

Ephesians 5:32-33 Commentary

PREVIOUS

EPHESIANS - CHRIST AND THE CHURCH
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Ephesians 5:32 [This mystery](#) is [great](#); but I am [speaking](#) with [reference](#) to [Christ](#) and the [church](#). (NASB: Lockman)

Greek: [to musterion touto mega estin, \(3SPAI\) ego de lego \(1SPAI\) eis Christon kai eis ten ekklesian.](#)

Amplified: This mystery is very great, but I speak concerning [the relation of] Christ and the church. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: The marriage relationship is doubtless a great mystery, but I am speaking of something deeper still - the marriage of Christ and his Church. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: This mystery is great. However, I am speaking with regard to Christ and the Church.

Youngs: this secret is great, and I speak in regard to Christ and to the assembly;

THIS MYSTERY IS GREAT: to musterion touto mega estin, (3SPAI)

- Eph 6:19; Col 2:2; 1Ti 3:8,16
- [Ephesians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 5:25-31: Spirit-Filled Families - 2](#) - Wayne Barber
- [Ephesians 5:25-33 Do You Really Love Your Wife? \(Part 1\)](#) - Steven Cole
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This mystery is great - As a wife is to her husband, so the church is to Christ. Marriage is a reflection of the magnificent mystery of union between Christ and His church, completely unknown until the New Testament.

MacArthur writes that...

The sacredness of the church is wed to the sacredness of marriage; so by your marriage, you are either a symbol or a denial of Christ and His church. (MacArthur, J. *The Fulfilled Family*. Chicago: Moody Press)

John Piper comments that...

And, with that as his clue, he unfolds the meaning of marriage: it's a symbol of Christ's love for the church represented in the husband's loving headship toward his wife; and it's a symbol of the church's glad submission to Christ represented in the wife's relation to her husband.

He calls Ge 2:24 a "mystery" because God did not reveal clearly all his purposes for the marriage of male and female in Genesis. There were hints and pointers in the Old Testament that marriage was like the relation of God and his people. But only when Christ came did the mystery of marriage get spelled out in detail. It is meant to be a portrait of Christ's covenant with his people, his commitment to the church. ([Male and Female He Created Them in the Image of God](#))

So marriage is like a metaphor or an image or a picture or parable that stands for something more than a man and a woman becoming one flesh. It stands for the relationship between Christ and the church. That's the deepest meaning of marriage. It's meant to be a living drama of how Christ and the church relate to each other. ([Husbands Who Love Like Christ and the Wives Who Submit to Them](#))

Spurgeon wrote...

Unity, mark you, for that is the essence of the marriage-bond. We are one with Christ, who made himself one with his people.

Constable writes that...

The relationship that exists between a husband and his wife is the same as the one that exists between Christ and His church. The church has as close a tie to Christ spiritually as a wife has to her husband spiritually.

Lloyd-Jones has an interesting comment writing that...

This is true in regard to the pattern of the first man and the first woman. "Woman was made at the beginning as the result of an operation which God performed upon man. How does the church come into being? As the result of an operation which God performed on the Second Man, His only begotten, beloved Son on Calvary's hill. A deep sleep fell upon Adam. A deep sleep fell upon the Son of God, He gave up the ghost, He expired, and there in that operation the church was taken out. As the woman was taken out of Adam, so the church is taken out of Christ. The woman was taken out of the side of Adam; and it is from the Lord's bleeding, wounded side that the church comes.

One spirit with the Lord:
Jesus, the glorified,
Esteems the church for which He bled,
His body and His bride.
—Mary Bowley Peters

Mystery (3466) (**musterion** from **mustes** = one initiated [as into the Greco-Roman religious "mystery" cults] from **mueo** = to close or shut) (Click word study on **musterion**) as used in classical Greek conveyed the idea of silence in the rites of the "mystery" religions so common in the Greco-Roman Empire. **Musterion** referred to religious secrets which were confided only to the initiated. Thus in Paul's day, musterion embrace ideas such as "a secret rite," "secret teaching," and "a divine mystery which is beyond human comprehension." The "mystery-religions" had their secrets and signs as modern secret societies have today. Those initiated into these pagan cults, knew these secret signs.

Musterion in Scripture takes on a completely different meaning and does not refer to truths know only to a select, initiated few but in contrast was is a previously hidden purpose of God which when uncovered is understood by the Spirit-taught believer. In other words musterion signifies those truths which are part of God's plan and can only be understood as He reveals them by His Spirit through His Word. Musterion is a truth which without special revelation would have been unknown and thus is commonly used with words denoting revelation or knowledge (e.g., "to know the mysteries", (Mt 13:11), "revelation of the mystery", (Ro 16:25-note) or "made known... the mystery", Eph 3:3-note)

The secret counsels of God remain hidden from the ungodly (to them they are a true "mystery" as the word is commonly used in English) but when these truths are revealed to the godly, they are understood by them. The **mystery** is not in the fact that the truths are difficult to interpret, but that they are impossible to interpret until their meaning is revealed at which time the truth becomes plain.

Mysteries in the Scripture fall into two categories. Some have already been revealed, and among these are the incarnation of Christ and the salvation of sinners. Others are yet to be seen, such as the general resurrection, the coming Antichrist, and the evil of the last day. It is comforting to realize that all the mysteries which bear on our salvation are already revealed to readers of Scripture.

Vincent defines **musterion** as that

which was kept hidden from the world until revealed at the appointed time, and which is a secret to ordinary eyes, but is made known by divine revelation." (Vincent, M. R. Word studies in the New Testament. Vol. 4, Page 234-235).

There are 28 uses of **musterion** in the NT - Mt 13:11; Mk. 4:11; Lk 8:10; Ro 11:25; 16:25; 1Co. 2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51; Ep 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19; Col. 1:26, 27; 2:2; 4:3; 2Th 2:7; 1Ti 3:9, 16; Rev. 1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7

F B Meyer writes in his devotional commentary on Ephesians...

Here is a mystery indeed. That scene in Eden is also a parable. It was not good for Christ to be alone. He needed one to love and to give love. But there was none among unfallen angels that could answer to Him. And therefore God the Father sought a bride for his Son from among the children of men; yea, He took the Second Eve from the wounded side of the Second Man, as He lay asleep in the garden-grave.

Redeemed men compose that bride. The Saviour loves them, as a true man who for the first time loves a pure and noble woman. He does not love them because they are fair, but to make them so. He has approved his love by becoming man, and giving Himself to death. By his blood, and Word, and Spirit, He is sanctifying and purifying them for Himself. The process is long and severe; but He nourishes and cherishes them, as a man does his wounded flesh. And ere long, when the bride is complete in numbers and in beauty, the mystery that now veils her shall be flung aside, and amid the joy of creation, He will present her to Himself, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing; bearing his name, sharing his rank, and position, and wealth, and power, and glory, for ever and ever.

Then the Church shall cleave to Him for ever, and He shall cleave to her. And they twain shall be one spirit.

And his own prayer shall be realized, offered on the eve of his agony and passion, "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as We are one." (F. B. Meyer. Ephesians - A Devotional Commentary)

BUT I AM SPEAKING WITH REFERENCE TO CHRIST AND THE CHURCH: ego de lego (1SPA) eis Christon kai eis ten ekklesian:

- Ps 45:9-17; Song 1:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Is 54:5; 62:4,5; Jn 3:29; 2Co 11:2; Re 19:7,8; 21:2
- [Ephesians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
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I am speaking with reference to Christ and the Church - John MacArthur asks...

Why is submission as well as sacrificial, purifying, and caring love so strongly emphasized in Scripture? Because the sacredness of the church is wed to the sacredness of marriage. Your marriage is either a symbol or a denial of Christ and His church. (MacArthur, J. Different by Design)

Christ (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, rub with oil, consecrate to an office) is the Anointed One, the Messiah, **Christos** being the Greek equivalent of the transliterated Hebrew word Messiah.

Church (1577) (**ekklesia** from **ekkaléo** = call out in turn from **ek** = out + **kaleo** = call) literally "called-out ones". The Greeks used **ekklesia** for assembly of citizens called out to transact city business. The church is a living organism, composed of living members joined together; through which Christ works, carries out His purposes and He lives.

Everyone who has been saved belongs to the body of Christ, the universal church. The universal church is manifested in the world by individual local churches, each of which is to be a microcosm of the body of Christ. The church is to function under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, operating under His sovereign rule. Jesus Christ is the Founder and Lord of His church and has guaranteed its perpetuity until He returns.

John Piper writes that "In other words, the covenant involved in leaving mother and father and holding fast to a spouse and becoming one flesh is a portrayal of the covenant between Christ and his church. Marriage exists most ultimately to display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church. ([Marriage: God's Showcase of Covenant-Keeping Grace](#))

Ephesians 5:33 [Nevertheless, each individual](#) among you [also](#) is to [love](#) his [own wife](#) even as [himself](#), and the [wife](#) must see to it that she [respects](#) her [husband](#) (**NASB: Lockman**)

Greek: [plen kai humeis oi kath' ena hekastos ten heautou gunaika houtos agapato \(3SPAM\) os heauton, e de gune hina phobetai \(3SPPS\) ton andra.](#)

Amplified: However, let each man of you [without exception] love his wife as [being in a sense] his very own self; and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband [hat she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and hat she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

Phillips: In practice what I have said amounts to this: let every one of you who is a husband love his wife as he loves himself; let the wife reverence her husband. ([Phillips: Touchstone](#))

Wuest: Nevertheless, also as for you, let each one in this manner be loving his own wife as himself, and the wife, let her be continually treating her husband with deference and reverential obedience.

Young's Literal: but ye also, every one in particular--let each his own wife so love as himself, and the wife-- that she may reverence the husband.

NEVERTHELESS, EACH INDIVIDUAL AMONG YOU ALSO IS TO LOVE HIS OWN WIFE EVEN AS HIMSELF: plen kai humeis oi kath' ena hekastos ten heautou gunaika houtos agapato (3SPAM) os heauton.:

- Ep 5:25,28,29; Col 3:19; 1Pe 3:7

There is no more definitive statement of God's ideal for marriage than Ephesians 5:32. When believing husbands and believing wives walk in the power of the Spirit, subject themselves to Christ holy fear, yield to His Word and His control, and are mutually submissive, blessing is the result.

Nevertheless - See discussion of .

Spurgeon comments...

Thus the Spirit of God follows us to our homes, and teaches us how to live to the glory of God. May he help us so to do, for Christ's sake! Amen.

McGee comments that Paul's word...

Nevertheless brings us down to earth with a jolt. This is the practical part about marriage. Oh, how sin has marred this glorious relationship—as it has marred everything else—but this relationship can be yours if you want it to be the best.

Paul brings the reader back to the ordinary routine of Christian living in the home. "Let each love his wife as himself." This shows the kind of husband to whom the wife is to be in subjection. The husband and the wife in the home are to set forth in simplicity the mystery of the coming glory. This is a very practical application of that which is highly idealistic. He brings the romantic into the realm of reality. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Each individual among you - Paul addresses every husband individually without naming him as such and encourages (actually he commands - present imperative - as our habitual, continuous practice) each to go on loving his wife as his very self.

Remember husbands what God commands, He always enables. We can't love our wives in our strength, but only in the grace and power supplied by the indwelling Spirit. Try to love your wives to the point of being willing to die for them and see how far you get in your own strength.

MacDonald commenting on husbands loving their wife as themselves says "Not merely as you might love yourself, but in recognition of the fact that she is one with you. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

Love (25) (**agapao** related to noun **agape** - see word study) describes the love God gives freely, sacrificially and unconditionally regardless of response -- love that goes out not only to the lovable but to one's enemies or those that don't "deserve" it. **Agapao** speaks especially of love as based on evaluation and choice, a matter of will and action. This love is not sentimental or emotional but obedient and reflective of the act of one's will with the ultimate desire being for another's highest good. Since it is unconditional, this love is still given if it's not received/returned! **Agape** gives and give and gives. It is not withheld.

Agape love is commanded of believers, empowered by His Spirit, activated by personal choice of one's will, not based on one's feelings toward the object of one's love and manifested by specific actions (see 1Cor 13:4-8 [see notes] for a succinct list of these actions). **Agape** love speaks of a love called out of one's heart by the preciousness of the one loved, a love that impels one to sacrifice one's self for the benefit of the object loved. It is the love shown at Calvary. The prototype of this quality of supernatural love is the Father's love for sinful men as manifest by the Son's sacrifice on the Cross.

Speaking to faithless **Israel** God speaks of coming days of restoration declaring "I have **loved** you with an everlasting **love**; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. ([Jeremiah 31:3](#))

In Romans **Paul** explains that even while we were helpless and ungodly, Christ died for the ungodly adding "But God demonstrates His own **love** toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (see **note** Romans 5:8)

John writes "In this is **love**, not that we **loved** God, but that He **loved** us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ([1John 4:10](#))

F B Meyer - It is no ordinary love to which we are summoned. Whether in the home circle, where man and wife live in each other's presence, or in the daily walk and conversation of life, we are to imitate God, as his dear children. It is not enough to love as our fellows do. We must love as Christ did. Our one ideal must be, "as Christ loved." To love foes to make them friends; to love in the teeth of obloquy and shame; to love to the point of self-giving and blood; to love the foul till the pollution gives place to purity and beauty --such is the love of Christ. Let us sit at his feet and learn of Him, until we reflect Him, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory. Oh to love like Thee, blessed Master! and that we may, fill us with thy love until our cup run over! (F. B. Meyer. Ephesians - A Devotional Commentary)

AND THE WIFE MUST SEE TO IT THAT SHE RESPECTS HER HUSBAND: e de gune hina phobetai (3SPPS) ton andra:

- Eph 5:22; 1Ki 1:31; Esther 1:20; Hebrews 12:9; 1Peter 3:2, 3, 4, 5, 6
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Respects ([5399](#)) (**phobeo** from **phobos** = fear, reverence, respect, honor) means to be afraid of someone, clearly not the meaning in this context. The idea of phobeo here is to have a profound measure of respect for one's husband. Note the present tense calls for continuous respect, which will surely be her response when she is sacrificially, unconditionally loved by her husband.

Paul had used the noun (phobos) related to **phobeo** in this section when he exhorted both spouses to "be subject to one another in the **fear** of Christ. (Eph 5:21)

And remember that the context of this exhortation is related to the charge for believers to be continually be being filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit.

John Eadie comments "The wife for her part is to give her husband the respect that is due him in the Lord (Eph 5:22). As Eph 5:21 has made plain, such respect is conditioned by and expressive of reverence (phobos) for Christ. It also assumes that the husband will so love his wife as to be worthy of such deference. Those who are puzzled because Paul does not tell wives that they are to love their husbands fail to appreciate the almost rabbinical precision with which the analogy is handled. Christ loves the church; the church's love for Christ is expressed in submission and obedience ([Ephesians 5 Commentary](#))

Torrey's Topic Wives

- Not to be selected from among the ungodly -Genesis 24:3; 26:34,35; 28:1

DUTIES OF, TO THEIR HUSBANDS

- To love them -Titus 2:4
- To reverence them -Ephesians 5:33
- To be faithful to them -1 Corinthians 7:3-5,10
- To be subject to them -Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22,24; 1 Peter 3:1
- To obey them -1 Corinthians 14:34; Titus 2:5
- To remain with them for life -Romans 7:2,3

SHOULD BE ADORNED

- Not with ornaments -1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Peter 3:3
- With modesty and sobriety -1 Timothy 2:9

- With a meek and quiet spirit -1 Peter 3:4,5
- With good works -1 Timothy 2:10; 5:10

GOOD

- Are from the Lord -Proverbs 19:14
- Are a token of the favour of God -Proverbs 18:22
- Are a blessing to husbands -Proverbs 12:4; 31:10,12
- Bring honour on husbands -Proverbs 31:23
- Secure confidence of husbands -Proverbs 31:11
- Are praised by husbands Proverbs 31:28
- Are diligent and prudent -Proverbs 31:13-27
- Are benevolent to the poor -Proverbs 31:20
- Duty of, to unbelieving husbands 1 Corinthians 7:13,14,16; 1 Peter 3:1,2
- Should be silent in the Churches -1 Corinthians 14:34
- Should seek religious instruction from their husbands 1 Corinthians 14:35
- Of ministers should be exemplary -1 Timothy 3:11

Good-Exemplified

- Wife of Manoah -Judges 13:10
- Orpah and Ruth -Ruth 1:4,8
- Abigail -1 Samuel 25:3
- Esther -Esther 2:15-17
- Elizabeth -Luke 1:6
- Priscilla -Acts 18:2,26
- Sarah -1 Peter 3:6

Bad-Exemplified

- Samson's wife -Judges 14:15-17
- Michal -2 Samuel 6:16
- Jezebel -1 Kings 21:25
- Zeresh -Esther 5:14
- Job's wife -Job 2:9
- Herodias -Mark 6:17
- Sapphira -Acts 5:1,2