

Ephesians

Husbands and Wives: Together at the Cross

Lesson #10 for September 2, 2023

Scriptures: Ephesians 5:21-33; Philippians 2:3-4; Ezekiel 16:1-14; 2 Corinthians 11:1-4; Genesis 2:15-25.

1. In Ephesians 4-6, Paul talked about the practical aspects of our understanding of Christianity. This particular lesson will focus on Ephesians 5:21-33, considering how Christ relates to us as individuals, particularly in our marriage relationships.

Ephesians 5:21-33: ²¹ Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For a husband has authority over his wife just as Christ has authority over the church; and Christ is himself the Saviour of the church, his body. ²⁴And so wives must submit completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. ²⁶He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, ²⁷in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. ²⁸Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹(People never hate their own bodies. Instead, they feed them and take care of them, just as Christ does the church; ³⁰for we are members of his body.) ³¹As the scripture says, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and unite with his wife, and the two will become one.” ³²There is a deep secret truth revealed in this scripture, which I understand as applying to Christ and the church. ³³But it also applies to you: every husband must love his wife as himself, and every wife must respect her husband.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., Ephesians 5:21-33). New York: American Bible Society [abbreviated as Good News Bible].[†] [We will study this verse by verse as we proceed.][‡]

[From the Bible study guide=BSG:] In this counsel, Bible students today may hear the risen Christ addressing our relationships. We are positioned to do so when we understand Ephesians 5:21–6:9 as Paul’s way of actualizing the great **theme of the letter, unity**, but now for the Christian household. While he offers a strong critique of the flawed social structures of the old humanity (see *Eph. 4:22*), he also celebrates the creation of a new humanity (see *Eph. 2:15*) embedded within the wider humanity with its flawed social structures. From within these structures, believers demonstrate that a new power, the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 2:22; Eph. 3:16; Eph. 5:18–21; Eph. 6:17, 18*) and a new ethic patterned on Christ (*Eph. 4:13, 15, 20–24, 32; Eph. 5:2, 10, 17, 21–33*) have been unleashed, which point toward the ultimate fulfillment of God’s plan for His people and the

world.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sabbath Afternoon, August 26.^{†‡§}

2. In these verses, Paul was drawing a strong contrast between the way marriages were typically regarded in his society and the way a Christian should treat his/her spouse.

3. Paul started this discussion by mentioning something quite interesting.

Ephesians 5:21: [Addressed to church members:] Submit yourselves to one another because of your reverence for Christ.—*Good News Bible*.^{*†}

4. The New Testament talks about church members in passages like Mark 10:42-45; Romans 12:10; and Philipians 2:3-4. It is clear that we are to love one another warmly as Christian brothers and sisters and to be eager to show respect for one another. Ephesians 5:21 is not just a passage about how husbands and wives are to relate to each other, although it does talk about that; but, it also talks about how we should relate to all other true church members. Isn't this what we expect to happen in heaven?

5. So, how are we to understand that? In the very next verse, Ephesians 5:22, it says:

Ephesians 5:22: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

1 Peter 3:1,5: ¹ In the same way you wives must submit to your husbands, so that if any of them do not believe God's word, your conduct will win them over to believe. It will not be necessary for you to say a word.... ⁵For the devout women of the past who placed their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful by submitting to their husbands.—*Good News Bible*.^{*}

6. How do devout women make themselves beautiful? They make themselves beautiful by living beautiful Christian lives. In fact, they should honor Christ even before they honor their husbands.

[BSG:] In both Colossians and Ephesians, Christ—and only Christ—is identified as the Head of the church, which is His body (*Eph. 1:22, Eph. 5:23, Col. 1:18*): "Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (*Eph. 5:23, NKJV*). By analogy, the husband is "the head of the wife" (*Eph. 5:23*), with **the church's faithfulness to Christ serving as a model for the wife's loyalty to her husband. The passage presumes a loving, caring marriage, and not a dysfunctional one. This verse should not be interpreted to allow any form of domestic abuse.**—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Sunday, August 27.^{†‡§}

7. Which worries you the most? (1) The church's unfaithfulness to Christ? Or, (2) A wife's unfaithfulness to her husband? Was the church in Paul's day faithful to Christ? (See **Revelation 2:1-4**.) Back in the beginning, was the church at Ephesus faithful?

8. Ellen G. White, cofounder and prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, wrote:

If he [the husband] is a coarse, rough, boisterous, egotistical, harsh, and overbearing man, let him never utter the word that the husband is the head of the wife, and that she must submit to him in everything; for he is not the Lord, he is not the husband in the true significance of the term.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Release** No. 1544 - Relation of Husbands and Wives, Manuscript 17, 1891 (*21MR** 215.6); *The Adventist Home** 117.1.[‡]

9. Ephesians 5:25-29 shows some similarity to a very interesting passage in Ezekiel 16.

Ephesians 5:25-29: ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. ²⁶He did this to dedicate the church to God by his word, after making it clean by washing it in water, ²⁷in order to present the church to himself in all its beauty—pure and faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any other imperfection. ²⁸Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹(People never hate their own bodies. Instead, they feed them and take care of them, just as Christ does the church.)—*Good News Bible*.*

Ezekiel 16:1-14: ¹ The LORD spoke to me again. ² “Mortal man,” he said, “point out to Jerusalem what disgusting things she has done. ³Tell Jerusalem what the Sovereign LORD is saying to her:

“You were born in the land of Canaan. Your father was an Amorite, and your mother was a Hittite. ⁴When you were born, no one cut your umbilical cord or washed you or rubbed you with salt or wrapped you in cloth. ⁵No one took enough pity on you to do any of these things for you. When you were born, no one loved you. You were thrown out in an open field.

⁶ “Then I passed by and saw you squirming in your own blood. You were covered with blood, but I wouldn’t let you die. ⁷I made you grow like a healthy plant. You grew strong and tall and became a young woman. Your breasts were well formed, and your hair had grown, but you were naked.

⁸ “As I passed by again, I saw that the time had come for you to fall in love. I covered your naked body with my coat and promised to love you. Yes, I made a marriage covenant with you, and you became mine.” This is what the Sovereign LORD says. [Is this a direct quote?]

⁹ “Then I took water and washed the blood off you. I rubbed olive oil on your skin. ¹⁰I dressed you in embroidered gowns and gave you shoes of the best leather, a linen headband, and a silk cloak. ¹¹I put jewels on you—bracelets and necklaces. ¹²I gave you a nose-ring and earrings and a beautiful crown to wear. ¹³You had ornaments of gold and silver, and you always wore clothes of embroidered linen and silk. You ate bread made from the best flour, and had honey and olive oil to eat. Your beauty was dazzling, and you became a queen. ¹⁴You became famous in every nation for your perfect beauty, because I was the one who made you so lovely.” This is what the Sovereign LORD says.—*Good News Bible*.*†† [Why did God picture Himself like this? And why did He talk this way about His nation?]‡

10. Did God really tell Ezekiel to represent His relationship to His people on this earth in these words? Think about what is implied by these passages in Ephesians and in Ezekiel.

11. How does Christ treat His bride, the church? As noted in the Bible study guide, He:

(1) *Loves the church as bride (Eph. 5:25)*. We must never forget that this is heart work for Jesus. He loves us!

- (2) *Gives Himself as the bride price.* In the context of ancient wedding arrangements, the bridegroom would “purchase” the bride with the “bride price,” which was usually a large sum of money and valuables, so large that ancient village economies depended upon the custom. **Christ pays the ultimate price for the church as His bride since He “gave Himself for her” (Eph. 5:25, NKJV).** In the incarnation and at the cross, He gives Himself as the bride price.
- (3) *Bathes His bride.* The preparation of the bride was an important part of the ancient wedding festivities. As is also true today, it was the bridesmaids and female relatives of the bride who prepared her for the ceremony. Paul, though, imagines the divine Bridegroom preparing His bride for the wedding! It is He who sanctifies and cleanses her “by the washing of water” (Eph. 5:26, ESV), a probable reference to baptism.
- (4) *Speaks the word of promise.* This cleansing is performed “with the word” (Eph. 5:26, ESV), pointing to the word of promise that the divine Bridegroom speaks to His bride, perhaps in the context of the betrothal ceremony (compare Eph. 1:3–14, Eph. 2:1–10, noting God’s promises to believers at the time of their conversion). **Betrothal was the ancient version of modern engagement, but was a much more serious set of negotiations, which included a written agreement about the bride price (from the husband) and the dowry (assets the bride would bring to the marriage from her family).**
- (5) *Prepares and adorns the bride.* **When the bride is finally presented to her Groom, she is fabulously beautiful, appearing in flawless splendor (Eph. 5:27). Christ not only bathes the bride; He prepares and adorns her, as well.—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, August 28.†§**

12. Do these words portray to you Christ’s love for us as individuals? Why does God consider us as being so valuable?

13. How do these words apply to Christ’s love for the church?

[BSG:] (1) *Betrothal.* Christ offered Himself up for the church (as “bride price”) and so became betrothed to her (Eph. 5:25). (2) *Preparation for the wedding ceremony.* The attentions of the Bridegroom continue in His present efforts to sanctify and cleanse the bride (Eph. 5:26). (3) *The wedding ceremony itself.* Christ’s present attentions are in view of the “presentation” of the bride at the wedding (Eph. 5:27). This last element looks to the grand wedding celebration at His return, when Christ, the Bridegroom, will come to claim the church as bride and present her to Himself (Eph. 5:27; compare 2 Cor. 11:1, 2; Col. 1:21–23, 28).—Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Tuesday, August 29.‡§

2 Corinthians 11:1-4: ¹ I wish you would tolerate me, even when I am a bit foolish. Please do! ²I am jealous for you, just as God is; you are like a pure virgin whom I have promised in marriage to one man only, Christ himself. ³I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted and that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ—in the same way that Eve was deceived by the snake’s clever lies. ⁴For you gladly tolerate anyone who comes to you and preaches a different Jesus, not the one we preached; and you accept a spirit

and a gospel completely different from the Spirit and the gospel you received from us!—*Good News Bible*.* [Compare Galatians 1:8-9.]‡

14. Paul had a lot of trouble with people traveling behind him, trying to present a different gospel. Hence, in other parts of Paul's letters, he suggested that this "different gospel" was being preached by Pharisees and other Jews who followed him and insisted that in order to be a real Christian, one first must become a fully-recognized Jew, including circumcision and a full list of ceremonial requirements! See Acts 15, Romans 14, and 1 Corinthians 8 & 10. Paul vehemently disagreed with the teachings of those "Judaizers."
15. Paul suggested that because of the life and death of Jesus and the meaning it had come to have for church members, they should be drawn to Christ with an indissoluble bond. At one time, those church members had been far away from God; but, after listening to Paul and other Christian leaders, they had grown to be faithful church members.

Colossians 1:21-22: ²¹ At one time you were far away from God and were his enemies because of the evil things you did and thought. ²²But now, by means of the physical death of his Son, God has made you his friends, in order to bring you, holy, pure, and faultless, into his presence.—*Good News Bible*.* [See John 15:15.]‡

[BSG:] Ancient weddings often began with a nighttime parade (see *Matt. 25:1–13*). The groom and his entourage would gather at the groom's home—the couple's new home—and with grand ceremony begin a procession. Lit by torches and accompanied by joyful, lilting music and great rejoicing, the crowd jostles toward the home of the father of the bride. Gathering up the bride there or meeting the bride's own procession on the way, the parade would convey the couple to their new home, where the guests would settle into a weeklong feast, culminating in the wedding ceremony, when the bride would be presented to the groom.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Tuesday, August 29.‡§

16. Think over what you know about the history of the Christian church from Paul's day to now. How long has God been waiting for us to accept His invitation and to get ourselves ready? (See *Evangelism* 694-697: "The Reason for the Delay.")
17. When you think about the second coming, what mental picture comes up? **When Jesus shows up with the entire sky being full of bright shining angels, will you be excited? Or, will you be terrified?**
18. Paul had a very different idea about how Christian wives and husbands should relate to each other than did the rest of society. He challenged Christian husbands to turn from the expected practices of their time and to seek to match Christ's tender love.

See Ephesians 5:25-27 in #9 above. Then, Paul added another metaphor to his story. He dove even deeper into his explanations of how husbands and wives should get along.

Ephesians 5:28-30: ²⁸Men ought to love their wives just as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹(People never hate their own bodies. Instead, they feed them and take care of them, just as Christ does the church; ³⁰for we are members of his body.)—*Good News Bible*.*

[BSG:] Paul's rules for the Christian household (*Eph. 5:21–6:9*) disclose a challenging social context. In Ephesians 5:28–30, Paul addresses husbands who, following the all-too-frequent pattern of the time, may choose to “hate their own flesh” (see *Eph. 5:28, 29*), abusing and beating their wives. In the Greco-Roman world of Paul's day, the legal power of the “father of the family” (Latin, *pater familias*) was very broad. He could punish harshly or even kill his wife, children, and slaves and be within his legal rights (though exercising such power in extreme ways was increasingly constrained by public opinion)....

In Ephesians 5:28–30, Paul adds a new rationale to support the love of Christian husbands for their wives: self-love. Paul offers a truism: “No one ever hated his own flesh” (at least no one thinking clearly). Husbands don't harm themselves or beat up on their own bodies. Instead, they “nourish and cherish” them (*Eph. 5:29, NKJV*). In a bid to eliminate harshness and violence against Christian wives, Paul invites the Christian husband to identify with his wife. You are so much one with your wife, Paul argues, that to harm her is nothing short of inflicting self-harm, and most people in their right minds don't do that.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Wednesday, August 30.†§

19. What would happen to our marriages if each spouse modeled his/her relationship to his/her partner according to what s/he knows about the life and practices of Jesus Christ?
20. Then, Paul picked another metaphor, a very early one found in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:18-25: ¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him.” ¹⁹ So he took some soil from the ground and **formed all the animals and all the birds**. Then he brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and that is how they all got their names. ²⁰ So the man named all the birds and all the animals; **but not one of them was a suitable companion to help him.**

²¹ Then the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the flesh. ²² **He formed a woman** out of the rib and brought her to him. ²³ Then the man said,

“At last, here is one of my own kind—

Bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh.

‘Woman’ is her name because she was taken out of man.”

²⁴ **That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one.**

²⁵ The man and the woman were both naked, but they were not embarrassed.—*Good News Bible*.*†

21. ***Some men claim that men are superior to women and that women should obey them because the first woman was taken out of man (Adam). They seem to forget that every man since that day has been taken out of a woman!***
22. Paul pointed out that marriage is intended be a “one-flesh” experience.

[BSG:] Note that in choosing Genesis 2:24, Paul selects a statement about marriage made before the Fall and applies it to the relationships between Christian husbands and wives. In our distinctly post-Fall world, rampant exploitation of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman reveals how deeply entrenched in modern cultures is the idea that the sexual union represents subjugation of the woman. Paul argues that the sexual relationship, as reflected in Genesis, is not one of subjugation but of union. It does not symbolize or actualize the dominance of the male but the union of husband and wife, so much so that they are “one flesh.” We may look to both Ephesians 5:21–33 and Genesis 2:24, then, for an important, countercultural, and corrective theology of marriage and sexuality.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, August 31.‡

23. So, Paul concluded by saying that just as Christ loves the church, husbands should love their wives. As a double metaphor, husbands should love their wives and wives should love their husbands, just as Christ loves the church. Is that an example that is even possible to reach? Unfortunately, there is a very natural tendency for marriage partners to try to coerce or control their partners.
24. Ellen G. White consistently urged marriage partners to turn away from efforts to control the other.

[From the writings of Ellen G. White=EGW:] Do not try to compel each other to yield to your wishes. You cannot do this and retain each other’s love. Be kind, patient, and forbearing, considerate, and courteous.—Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing** 361.5 [1905]; *The Adventist Home** 118.2; *The Faith I Live By** 259.4.‡

[BSG:] She comments [as quoted in *Adventist Home*] directly on the interpretation and application of Colossians 3:18 (*and Eph. 5:22–24*).—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Friday, September 1.‡§

[EGW:] The question is often asked, “Shall a wife have no will of her own?” The Bible plainly states that the husband is the head of the family. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands.” If this injunction ended here, we might say that the position of the wife is not an enviable one.... Many husbands stop at the words, “Wives, submit yourselves,” but we will read the conclusion of the same injunction, which is, “As it is fit in the Lord.” [Colossians 3:18]

God requires that the wife shall keep the fear and glory of God ever before her. Entire submission is to be made only to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has purchased her as His own child by the infinite price of His life.... There is One who stands higher than the husband to the wife; it is her Redeemer, and her submission to her husband is to be rendered as God has directed—“as it is fit in the Lord.”—Ellen G. White, Letter 18b, 1891. [Written from Battle Creek, Michigan, February 15, 1891]; *The Adventist Home** 115.3-116.1.‡

25. Are these words from Paul and Ellen White sufficiently clear for us to understand the high standard to which Christ is calling us?

26. Unfortunately, there are many in our world who believe that Christian standards are outdated and outmoded. How would you try to enlighten such a person by presenting the truth from these texts, especially Ephesians 5:21-33?

27. It is becoming more and more clear that Paul had a central message in Ephesians.

[BSG:] **Unity runs like a golden thread through Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Unity applies not only to the relation between the Jews and the Gentiles in the church (*Ephesians 2*). Throughout the epistle, Paul discusses how unity is brought about by the triune God; by salvation; by baptism; by faith; by spiritual gifts; by the presence of the Holy Spirit in us; by the transformation of our walk of life, according to the pattern of Christ; and by Christian wisdom.** Ultimately, for Paul, unity in all its aspects is possible only in Christ.

Paul brings to its rightful place his entire discussion of the unity of the church as the new humanity: the family. If ever there was an example or a model of unity, it is the family.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 132.†§ [Do many marriages today represent this perfect union?][‡]

[BSG:] As elsewhere in his epistles, Paul mixes a solid theological discussion (doctrine of Christ and doctrine of the church) in his practical considerations. **In Paul's view, biblical theology does not exist for the sole purpose of devising a coherent and beautiful intellectual system; the apostle's practical message is always built on the solid foundation of biblical theology.**

For this reason, the apostle does not approach the discussion of the family as if it were a marginal topic that could be addressed with a few solutions taken from general human wisdom, psychology, or sociology. Rather, he places his discussion of the family in the context of foundational Christian doctrines: God, Creation, Christ, salvation, and the church. In fact, here Paul does not use the family to illustrate these doctrines but, rather, uses these doctrines to illustrate the Christian family!

As in the case of the church, Paul does not accept that the approach to the Christian family be determined by the realities of our fallen human nature and society. Rather, he follows Jesus' "to the beginning" interpretive principle (" 'but from the beginning it was not so,' " *Matt. 19:8, NKJV*), which helps the Christian church and its theology to orient itself toward the restoration of God's ideals for us, as opposed to legitimizing the realities of the sinful world. Paul's treatment of the family in the context of these foundational Christian doctrines shows that the Christian family cannot be subjected to compromise.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide 133.†§**

28. No doubt, each one of us has heard some fairly lengthy discussion about how husbands and wives should relate to each other based on this passage of Scripture in Ephesians 5. Let us pull together several main points.

[BSG:] Several points may help us gain a better understanding of this passage:

(1) The attitudes of both the husband and the wife come from the context of submitting to one another (*Eph. 5:21*), as a result of being filled by the Holy Spirit (*Eph. 5:18*).

(2) **The wife submits to her husband, not as to a boss but as to Christ, her Savior and Protector. The meaning of submission is to hold her husband in high regard, respecting, acknowledging, and appreciating him as her protector and helper. The Bible does not provide any foundation to the notion of regarding the wife as inferior to her husband and, therefore, in subjection to him as to a superior....**

(3) **Husbands, in their turn, must remember that women perceive love in terms of care and protection.** The husband's love for his wife is like the Lord's sacrificial love for the church. Paul teaches men to have the right attitude of humility, appreciation, and love for their wives.

(4) True, Paul did compare the wife's submission with the church's submission, and the husband's love with Christ's love. But Paul does not make this comparison loosely, mixing up theological concepts, thereby providing ground for hierarchical relationships between men and women or for a sacramental view on marriage. On the contrary, the apostle immediately qualifies his comparison and explains very carefully what he meant exactly and what the points of comparison are. That comparison refers to the attitudes and forms of submitting to each other and of expressing love.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 133-134.†§

29. An early Christian apologist by the name of John Chrysostom lived from A.D. 347-407. He is known as a famous preacher and the patriarch of the church in Constantinople. He gave us these interesting words about husbands and wives.

[BSG:] Wouldest thou have thy wife obedient unto thee, as the Church is to Christ? Take then thyself the same provident care for her, as Christ takes for the Church. Yea, even if it shall be needful for thee to give thy life for her, yea, and to be cut into pieces ten thousand times, yea, and to endure and undergo any suffering whatever,—refuse it not. Though thou shouldest undergo all this, yet wilt thou not, no, not even then, have done anything like Christ. For thou indeed art doing it for one to whom thou art already knit; but He for one who turned her back on Him and hated Him. In the same way then as He laid at His feet her who turned her back on Him, who hated, and spurned, and disdained Him, not by menaces, nor by violence, nor by terror, nor by anything else of the kind, but by his unwearied affection; so also do thou behave thyself toward thy wife.... For what sort of union is that, where the wife trembles at her husband? And what sort of pleasure will the husband himself enjoy, if he dwells with his wife as with a slave, and not as with a free-woman? Yea, though thou shouldest suffer anything on her account, do not upbraid her; for neither did Christ do this.—*Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians*, in Philip Schaff, ed., *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Printing

Company, 1983), vol. 13, p. 144.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 134].^{‡§}

30. Not every Bible scholar down through history had this same great view. The role and status of women through much of history has been bleak. Even in the days of the Protestant Reformation, the role of women was very low. Look at this note found in the 1549 reprinting of the *Matthews Bible* (1537) done by Edmund Beck. After reading Peter's counsel that wives "be in subjection to your own husbands... even as Sarah obeyed Abraham," (See 1 Peter 3:1,6.) Mr. Beck attached this note in the margin to male readers:

He dwelleth wyth hys wyfe accordynge to knowledge, that taketh her as a necessarye helper, and not a bondeservaunt or a bondeslave. And if she be not obedient and helpful unto him, endevoureth to beate the feare of God into her heade, that thereby she may be co[m]pelled to learne her dutie and do it. [Copied as close to the original spelling as possible; letter in brackets is added.][‡]

31. Contrast those words from the time of the Protestant Reformation with the following:

[BSG:] The view of Seventh-day Adventists on the family, especially focusing on the relationship between the spouses, is expressed in fundamental belief 23: "Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian, a marriage commitment is to God as well as to the spouse and should be entered into only between a man and a woman who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the relationship between Christ and His church. . . . Although some family relationships may fall short of the ideal, a man and a woman who fully commit themselves to each other in Christ through marriage may achieve loving unity through the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message."—Seventh-day Adventist Church, "What Adventists Believe About Marriage and the Family," available from [reference listed but not as a hyperlink] <https://www.adventist.org/marriage-and-the-family/>.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 135].[‡]

32. Could you present a clear understanding of the ideal Christian relationship in marriage? In your culture, which may be very different from other cultures in the world, how do you see the marriage relationship being practiced? Has Christianity had a major impact on how marriages are practiced? And in your marriage?

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Last Modified: August 11, 2023