

But love in this verse is qualified as the same Agape love Jesus demonstrated for His church when he gave up His life for us. So, the command is much more than feeling the emotion of love, it is a commitment to give up your life for your beloved.

*Few of us will be called on to literally die, but what are some things that we might see as loving acts of self-sacrifice for our wives?*

*Ephesians 5:32 NLT - 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.*

According to Paul, this description of love and submission in marriage should reveal the relationship between Christ and the church.

*We have seen Jesus demonstrate unconditional, submission to God's will and self-sacrificing love for us. What can we, the church, do to demonstrate our submission in response to His love for us?*

## WRAP-UP

We are loved by Jesus with a committed and unconditional love. That love shapes us into our new identity as Christ followers and imitators of God. Because of God's love and our new identity, we are able to do what Jesus did by submitting to one another and loving one another. In the marriage relationship, this is lived out as wives choose to submit themselves to their husbands. For the husband, it is seen by self-sacrificing love for his wife. God uses this relationship in marriage to demonstrate the way the Church submits itself to God's authority and Jesus sacrificed himself for the Church because of His Agape love for us.

## MEMORY VERSE.

*Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*  
- Ephesians 5:2 NLT

**PRAYER (20 MIN)** Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

*Challenge.- If you are married, look for ways to demonstrate your love and mutual submission to your spouse this week. If you are single, receive and respond to Jesus' Agape love for you, His beloved.*

## **“Submission and Love”** **Prison Letters- #5**

### INTRODUCTION

As Paul continues his letter to the Ephesians, he gives us examples of what it looks like to live in our new identity as Christ followers. We are to live our lives filled with love and following Jesus' example of love and submission. This is how the world recognizes us as Christians, it is by our love. The first half of this chapter details what a life lived in darkness entails and how we are not to participate in that lifestyle anymore because we are living in the light and by the power of God's Holy Spirit who fills us. Our study focuses on the second half of this chapter which outlines spirit-guided relationships between a husband and wife, and how that relationship is an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the Church.

### Ice Breaker

*Is there someone you look to as an example of how to live your life?*

### Key Passage

***Ephesians 5:21 NLT - 21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Following Christ's Example

Paul tells us we should be imitators of God, following Jesus' example. Upon hearing we should follow Christ's example, we might feel overwhelmed. Because in our own power, it is impossible. Luckily there is a greater power at work in us.

What is the source of our inner strength (Eph 3:16)? As you read the following passages (Eph 5:1-2, John 13:34) how would you summarize what it is we are called to do?

*Ephesians 3:16 NLT - 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.*

*Ephesians 5:1-2 NLT - 1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

*John 13:34 NLT - 34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.*

Building our relationships on the foundation of God's love, we are called to have the same attitude that Jesus demonstrated when He washed the disciples' feet in John 13.

How is that attitude described below? How does this attitude lead us to follow Paul's instructions in Eph 5:21?

*Philippians 2:6-8 NLT - 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*Ephesians 5:21 NLT - 21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

## 2. Wives

*Ephesians 5:22-24 NLT - 22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.*

Ephesians 5:22 is often given without context, but we now have a lens through which to view this verse. We know all of us are called to love each other with the love Jesus has loved us, and that we are to be humble and put the needs of others ahead of our own, just as Christ did when He sacrificed himself for us. And in verse 21 we see we are to submit to one another. Paul is using the marriage relationship as a microcosm in which love and submission are lived out. He addresses both the husbands' and wives' responsibilities.

There are some interesting points underlying verse 22. The verb "submit" (*hypotassō*) is in the middle or passive voice, which means "to place yourself under". It is done willingly, by choice, not forced. *Hypotassō* only appears once (v.21) "submit to one another" but is referred back to in verse 22. The Greek grammar of the original language links that one verb in both verses. The word that does appear in verse 22 is *idios*, which means "your own" or "belonging to yourself".

*Why is it significant that wives submit to their own husbands (idios)? What do you see in the verse below that is unique in the relationship between a husband and wife, that makes submission easier?*

*Ephesians 5:31 NLT - 31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."*

It is God's plan that a husband and wife should be united as one. Unfortunately, in our fallen and imperfect world, this can be challenging.

*What are some of the greatest sources of disunity you've seen among married couples? How might Godly love, humility and mutual submission influence these types of conflict? What are some ways Ephesians 5:22 might be misused or misrepresented?*

## 3. Husbands

*Ephesians 5:25 NLT - 25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her*

*On the face of it, this may appear to be an easier commandment for husbands to love their wives, than for wives to submit to husbands.*