

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Ordering-Under To One Another

by Dan Trygg

“...be-being-filled with the Spirit, ...and be-subordinating-yourselves to one another in reverence of Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ also is head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> But as the church is subordinating to Christ, so also the wives to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.” Ephesians 5:21-27

“But I do not allow a woman to teach or domineer over a man, but to be giving-calm-attention.”

1 Timothy 2:12

We talked last week about Paul’s admonition to watch carefully how we walk. **We have been delivered from the darkness, and have become children of God. We are not to live according to the ways of those who do not know God.** We were raised in the propaganda and expectations of this present evil age. It is the default we learned, but we are following Christ now, so **we need to put aside those ineffective and unhealthy ways of living, and discover how to live in ways that express the heart of Jesus.** It is the Spirit who gives us life, and reveals Jesus, so Paul exhorted us to be-being-filled with the Spirit. **Through praise, thanksgiving, mutual edification and yielding to one another, our hearts are prepared and opened to the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through us.** The choice to “order-ourselves-under one another” (vs. 21) is reminiscent of the heart of Jesus, described in Philippians 2:5-8. This was Jesus’ attitude toward His earthly parents (Lk. 2:51). It is this humble, servant-heart that invites the filling of the Spirit.

Notice that we are *all* to be doing this to *one-another*. **Men to men, women to women, children to adults, adults to children, men to women, and women to men. We are all to be of this mind and attitude toward one another. But Paul wanted to make a specific application.** He wanted the *wives* to be “ordering-themselves-under” their husbands, ...and he wanted to introduce a responsibility to men toward their wives. They were to be a “head” to their wives, just like Christ is head to the church. **In our culture today, “submission” and “headship” have become loaded terms, but in first century Ephesus these were radical, revolutionary ideas, ...terms that corrected dysfunction and promoted freedom and edification.**

Before going there, we need to go back in history to see what the relationships between husbands and wives were intended to be, and what happened. **In Genesis 1:26-28, we read that God made humans in His image, male and female, and set them over His creation to care for it.** In Genesis 2, the more detailed account, we find that God made the female to be a “helper” to the male. Of the 21 times that this word occurs in the OT, 17 times it is used of God Himself, 2 times it is uses of Israel’s allies coming to help them in battle. It is *never* used to refer to a “servant” or “less-than” role. It always refers to someone who can bring additional strengths and abilities that complement or add to the abilities of the person being assisted. In the context of Genesis, humankind was given a responsibility that was too big for Adam to accomplish on his own, so God made Eve to assist him in their joint calling. **This was God’s Plan - Both partners were recognized for their unique strengths, and worked together to help each other fulfill their Divine calling.**

What happened? Sin happened! As a result of their sin, a desire for control and dominance set into the partner relationship that God had intended. In Genesis 3:16, God said, “Your *desire* will be for your husband, but he will *rule over* you.” The same Hebrew words are used in 4:7, where God warns Cain, “Sin is crouching at the door, and its *desire* is for you, but you must *master* it.” It is clear that the “desire” is not describing some domestic unity, it is a desire to “control” the person, or to “turn away from” and “escape from” the relationship. The word for “rule” or “master” is self-evident. **This is the Curse -- Instead of a complementary relationship, where both parties were equal partners in fulfilling a Divine calling, sin fractured the relationship, sowed disharmony, independence, manipulation, control and domination.** Instead of working together to fulfill God’s calling, they began to turn away from God’s will and from each other. Typically, women have attempted to control men by manipulation, and men have dominated women by brute force.

**What about Ephesus? What was the history of relationships between men and women there?** Ephesus had a somewhat unique history. It was the center of the cult of Artemis (Diana). Artemis was a goddess of fertility, childbirth, and animals. She was a protector, and was considered to be the patron goddess of Ephesus. **Artemis was the most popular goddess of the Greco-Roman world in the first century,** and her temple in Ephesus was one the of the seven wonders of the world. According to mythology, she was the daughter of Zeus and Leto, and was the older twin sister of Apollo. She observed the long, painful, nine-day labor of her mother, and helped as a midwife in the delivery

of her brother. **Because she was “first”, she was considered to be superior to her male sibling.** She also became determined to never have children. She asked Zeus to make her immune to love. Virginity was her chosen perpetual state. She had no love interests or relationships with men. She became the goddess of childbirth, either helping with an easy delivery, or bringing a merciful end to the pain through her arrows. While the Greek version of Artemis became mixed with characteristics of Ishtar, the fertility goddess, **the Ephesian Artemis was a forthright protector of women, especially those who wished to remain as virgins.** The Greek Artemis was born elsewhere (the island of Delos), but the Ephesian Artemis was born near Ephesus. **Her first temple was built by Amazons,** a tribe of warrior women located in that area, and to the north. They were very independent, and their characteristics influenced the conception and practices of Artemis of the Ephesians. Her temple was a sanctuary. Anyone could come there for protection, especially women fleeing abusive relationships. **Amazons had formed a society which was almost totally centered around women, and excluded men. Artemis worship was a women-only cult.** Only women and eunuchs were permitted to participate. **Women were first and foremost. They were the priestesses, teachers, and authorities. Men were disregarded and disrespected.** Their input or participation was unwelcome. In a civil and domestic society that was largely patriarchal, **Artemis worship gave women a place where they were given primacy.** Artemis worship was directly opposed to Jesus. *She* was called “savior”. *Her* throne was the “first throne”. *She* was “queen of heaven”, “lord” and “god”. **Her followers saw her as “greater” than Jesus or any other so-called god. And, ...they were used to being in charge of spiritual teaching. They asserted themselves over men in matters of religion** (1 Tim. 2:12).

**What about the role of men in Ephesus, and the larger Greco-Roman world? The standard view was that a man was to rule his household like a king.** His wife, children, slaves and possessions were under his control and at his disposal. When a woman married, she became the possession of her husband. Her dowry was his property. She was generally given charge of the household, and the rearing of children, but the “master of the house” was the husband. **Roman marriage was not based upon romantic love, or benevolence. It was utilitarian, ...for the production of children and the securing of status within society.** It was not uncommon for men to have affairs and mistresses. Women, slaves and children were considered “inferior” to the free man. Therefore, they were to be responsive and obedient to him. **The oldest living male (husband or eldest son) had absolute authority, even of life or death, over the other members of the household** (though this extreme was rarely practiced). **Men asserted themselves over women, slaves and children in their households in matters of domestic life, legal rights and property.**

Clearly, what Paul was advocating here was a radical corrective to extreme expressions of “the Curse”. **Both men and women are to be subordinating themselves to one another, in the body of Christ and in the homes.**

Paul makes the application to women, in vs. 22, because they needed to put aside their extreme attitude of spiritual ascendancy over men. Notice that the verb “be subject” or “be subordinating yourselves” is not even *found* in this verse! It must be brought down from the previous verse, where we are *all* to be “subordinating ourselves to one another”. This is one application of *that* verbal form. Again, this is one of five ongoing actions we are to be engaging in to be-being-filled with the Spirit: “speaking, ...singing, ...making melody, ...giving thanks, ...and “arranging-yourselves-under to one another”. This application, “wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord” was a corrective to the mindset of superiority of women toward their husbands. **In faith, the women were to put aside their independence and self-arrogation, and arrange themselves under their husbands to serve, assist and edify them.**

Meanwhile, the men are to be doing the same toward their wives, but Paul introduces a new term into the discussion. Because of the religious disenfranchisement of men in Ephesus, **Paul emphasized a different word picture that would engage men in a positive, healthy vision. They were to serve as a “head” to the wife/woman, just as Christ is “head of the church”.** \*\*\*\*We hear the word “head”, and we hear “boss” or “authority”, but the NT Greek word for “head” did *not* mean *that*, at all. It meant “source, origin, one who assists another to come to completion.” It is **a serving role, not an authority term.**\*\*\*\* Notice how it is used here: “the husband is (a) head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, Himself being *Savior* of the body. ...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ *loved* the church and *gave Himself on behalf of her*, in order *that He might sanctify her* (‘set her apart, make her holy’), cleansing her in the washing of the water with a personal-word, in order *that He might present to Himself the church glorious* (honored, distinguished, splendid, radiant), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she might be holy and without blemish. Thus, the husbands are to *love their wives* as their own bodies. The one loving his own wife loves himself.” **Instead of being a dictator and ruler of his wife, a Christian husband is to love his wife, give himself on her behalf, and work to help her become all she can be.** His job is to do all he can to help her mature and fulfill her calling in Christ. More than passively subordinating himself to her, **he is to take the initiative to invest himself in her growth and completion as the unique person God intends her to be.**

Artemis worship and Roman culture further accentuated the broken dynamics of the Curse, the impact of Jesus was to call *both* men and women to serve and edify one another, so that *together* they could accomplish God’s will. **Jesus does *not* call us to ‘ratify the Curse’, ...He calls us to demonstrate the beauty of His Plan for humanity!**