

but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:15-16), explaining how Joel foretold a time when all would receive the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-32), something to be no doubt accompanied by joy.

Some today in the charismatic movement claim that they can get “drunk with the Holy Spirit,” but this is not something that is present in the mind of the Apostle Paul. For his ancient audience, he is contrasting being drunk with wine *which leads to gross sexual sins*, versus being filled with the Holy Spirit. Those who get drunk are often trying to search for the joy, one which the Holy Spirit provides without the need for alcoholic inducement.

5:19-20 Paul gives some specific examples of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, that are exactly the opposite of any kind of sexual orgy as would be practiced by the Greeks or Romans. Those filled with the Spirit are to find themselves, “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah to God, even the Father.” This is paralleled by Colossians 3:16-17:

“Let the word of Messiah richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Yeshua, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

Being filled with the Holy Spirit causes one “in everything [to] give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Messiah Yeshua” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). The First Century Messianic assembly would have modeled its worship style from the Tanach Scriptures, various Jewish liturgies from the Synagogue, and would have had its own songs and hymns exalting Yeshua (such as the *Carmen Christi* of Philippians 2:6-10). Spontaneous songs were also a part of some of the early congregations (1 Corinthians 14:15). The comparison and contrast between drunkenness leading to lewd sexual practices, and being filled with the Holy Spirit leading to some kind of worship or thanks issued to God, could not be clearer. In whatever we do today, let it be for God’s glory and not for self-pleasuring.

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah. 22 Wives, *be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly], He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

5:21-33 Being filled with God’s Spirit (v. 18) will result in a manner of life for Paul’s audience different from their previous pagan experience. Many are agreed that the instructions which complete ch. 5, vs. 21-33, are an expansion upon a prior message given in Colossians chs. 3 & 4. Other than how Ephesians 2:14-16 is approached and encountered by Messianics, Ephesians 5:21-33 is ***the most*** debated and controversial part of the entire epistle for today among interpreters. This is why Witherington urges, “the trajectory and contextualizing of the argument are as important as the details of what Paul says.”⁴² If not

⁴² Witherington, 314.

read closely and carefully, we are likely to not only miss some key points of Paul’s instruction to First Century readers, but also significantly misapply them in a modern setting.

5:21-6:9 compose a very important part of Biblical instruction because it concerns the institution of the family, specifically the institution of the family after the arrival of the Messiah. The Apostle Paul describes the relationship husband and wife are to have to one another (5:21-33), the relationship of children to their parents (6:1-4), and even the relationship of slaves and masters (6:5-9). It is commonly referred to in theological works by the German term *Haustafel*, meaning “house table.” One point that should not elude us is the fact that for his audience in Asia Minor, Paul is largely subverting (or even countering) ancient Greco-Roman household codes. These are things that we see outlined by philosophers such as Aristotle, that later found their way into Second Temple Judaism:

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY	SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM
<p>Having ascertained, from the previous analysis, what are the elements of which the city is constituted, we must first consider the management of the household; for every city is composed of households...[E]very subject of inquiry should first be examined from its simplest elements; and the primary and simplest elements of the household are the connection of master and slave, that of the husband and wife, and that of parents and children. We must accordingly consider each of these connections, examining the nature of each and the qualities it ought to possess. The factors to be examined are therefore three: first the relationship of master and slave; next, what may be called the marital relationship...and lastly, what may be called the parental relationship (Aristotle <i>Politics</i> 1.1253b).⁴³</p> <p>While the head of the household rules over both wife and children, and rules over both as free members of the household, he exercises a different sort of rule in each case. His rule over his wife is like that of a statesman over fellow citizens; his rule over his children is like that of a monarch over subjects. The male</p>	<p>[W]ives shall serve their husbands, not indeed in any particular so as to be insulted by them, but in a spirit of reasonable obedience in all things... (Philo <i>Hypothetica</i> 7.3).⁴⁵</p> <p>[F]or, says the Scripture, “A woman is inferior to her husband in all things.” Let her, therefore, be obedient to him; not so, that he should abuse her, but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God has given the authority to the husband... (Josephus <i>Against Apion</i> 2.201).⁴⁶</p>

⁴³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 12.

is naturally fitter to command than the female... (Aristotle <i>Politics</i> 1.1259a). ⁴⁴	
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In comparing the Hellenistic model of the household as offered by Aristotle, to the views of the Jewish writers Philo and Josephus, one can see that the latter are certainly “toned down” a bit. We should not at all think that the ancient Synagogue advocated a model of family organization exclusively influenced from Greek philosophy, and note how there was variance. Yet, we can also see some phrases that have found their way into our religious language today, which appear to have *not* originated in Scripture. The kind of submission that Paul has in mind in vs. 21-33 is somewhat different than the kind of submission put forward by the contemporary philosophy, either Hellenistic or Jewish, of his day. O’Brien indicates how many see that “in Hellenism the model was political, but in Ephesians and Colossians...the model and motivating force is Christ himself.”⁴⁷

However one interprets and applies vs. 21-33, **everyone should agree that Yeshua should be the epicenter of the emotions and actions involved**, and that Believers who are husband and wife demonstrating the work of the Holy Spirit inside them is critical. Agreeing on this is imperative, because surveying the different options and opinions available is not unlike walking through a live mine field. There is considerable scholarly debate today in examining vs. 21-33 over what Paul’s remarks originally meant, and how they should be applied among modern Believers.⁴⁸ Lincoln well summarizes the controversies present in this section: “Typical of the content of all these discussions is the notion that the man is intended by nature to rule as husband, father, and master, and that not to adhere to this proper hierarchy is detrimental not only to the household but to the life of the state.”⁴⁹ This attitude, originally seen in Aristotle, is one that has been adopted by most of historic Christianity, and is also seen in most of today’s Messianic movement.

The inauguration of the new status of Believers brought about via the work of Yeshua—one where “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28)—initiated a revolutionary equality that had not existed since the Garden of Eden (subverting t.*Berachot* 6:18). This kind of equality particularly affected the role of women, slaves, and minors in the ancient *ekklēsia*. In the Mishnah, we see that “Women, slaves, and minors are exempt from the recitation of the

⁴⁵ *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, 743.

⁴⁶ *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, 806.

A footnote on the quote offered by Josephus indicates, “This text is nowhere in our present copies of the Old Testament.”

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁷ O’Brien, 406.

⁴⁸ For a small snapshot of opinions, consult: Lincoln, 359-361; Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992), pp 133-224; Gordon D. Fee, “The Cultural Context of Ephesians 5:18-6:9” *Priscilla Papers* Issue 16:1, Winter 2002; Witherington, pp 319-325.

⁴⁹ Lincoln, 358.

Shema and from [the obligation to wear] phylacteries” (m.*Berachot* 3:3),⁵⁰ but I doubt that many today would prohibit anyone other than Jewish males from declaring “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4). In the First Century, the early Messianic movement was quite subversive to the dominant culture of the times, be that culture Greco-Roman or Jewish, because everyone had a place in the assembly and something to contribute. Regarding Paul’s message in Ephesians, David Hamilton observes,

“Paul said that God’s purpose was to bring all things together in unity in Christ. He told believers they had the shared tragedy of sin, but now they were heirs together. There was equality at the foot of the Cross. Equality of forgiveness. Equality of hope. Equality of purpose. Believers were all being built together into God’s future dwelling”⁵¹ (cf. 1:10; 2:1-3, 4-10, 22).

Those who argue against Pauline authorship of Ephesians claim that there are contradictions of marriage seen between 5:21-33 and Paul’s writing in 1 Corinthians 7,⁵² as the author of Ephesians seems to be more pro-marriage than the Apostle Paul himself. These supposed differences are not because of different authors, but are rather because of different circumstances Paul is addressing to two separate groups of recipients.⁵³ Paul does not appear to be addressing circumstances of mixed marriage or family situations in 5:21-6:9, as he does in 1 Corinthians 7.⁵⁴

5:21 The general statement made in v. 21 affects how we interpret the verses that follow, all the way to 6:9. Paul asserts, “Submit to one another in fear of the Messiah” (CJB). The issue at hand is **mutual submission** of individual Believers to one another, *Hypotassomenoi allēlois* (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις). The service that is required of individual Believers to one another has been modeled by Messiah Yeshua in Philippians 2:3-8, as the Master emptied Himself of His exalted glory in Heaven, entering into our world, being born as a mortal to atone for fallen humanity.

Mutual submission of Believers to one another is to be natural evidence of the Holy Spirit enacting a change in peoples’ lives. The verb *hypotassō* (ὑποτάσσω), employed in v. 21, “has a wide range of meaning centered on the idea of enforced or voluntary subjection,” as the middle voice participle *hypotassomenoi* would relate “‘to subject oneself,’ ‘to be subservient,’ ‘to submit voluntarily’” (TDNT).⁵⁵ Paul lays forward what it means for people within a common family unit of the First Century to submit to one another. If this kind of submission exists in proper balance, then the Body of Messiah as a whole should likewise be. As family members are submitted to one another in the Lord, this will inevitably guide larger groups of Believers, as all seek to find a place in the *ekklēsia* where they can feel welcome, be used, and allow their unique gifts and talents to contribute for the benefit of all. Mutual submission is supported by previous admonitions seen in the letter:

⁵⁰ Tzvee Zahavy and Alan J. Avery-Peck, trans., in Neusner, *Mishnah*, 6.

⁵¹ Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2000), 132.

⁵² Furnish, in *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, 843.

⁵³ Consult the author’s entries for 1&2 Corinthians in *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*.

⁵⁴ Witherington, 313.

⁵⁵ G. Dellling, “*hypotássō*,” in TDNT, 1159.

“[W]ith all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love...Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE *of you* WITH HIS NEIGHBOR [Zechariah 8:16], for we are members of one another...Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Messiah also has forgiven you” (4:2, 25, 32).

What is specifically in view in Ephesians 5:21-6:9 is not the religious leadership within a congregation, but rather how family groupings were to be organized. Paul’s theme of mutual submission would not have been entirely foreign to the Jewish community of the First Century, as submission to one another is seen in the DSS:

“Thus shall each Israelite know his proper standing in the *Yahad* of God, an eternal society. None shall be demoted from his appointed place, none promoted beyond his foreordained rank. So shall all together comprise a *Yahad* whose essence is truth, genuine humility, love of charity, and righteous intent, caring for one another after this fashion within the holy society, comrades in eternal fellowship” (1QS 2.22-25).⁵⁶

Perkins observes how here, “Order determined by the individual’s insight and holiness governs relationships between members of the community.”⁵⁷ While there is a ranking within the Qumran community, it is notably determined by age or time spent in the community (1QS 5.23-25). Unlike Greco-Roman culture, there is a submission here based on a spirituality that is to bind the community together. Yet this is within a sectarian branch of Judaism, and may not have been manifested on a larger level.

Paul says that Believers are to be submitting to one another in the fear of the Messiah. Fear of God is an important theme in the Scriptures (Psalm 36:2; Romans 3:18), and the submission that is to take place within the family unit is done so not only because of fear for God, or a fear of what might happen should people be treated improperly, but most specifically because of a fear of losing what the Messiah has brought. Our Lord taught His Disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). Not only must we deny our flesh and inclination toward worldly pleasures, pursuing Him, but such denial also involves our interdependence toward others on the same journey. Clement of Rome expresses (in the late First Century C.E.) how this can work well within the broad Body of Messiah, and offers us thoughts that we all need to take to serious heart:

“Let us take our body as an example. The head without the feet is nothing; so likewise the feet without the head are nothing: even the smallest limbs of our body are necessary and useful for the whole body: but all the members conspire and unite in subjection, that the whole body maybe saved. So in our case let the whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each man be subject unto his neighbor, according as also he was appointed with his special grace. Let not the strong neglect the weak; and let the weak respect the strong. Let the rich minister aid to the poor; and let the poor give thanks to God, because He hath given him one through whom his wants may be supplied. Let the wise display his wisdom, not in words, but in good works. He that is lowly in mind, let him not bear testimony to himself, but leave testimony to be borne

⁵⁶ Wise, Abegg, and Cook, 128.

⁵⁷ Perkins, in *NIB*, 11:443.

to him by his neighbor. He that is pure in the flesh, let him be so, and not boast, knowing that it is Another who bestoweth his continence upon him. Let us consider, brethren, of what matter we were made; who and what manner of beings we were, when we came into the world; from what a sepulchre and what darkness He that molded and created us brought us into His world, having prepared His benefits aforehand ere ever we were born. Seeing therefore that we have all these things from Him, we ought in all things to give thanks to Him, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Clement 37:5-38:1).

5:22-23 If v. 21 lays forward the general statement requiring mutual submission of those within the family, then 5:22-6:9 particularizes this and how it was to be manifest in the homes of Paul’s audience. Vs. 22-33 lay forward the most important and intimate of human relationships, that of husbands and wives toward one another. Parallels can be seen between Ephesians 5:22-33 and other important sections of the Apostolic Scriptures, notably Paul’s concurring letter of Colossians:

EPHESIANS 5:22-33 AND THE HOUSEHOLD CODE ⁵⁸		
ITEM	EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS AND PARALLELS
to wives	Wives...to your own husbands, as to the Lord (5:22)	Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord (Colossians 3:18) In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands... (1 Peter 3:1) encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children...being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored (Titus 2:4-5)
reason for conduct	the husband is the head of the wife, as Messiah also is the head of the [assembly]...as the [assembly] is subject to	[Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:3)]

⁵⁸ Ibid., 11:447-448.