

A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand

Unity in the House of God

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Unity = ONE

Paul's focus – chief concern - in his letter to the Ephesians is unity:

1. Unity of the universe in Christ (1:20-23)
2. Unity of Jew and Gentile in one new Man, a holy temple (2:11-22)
3. Unity of Gentiles and Israel in Christ (3:6, 18-19)
4. Unity within the Church, and among various members of one Body (4:1-6, 7-16)
5. Unity within various relationships (5:21-33)
6. Unity to stand (6:10-20)
7. The large number of words with "sun" prefixes (meaning: with, together with)

Not just any unity, but **unity achieved in and through Christ.**

Hermeneutical Principle

Lens: God's Character and Redemptive Activity

When a passage seems to advocate something that goes against God's character and clear pattern of activity in the world, we must work harder to understand what's being said.

A. God topples the mighty and elevates the lowly:

“He has toppled the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly.” (Luke 1:52)

"He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with nobles, and inherit a seat of honor..." (1 Samuel 2:8)

Ex. God elevates the “lowly”:

- Israel (Ez 6), Esther, Ruth, the younger brother over the eldest brother, Bethlehem, Mary, fishermen, children, Gentiles, slaves, women, the Samaritan woman, the Canaanite woman, the bleeding woman, the prostitute, the poor,... and **us**.

Ex. God topples the “mighty”:

- Israel, Babylon, Assyria, kings, priests, the eldest brother (Esau and Jacob; Joseph's brothers, David's brothers), Pharisees, Sadducees, the wealthy, James and John (vying to sit on Christ's right and left),...and **us**.

B. He *levels* hierarchies. Keep in mind that one of the ways that he elevated the slave was by making us all slaves.

GOD



Israel



Gentile Nations

GOD



The Jews



Jewish Religious Leaders



Jewish Men



Jewish Women (The lowly)

Cultural Views of the Time

Jewish Thought:

Apocrypha – 250 BC

“The Wisdom of Ben Sira,” “From woman is the beginning of sin and because of her all die.”

Talmudic writings

Every male Jew, as part of daily prayer, thanked God that He did not “make me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” (c.f. Galatians 3:28)

Rabbinic Teaching

“It would be better to see the Torah burnt than to hear its words on the lips of women.”

Philo

A Jewish philosopher contemporary to Christ, said, “A wife is a selfish creature, adept at beguiling the morals of her husband.”

Jewish Culture

There were Jewish men who believed that God would never send the Messiah through a mere woman, so they wore pants that tied at the ankles to catch the baby Messiah when He entered the world.

Cultural Views of the Time

Greek Philosophers:

Socrates – 470-399 BC

Often referred to women as the weaker sex, and argued that being born a woman is a divine curse since *woman is halfway between man and animal*.

Aristotle – 384-322 BC

Formalized the practice of sexual discrimination and brought authority to the belief in sexual inequality.

Greek Stoics

Regarded women as hindrances, distractions, and temptations.

Church Fathers:

Tertullian – 155-230 AD

Roman lawyer, trained in Greek Stoic philosophy, leading defender of Christianity. “Woman, do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are **the Devil’s gateway**; ...you are the first deserter of the divine law; ...you destroyed so easily God’s image in man.”

Thomas Aquinas – 1225-1274 AD

Did more to systematize Christian beliefs than any other, **and harmonize them with Greek philosophy**. Interpreted Paul’s writing through the eyes of **Aristotle**. With his teachings, the Greek deprecation of women became firmly cemented into Christianity.

GOD



CHRIST



James and John



Everyone Else

GOD



CHRIST, MARY (Mother of God)



Pope (Holy Father)



Male Religious Leaders (Cardinals,...)



Men



Women

GOD



CHRIST (Mediator)



Man



Woman

GOD



CHRIST (Mediator)



Husband



Wife

GOD

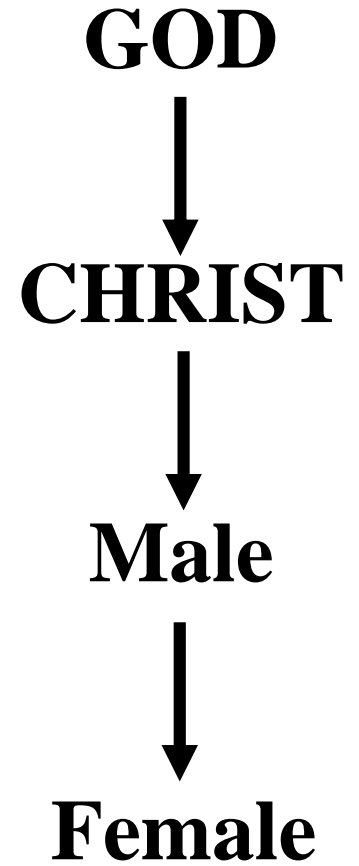
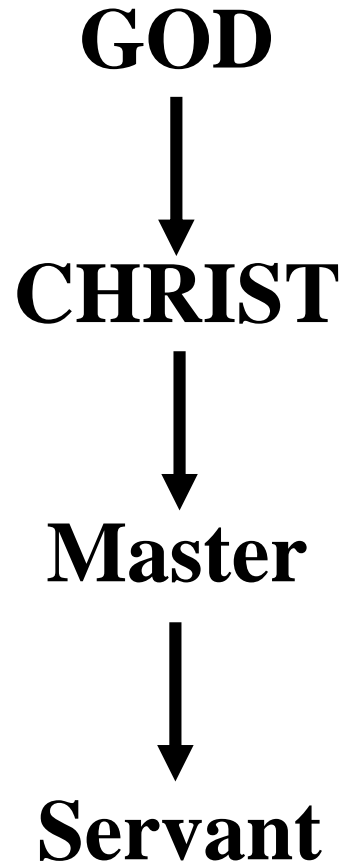
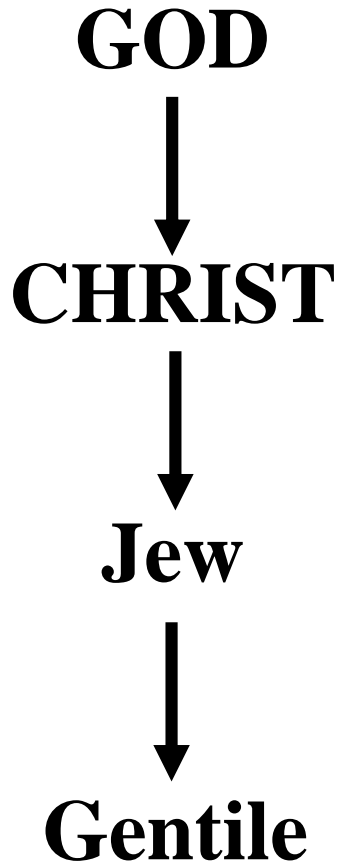


CHRIST

Husband (Mediator)



Wife



G/C/H



Jew



Gentile

G/C/H

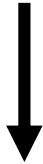


Master



Servant

G/C/H



Male



Female

G/C/H



Jew = Gentile

G/C/H



Master



Servant

G/C/H



Male



Female

**“There is neither Jew nor Gentile...
(Gal 3:28)**

G/C/H
↓
Jew = Gentile

G/C/H
↓
Master
||
Servant
(equal but different roles)

G/C/H
↓
Male
↓
Female

**“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free...
(Gal 3:28)**

G/C/H



Jew = Gentile

G/C/H



Master = Servant

G/C/H



Male



Female

**“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female...
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G/C/H



Jew = Gentile

G/C/H



Master = Servant

G/C/H



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(equal but different roles)

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G/C/H



G/C/H



G/C/H



Jew = Gentile Master = Servant Male = Female

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G/C/H



Jew = Gentile = Master = Servant = Male = Female

**“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28)**

Redeemed Reality is Radically Different

“But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your **servant**...” (Mk 10:43)

“...and whoever wants to be first must be your **slave**—just as the Son of Man did not come to be **served**, but to **serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:27-28)

“The greatest among you will be your **servant**.” (Mt 23:11)

“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Yet I am among you as the one who serves.**” (Lk 22:24-27)

Why? Because redeemed reality is radically different. It’s not about greatness. It’s about serving others.

G/C/H



Jew = Gentile = Master = Servant = Male = Female

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G/C/H



Servant = Servant = Servant = Servant = Servant = Servant

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G/C/H
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**“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female,
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G/C/H



ONE

**“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female,
for you are all ONE in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28)**

How?

“...Rather, in humility **value others above yourselves...**” (Ph 2:3)

“Be devoted to one another in love. **Honor one another above yourselves.**” (Ro 12:10)

How? A change of heart.

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“Be devoted to one another in **love**. Honor one another above yourselves.” (Ro 12:10)

Things to Keep in Mind

1. Handle metaphors, symbolic language, and analogies with care. Let Scripture itself determine the meaning and bounds of a metaphor or analogy.
2. Paul is a master wordsmith: meticulous, picky, creative, careful - not lazy, not careless, **so it matters which words he uses.**
3. God tends to eschew revolution and instead, plant seeds of change, e.g. the Gospel, which creates change far more powerfully than revolution ever could **because it changes the heart.**

Why is it important that we get this right?

Great Commission Implications

1. We don't want the church lagging behind the truth like it did on the slavery issue, and as a result, the name of Christ suffering harm.
2. We don't want the church lagging behind the world in setting free and elevating those that Scripture itself frees and elevates, and as a result, the name of Christ suffering harm.

Theological Implications

1. Serious theological disagreements carried out on the public stage sidetrack believers from the Great Commission and bring ridicule on the church by the world (see above).
2. Misinterpreting Scripture can lead to highly questionable, even heretical teachings that undermine Scripture's actual teachings, e.g. The Eternal Subordination of the Son (ESS). More on this later.

Sinful Nature Broken World

Ephesians 6:5-9

5 **Slaves, OBEY** your earthly **masters**, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart, in the same manner as unto Christ;
6 not with eyeservice, in the same manner of people-pleasers; but in the same manner as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.
7 Serving with good will/enthusiasm, in the same manner as to the **Lord, and not to people**,
8 knowing that each person, if he does something good, will receive this back from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

And, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that also the Master of them and of you is in heaven; and there is no partiality with Him.

Focus: Who has to obey whom.

Ephesians 6:5-9

2A. Slaves,...

2B. with...

2C. Not...

2D. but...

X. doing...

2D1. serving...

2C1. in...

2B1. Knowing...

2A1. And...

Ephesians 6:5-9

X. doing the will of God from the heart;

Ephesians 6:5-9

2D. but in the same manner as servants of Christ,

X. doing the will of God from the heart;

2D1. serving with good will/enthusiasm,

Ephesians 6:5-9

2C. not with eyeservice, in the same manner of people-pleasers,

2D. but in the same manner as servants of Christ,

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2C1. in the same manner as to the Lord, and not to people:

Ephesians 6:5-9

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2D1. serving with good will/enthusiasm,

2C1. in the same manner as to the Lord, and not to people,

2B1. knowing that each person, if he does something good, will receive this back from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

Ephesians 6:5-9

2A. Slaves, obey your earthly masters,

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2B1. knowing that each person, if he does something good, will receive this back from the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

2A1. And, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that also the Master of them and of you is in heaven; *and there is no partiality with Him.*

First Century Church Reaction

1. Believing masters began freeing their slaves.
2. Other believers began pooling their money to purchase the freedom of slaves.
3. The first century church began elevating those who had been kept down.

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Redemption Reconciliation Regeneration Restoration

Ephesians 6:5-9

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2A'. And, masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that also the Master of them and of you is in heaven; and there is no partiality with Him.

Focus: Am I doing the will of God from my heart?

Parallels

1. Paul seems to support the hierarchical structure. He even commands slaves to obey their masters.
2. Paul doesn't address the rightness or wrongness of that hierarchical structure.
3. Yet, Paul's real goal is to level that hierarchy by planting a seed that will do so as it comes to fruition in the hearts of those involved.
4. We need to remember that what first appears to be the message may not be the message at all when viewed through the lens of God's character and His clear pattern of redemptive activity in the world.
5. The X is the key.

Kephale

Cyril (376-444), Archbishop of Alexandria, in *De Recta Fide ad Pulcheriam et Eudociam*, wrote:

“Therefore of our race he [Adam] became first **head [kephale]**, which is **source [or, beginning]**, and was of the earth and earthy. Since Christ was named the second Adam, he has been placed as **head**, which is **source [or, beginning]**, of those who through Him have been formed anew unto Him unto immortality through sanctification in the Spirit. Therefore he himself our **source**, which is **head**, has appeared as a human being. Yet he, though God by nature, has himself a generating **head**, the heavenly Father, and he himself, though God according to his nature, yet being the Word, was begotten of him. **Because head means source**, he establishes the truth for those who are wavering in their mind that **man is the head of woman, *for she was taken out of him***. Therefore as God according to his nature, the one Christ and Son and Lord has as his **head [kephale]** the heavenly Father, having himself become our **head [kephale]** because he is of the same stock according to the flesh.”

Kephale

Athanasius (296-373), Bishop of Alexandria, in his letter denouncing Arianism, de Synodis, quoted in full the First Creed of Sirmium. The Creed includes this line:

“For the Son is the **Head [kephale], namely the beginning of all:** and God is the **Head, namely the beginning of Christ . . .**”

Keep in mind that these Church Fathers believed that women were to be subordinate to men. Yet, they are adamant that kephale cannot be used to support that position.

Why? Because it would mean that Christ is subordinate within the Trinity. (1 Cor. 11:3)

Hypotasso

1. Because of Paul's emphasis on unity throughout Ephesians...
2. Because of his exhortation to be eager to maintain unity...
3. Because aligning or unifying with each other makes far more sense than obeying or submitting to one another...
4. And, because hypotasso was used to align soldiers and weapons in a phalanx to achieve the greatest protection, strength, and effectiveness...

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...I'm going to translate hypotasso as unify/align yourselves.





Ephesians 5:18b-22

“...but be filled with the Spirit, **speaking** to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, **singing** and **making melody** in your heart to the Lord, **giving thanks** always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **unifying/aligning yourselves with** one another in reverence of Christ, wives to your **own** husbands as to the Lord...”

Sinful Nature Broken World

Ephesians 5:21-33

...21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives and Husbands

22 **Wives, SUBMIT** to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the **husband is the HEAD** of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also **wives** should **SUBMIT** in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Focus: Who makes the decisions.

What is the X (key) to Ephesians 5:21-33?

Given the way the passage has been translated for centuries, what would you expect the X to be?

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X. Wives submit to your husbands because the husband is the head of the wife.

X. In order that He Himself might present to Himself the honored (highly esteemed) church

F. In order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word

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F1. Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and **blameless**

E. Husbands, love your wives according to the same manner as also Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her

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E1. So, in this same manner, husbands are obligated (duty-bound) also to love their (own) wives as their (own) bodies. He who loves his (own) wife loves himself.

D. *But in the same manner as the church unifies with Christ, in the same manner also the wives with their husbands in everything*

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D1. For no one ever hated his (own) flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, *according to the same manner as also Christ [does] the church.*

C. He Himself Saviour/Deliverer/Preserver of the body

D. *But in the same manner as the church hypotassetai with Christ, in the same manner also the wives with their husbands in everything*

E. Husbands, love your wives according to the same manner as also Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her

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C1. Because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

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B1. Because of **this** a man shall leave his father and mother, and be glued to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

BX. This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and with reference to the church.

B2. Nevertheless, also you, each and every one, love his (own) wife in the same manner as himself

A. ...Unify yourselves with one another out of respect for Christ, wives with your own husbands in the same manner as with the Lord.

B. For the husband is the head of the wife in the same manner as also Christ is the head of the church

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Tertullian's Reaction

“Whence are we to find words enough fully to tell the happiness of that **marriage** which the Church cements...? ...What kind of yoke is that of two believers, partakers of **one** hope, **one** desire, **one** discipline, **one** and the **same service**? **Both** are brethren, **both** fellow servants, **no difference** of spirit or of flesh; nay, they are truly “**two in one flesh**.” Where the flesh is **one**, **one** is the spirit too. **Together** they pray, **together** prostrate themselves, **together** perform their fasts; **mutually** teaching, **mutually** exhorting, **mutually** sustaining. **Equally** are they both found in the Church of God; **equally** at the banquet of God; **equally** in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments.

Neither hides ought from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. The sick is visited, the indigent relieved, with freedom...Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they **mutually** challenge each other which shall better chant to their LORD. Such things when Christ sees and hears, He joys. To these He sends His own peace. Where two are, there withal is He Himself. Where He is, there the Evil One is not.”

Sinful Nature Broken World

Ephesians 5:21-33

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Focus: Who makes the decisions.

Redemption Reconciliation Regeneration Restoration

Ephesians 5:21-33

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- B. For the husband is the head of the wife in the same manner as also Christ is the head of the church
- C. He Himself Saviour/Deliverer/Preserver of the body
- D. But as the church hypotassetai with Christ, in the same manner also the wives with their husbands in everything
- E. Husbands, love your wives according to the same manner as also Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her
- F. In order that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word

X. In order that He Himself might present to Himself the honored (highly esteemed) church

- F1. Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and blameless
- E1. So, in this same manner, husbands are obligated (duty-bound) also to love their (own) wives as their (own) bodies. He who loves his (own) wife loves himself.
- D1. For no one ever hated his (own) flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, according to the same manner as also Christ [does] the church.
- C1. Because we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.
- B1. Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and be glued to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh...
- A1. In order that the wife may respect her husband.

Focus: Am I elevating my bride, and thus, The Bride?

GOD



CHRIST

Husband (Mediator)



Wife

G/C/H



HuW sibfaend

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus,…” (1 Tim 2:5)

G/C/H = ONE



HuWsi**bf**ae**nd = ONE**

G/C/H = ONE



HuWsib**faend = ONE**



One flesh following
one will...

G/C/H = ONE



HuW sibfaend = ONE



One flesh following
one will: **God's will.**

An Incredible Witness to the World

1. Tertullian was amazed by the Christian marriage because this oneness between husband and wife simply didn't exist outside of the church. The world had never witnessed anything like it.
2. That's because it can't be achieved without Christ. It is supernatural, requiring both members of this one flesh to continually seek God in determining His singular will for them. This process creates a "strand of three cords that is not easily broken."
3. This is how we should be preparing our sons and daughters for marriage – with a single-minded commitment to the oneness – the unity - they will share with their future spouse, and an eager desire to maintain that unity by laying it all – talents, gifts, wants, needs, dreams, plans, selves - before God, seeking His singular will for their unified life.
4. Can you imagine how powerful the church's witness in the world would be if our marriages reflected what Tertullian described? What Paul described?