

# DEEP SIX STUDY

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026

## ***New Light – “Who’s Really in Charge (Redefining Marriage)”***

**MESSAGE HIGHLIGHTS** *(You can view the full message online at [capecodchurch.com](http://capecodchurch.com))*

**Summary:** As we’ve walked through Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we’ve discovered a new way of looking at ourselves, our world, and the church in light (“New Light”) of the reality that we are now “in Christ” and called to see things differently. As Paul might put it, “the world is broken, but because of Jesus you have a new and better way to live.” Now we turn to perhaps the most challenging relationship in which to live that out – our marriages – to see how we’re called to live them out “differently.”

### **1. The Problem and the Big Picture** (Ephesians 5:21-22, 25)

- Paul writes in Ephesians 5 that, because of Jesus, marriage is now supposed to be different for his (Spirit-empowered) followers. They (we) are called to something better and higher in marriage than the prevailing ideas and norms of the day.
- There’s one big problem with marriage: it’s *hard*. It’s hard, because we bring our “stuff” – who we really are – into it. Marriage as a concept is beautiful, but we mess it up by bringing our selfish pride, ego, bitterness and unresolved “baggage” into a relationship that requires selflessness.
- Culture’s answer to this dilemma has often been, “the powerful have power.” In fact, in Paul’s day the Greek “Household Codes” were the norm: men/husbands/fathers were to rule the household without question because of their innate “deliberative capacity” and physical strength. Into this norm Paul writes, “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”...

### **2. The “Deal” Solution** (Genesis 2:18, 3:16-17, 1:27-28; Revelation 22:3, 5b; Ephesians 5:21-22,25)

- Apart from the Greek philosophers, the reality is that the idea of a husband-led hierarchy in marriage is biblical – but the big question is “*Where does that hierarchy come from?*” Contrary to popular (conservative) thought, the hierarchy doesn’t come from Genesis 2:18 (“I will make a *helper* for him...”); the word translated as “helper” (*ezer*) actually means “a strong ally, a rescuer” and is most often used of God himself. The pre-Fall ideal was equal partnership, as reflected in Genesis 1:27-28, and this ideal will be realized again in heaven (Revelation 22:3, 5b).
- After the Fall, however, a “deal” was required to ensure that two self-focused people would have guidance and a hierarchy for marital decisions. This was part of “the Curse” in Genesis 3: “he will rule over you,” and “you (the man) will struggle and scratch” to provide for the family. Not ideal, but “the Deal” that God worked out for marriage because of human sin (selfishness).
- In Christian marriage, though, we’re called to live out the redemptive power of Jesus *within* the hierarchy structure that was required by the Fall. This requires 3 relational realities:
  - a. The decision for submission is with the individual partner – not coerced or forced.
  - b. “Authority” is defined by sacrifice and service to each other – not by position or power.
  - c. “Submission” is always *voluntary* and *reciprocal* – not mandated or one-way.

### **3. The “Ideal” Solution** (Ephesians 5:21-22, 31-33)

- In Greek, the word “submit” (*hypotassō*) appears only in verse 21 — verse 22 borrows it, pointing to the ideal that without mutual submission there is no biblical submission, only domination.

- Every healthy marriage, regardless of theological tradition, finds its way to mutuality – a place of mutual deference, respect and honor between partners. But mutual submission in Christian marriage has a special purpose: to reflect the submissive, loving, sacrificial character of Jesus to a watching world – a world that desires something better than “me first.”

## **ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURE**

*These passages may provide additional insights related to the subject of this week’s message. All verses are NLT unless otherwise noted.*

Genesis 2:23-24; Proverbs 18:22; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Matthew 19:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 1 Peter 3:7

Video of the Week: [Ephesians](#) by Bible Project

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What was the model of marriage you grew up most closely observing (e.g., traditional male authority, equal partnership, female-dominated)? How has that model shaped your own marriage or male/female relationships?
2. What is your gut reaction when you hear the word “submission” in the context of marriage? Explain your answer.
3. Read Genesis 1:27-28 and Genesis 3:16-17 again. How does knowing that the (male) authority hierarchy that God instituted for marriage is the “Deal,” not the “Ideal,” change your perspective on the question of “who’s in charge”?
4. As pointed out in the message, the word translated “helper” in Genesis 2:18 *doesn’t* mean servant or assistant – it means “strong ally” or “rescuer.” What does that clarification tell us about God’s intended (ideal) role for women in his creation and in marriage?
5. Looking at the 3 “relational realities” for mutual submission in a Christian marriage, do they seem realistic and doable to you? Why or why not?
6. What would be one practical step you could take this week to make your marriage (or other relationship) better reflect the mutual-submission ideal Paul calls us to in Ephesians 5:21?