?
2. Based on Gen 1:26-28 and 2:18-22 what do you think it means to be both equal and different in God’s eyes?
3. What do you think stops men from nurturing & sacrificing for their wives? And what stops women giving way and respecting their husbands?
4. Do you have any other thoughts/questions from Ephesians 5?
5. What is God talking to you about and prompting you to do?