The role of culture in Paul's theology of marriage: An exegetical study of Ephesians 5:21-33

PD Schlehlein

orcid.org/0000-0002-3064-8719

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Promoter: Prof RS Hobyane

Co-promoter: Prof K Van Rooy

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Student number: 27937399

To Prof Koos van Rooy

Humble sage and student of African culture

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Abbreviations

BAGD	A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature
BDB	*Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*
DBL	Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (OT)
HALOT	*Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*
ML	The 1989 translation of the Tsonga Bible (*Mahungu Lamanene*)
MT	*The Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible*
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of the Old Testament and Exegesis*
SWANSON	*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament) (electronic version from Logos Research Systems)*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*
TS29	The Tsonga Translation of the Bible (1920)
TWOT	*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UT	*Ugaritic Textbook*

Abbreviations of Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Genesis	Ge
Exodus	Ex
Leviticus	Lev
Numbers	Nu
Deuteronomy	Dt
Joshua	Jos
Judges	Jdg
Ru	Ru
1 Samuel	1Sa
2 Samuel	2Sa
1 Kings	1Ki
2 Kings	2Ki
1 Chronicles	1Ch
2 Chronicles	2Ch
Ezra	Ezr
Nehemiah	Ne
Esther	Ext
Job	Job
Psalms	Ps(s)
Proverbs	Pr
Ecclesiastes	Ecc
Song of Songs	SS
Isaiah	Isa
Jeremiah	Jer
Lamentations	La
Ezekiel	Eze
Daniel	Da
Hosea	Hos
Joel	Joel
Amos	Am
Obadiah	Ob
Jonah	Jon
Micah	Mic
Nahum	Na
Habakkuk	Hab
Zephaniah	Zep
Haggai	Hag
Zechariah	Zec
Malachi	Mal

New Testament

Matthew	Mt
Mark	Mk
Luke	Lk
John	Jn
Acts	Ac
Romans	Ro
1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Corinthians	2Co
Galatians	Gal
Ephesians	Eph
Philippians	Php
Colossians	Col
1 Thessalonians	1Th
2 Thessalonians	2Th
1 Timothy	1Ti
2 Timothy	2Ti
Titus	Tit
Philemon	Phm
Hebrews	Heb
James	Jas
1 Peter	1Pe
2 Peter	2Pe
1 John	1Jn
2 John	2Jn
3 John	3Jn
Jude	Jude
Revelation	Rev

Abbreviations of Bible Versions

American Standard Version	ASV	1901
Complete Jewish Bible	CJB	1998
Douay – Rheims American Bible	DRA	1899
English Revised Version	ERV	1885
English Standard Version	ESV	2001
Geneva Bible	GB	1599
Good News Bible	GNB	1976
Jewish Publication Society Bible	JPS	1917
King James Version	KJV	1611
Mahungu Lamanene	ML	1989
Message	MSG	2001
New American Bible	NAB	1970
New American Standard Bible	NASB	1971
New English Bible	NEB	1961
New English Translation	NET	1995
New International Version	NIV	1984
New King James Version	NKJV	1982
New Living Translation	NLT	1996
New Jerusalem Bible	NJB	1985
New Revised Standard Version	NRSV	1989
Septuagint (Rahlf's)	LXX	1935
Revised Standard Version	RSV	1952
Tanakh (JPS)	TNK	1985
The Living Bible	TLB	1971
The Bible in Xitsonga	TS29	1929
Webster Bible	WEB	1833
Young's Literal Translation	YLT	1898

Note: For this study, the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) is the base text for the Old Testament, and the Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 27th Edition (NA27) is the base text for the New Testament. Therefore, both foundational texts are not listed in the Bible translations.

Key Words

1. Mystery
2. Marriage
3. Culture
4. Customary law
5. Submission
6. Husbands and Wives
7. Lobola
8. Tsonga
9. Polygamy
10. Greco-Roman
11. Jewish
12. Triperspectivalism
13. Covenant
14. Magistrate

The Role of Culture in Paul's Theology of Marriage: An Exegetical Study of Ephesians 5:21-33

Summary

The shadow of marriage lies within the dawn and dusk of Scripture. The world begins with the marriage of Adam and Eve (Gn 2) and ends with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19). The overarching goal of this study is to show that marriage in every culture is a covenant between a man and a woman that is formed when commenced by consent ("leaving"), continued by commitment ("cleaving"), and concluded by consummation ("one flesh").

Debate has persisted throughout the ages as to the way marriages in different cultures express God's ideal. How deeply may marital forms be influenced by the surrounding culture? How would a Roman, Jew and Greek of the past understand Paul, and for that matter, how about a Tsonga in the 21st century?

Feminist theology has forced the church to think more carefully about the roles and definition of marriage. The first purpose of this study is to establish exegetical conclusions on marriage from Eph 5:21-33, including the placement of v. 21, the meaning of "submit" (ὑποτάσσω), the duties and motivations of the wife, the meaning of "head", the duties and motivations of the husband, and Paul's use of Gn 2:24.

But should the conclusions from Eph 5 be adapted, reorientated and adjusted to fit one's cultural milieu? The second goal of the study states that while there is some correspondence in Paul's household code with the Roman, Greek and Jewish culture of his day, much of what the apostle says is fundamentally countercultural—from the nature of submission to the husband, to the kind of love a husband has for his wife, to the role of parents post-marriage.

The third design of this study states that one can answer the question "What is marriage?" by highlighting what philosophers call the material, formal, efficient and final cause of a particular action. The material cause of marriage—the components—

is a covenant, a chosen relationship of obligation under oath. The formal cause of marriage—the chronological and biblical form by which this covenant takes place—is consent, commitment and consummation. Consent is a kind of pre-commitment by the man toward his future bride and her family; commitment should be expressed in a formal, public covenant ceremony by oaths (which is a sincere declaration for God, and by extension, the Church and State); consummation is sexual intimacy that could result in pregnancy. The efficient cause of marriage—the performers in creating this covenant—is primarily God (regardless if the prospective spouses are worshippers of Him) but also the prospective husband and wife. The final cause of marriage—which is the goal of the covenant—is God's glory, companionship, sanctification, and procreation.

So, does culture play *any* role in the formation of marriage? The fourth purpose of this study answers "yes". Though the laws of marriage are timeless, cross-cultural and foundational for every society, the customs within marriage express themselves differently in each people group. Marital consent, commitment and consummation may look differently in some ways among the Tsongas, yet all within the confines of biblical norms. The Tsonga people have a host of beautiful customs that can and should be implemented within the marriage union, as long as those traditions remain subordinate to the inerrant word of God.

Die Rol van Kultuur in Paulus se Huweliksteologie: ’n Eksegetiese Studie van Efesiërs 5:21-33

Opsomming

Die huwelik loop soos ’n goue draad deur die geheel van die Skrif, van begin tot einde. Die wêreld begin met die huwelik tussen Adam en Eva (Gen. 2) en eindig met die huweliksfees van die Lam (Open. 19). Die oorkoepelende doel van hierdie studie is om aan te toon hoe die huwelik in elke kultuur ’n verbond tussen ’n man en ’n vrou is. Die huwelik begin by instemming (“verlaat”), verbintenis (“kleef”), en uiteindelik volvoering (“een vlees”).

Daar is al eeue lank debat rondom hoe huwelike in verskillende kulture God se ideaal uitdruk. Tot watter mate mag huweliksvorme deur die omringende kultuur beïnvloed word? Hoe het die Romeine, Jode of Grieke van antieke tye Paulus verstaan; trouens, hoe verstaan ’n Tsonga van die 21ste eeu hom?

Feministiese teologie het die kerk gedwing om na te dink oor die definisie van en die rolle binne die huwelik. Die eerste doelwit van hierdie studie is om eksegetiese gevolgtrekkinge te maak rakende die huwelik uit Ef. 5:21-33. Die ondersoek beskou die plasing van v. 21, die betekenis van “onderwerp” (ὑποτάσσω), die pligte en motiveringe van die vrou, die betekenis van “hoof”, die pligte en motivering van die man, en Paulus se gebruik van Gen. 2:24.

Moet die gevolgtrekking uit Ef. 5 egter gewysig, herposisioneer of aangepas word om by ’n persoon se eie kulturele milieu te pas? Die tweede doelwit van die studie is om die argument voor te lê dat terwyl daar wel enkele raakpunte was tussen Paulus se kode vir die huwelik en die Romeinse, Griekse en Joodse kulture van sy tyd, baie van dit wat Paulus sê fundamenteel kontrakultureel is—van die aard van onderworpenheid aan die man tot by die soort liefde vir die vrou en die rol van ouers na die huwelik.

Die derde doelwit van die studie beantwoord die vraag “Wat is die huwelik?” deur te verwys na wat filosowe noem die materiële, formele, effektiewe en finale oorsake van

’n gegewe aksie. Die materiële oorsaak van die huwelik—die komponente—is ’n verbond, ’n gekose verhouding van verpligting onder eed. Die formele oorsaak van die huwelik—die kronologiese en Bybelse vorm waarvolgens hierdie verbond geskep word—is instemming, verbintenis en volvoering. Instemming is ’n soort voor-verbintenis van die man aan sy toekomstige bruid en haar familie; die verbintenis moet uitgedruk word in ’n formele, openbare verbondseremonie onder eed (’n opregte verklaring voor God, en by implikasie, die kerk en staat); en volvoering is seksuele intimiteit wat tot swangerskap kan lei. Die effektiewe oorsaak van die huwelik—die akteurs in die skepping van hierdie verbond—is primêr God (ongeag of die voornemende huweliksmaats Hom dien), maar ook die voornemende man en vrou. Die finale oorsaak van die huwelik—die doel van die verbond—is God se glorie, kameraadskap, heiligmaking en voorplanting.

Gegewe die bostaande, speel kultuur *enige* rol in die vorming van die huwelik? Die vierde doelwit is om die antwoord van “ja” aan te bied. Alhoewel die wette van die huwelik tydloos, kruiskultureel en grondleggend aan elke samelewing is, is daar verskillende gebruike onder elke mensegroep. Instemming tot die huwelik, verbintenis en volvoering mag anders lyk onder die Tsongas as onder ander groepe, maar dit moet binne die grense van die Bybelse norme val. Die Tsonga-nasie het wonderlike en mooi gebruike wat ’n plek het binne die huwelik, solank as wat daardie gebruike onderhewig bly aan die onveranderlike Woord van God.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Background

The Bible begins and ends with marriage (Ge 2:24; Rev 22:20). Marriage is as old as humanity itself. The moment God accomplished his final touches on Eve was the moment marriage began. Marriage is the first institution of God. It is also among Satan's first realms of attack.

Debate has continued throughout the history as to the way marriages in different cultures express God's model for matrimony. How deeply may marital forms (e.g., roles among spouses) be influenced by the surrounding culture? This is why Stagg (1976:541) says the reader's first task in understanding the apostle's Ephesian *Haustafel* (5:21-6:9) is "to understand Paul's intention in Ephesians. How were the first readers to hear this domestic code?" That code, of course, being husbands and wives (5:21-33), children and their parents (6:1-4) and slaves and masters (6:5-9). *Haustafel* is the German term for household or domestic code. It describes the New Testament passage that teaches about relationships between members of the household.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he gives a sustained argument for the roles of husband and wife and the nature of marriage itself (5:21-33). His words, however, were not written to a faceless mass or in a neutral setting. As Schnabel (2008) and Jeffers (1999) argue repeatedly, Ephesus in Asia Minor was filled with at least three different and diverse cultures with differing levels of pagan beliefs.

For example, Ephesus was known primarily for its sanctuary to the goddess Artemis, the largest building in antiquity and one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The cult associating with this temple was most prominent in Paul's day and the early church. Gibson (2011:163) captures the intersection of these three cultures:

> *Marriage regulations among Romans, Greeks, and Jews differed significantly. While submission of wives to husbands was commonplace among Greeks and Jews, it was extremely rare for Roman wives to be in submission to their husbands. And while divorce was bilateral according to Roman and Hellenistic law, Jewish law allowed only the husband to initiate a divorce.*

Regarding the relevant passage of Scripture at hand, Ephesians 5:21 (and the so-called idea of “mutual submission”) most likely belongs in the previous section (5:15-21) relating to the consequences of a Spirit-filled life, though the verse is often subsumed in the following application section (5:22-33). It should be acknowledged, however, that v. 21, as shall be seen in the exegesis in chapter two, is heavily debated and could legitimately belong in the following section. Stagg (1979: 544) sees v. 21 as transitional, though recognizes the verse—at least grammatically—belongs in the previous section. However, because v. 21 has no finite verb, Nordling (2013: 327) believes the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι ("submitting") “could be construed with what precedes (5:18-20), with what follows (5:22-33) or as a pivot between the two blocks.”

There have been a number of noteworthy contributions to the study of the nature and theology of marriage in the Old and New Testament (e.g. Blomberg, 1990; Hugenberger, 1994; Palmer, 1972), along with a significant number of marital studies relating to African culture (Mbiti, 1973; Adeyemo, 2006; Fraser, 1969; Schapera, 1941; Owusu, 2007; Schlehlein, 2013; Kunhiyop, 2008; Harries, 1953). All of these studies have emphasised, to one degree or another, the various aspects of marriage in light of Scripture and African culture.

1.2 The need for the present study

There continues to be an ambiguous definition of marriage in sub-Sahara Africa, including the Tsonga people to whom this Thesis is applied. Since much of African culture stems from an oral culture (including Tsonga culture, the focus here), strict objective standards are difficult to come by in defining when marriage begins. The challenge, in fact, is not so much defining what marriage *is.* Rather, the difficulty is defining how marriage *is formed.*

Another reason the need for this study is crucial is because of the role culture plays in defining marriage. Ask someone in Africa to define marriage and how it is formed, and one may commonly hear the word “culture” used within the first sentence or two: “Well, in our culture….”[1] How much should culture play a role in defining the formal cause of

[1] Some may argue that “African culture” is far too broad a category. There is some truth to this claim, which is why this thesis narrows its focus toward Tsonga culture. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for writers to speak of “African culture” in general. For example, Mbetwa (2018:7), a Zambian author, gives an economic “analysis of African culture” throughout his entire book while rarely feeling the need to distinguish which part of Africa he is speaking about.

marriage? Did the culture of Paul's day flavour his definition of marriage? In Ephesians 5:21-33, was he primarily *engaging* culture or *countering* it? If it can be shown that St. Paul adopted the Greco-Roman culture of his day regarding marriage (even while following the broadest guidelines of Scripture), then one can conclude that many elements of marriage (e.g., roles, vows, bride price, divorce etc.) are flexible according to the host culture. However, if St. Paul was largely *countercultural,* teaching a kind of in-your-face opposition to the society of his day—then the constant pleas to cultural norms when interacting with marriage principles falls away. An unresolved question that remains is this: Did the pagan culture of Paul's day influence, in any way, his theology in Ephesians 5:21-33? How will the answer to this question colour our perspective of Tsonga marriage today?

The exegetical, cultural and philosophical conclusions of this study are not an end in themselves. They are the foundation for a greater pastoral question: "What should I do about a young couple in my church that has questions X,Y, and Z about marriage?" This question could be filled in with dozens, perhaps hundreds of other questions about the nature of marriage in Africa today. A study is needed to unravel many of these difficult issues.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The first aim of this study is a careful exegesis of the Bible's key defining passage of marriage—Eph 5:31—within the context of Eph 5:21-33. The second goal of this study is to analyse the tri-cultural milieu in which St. Paul lived (Hellenistic, Roman, and Jewish) by studying their perspectives on marriage. That is, the objective is to determine if Paul's largest sustained passage on the nature of marriage in Ephesians 5 was engaging with the Greco-Roman culture of his day or if it was in fact countering it.

The answer to this historical and exegetical question will then put the thesis in position to apply this to the nature, roles, and dangers in Tsonga culture regarding marriage. Regarding delimitations of the study, while the issues and traditions are often common among many Bantu people in Africa, this study will only study the issue among the Tsongas.

Another goal of the study is consolidating a kind of theology of marriage as seen throughout Scripture so as to determine the various "causes" of marriage, whether that be the material, formal, efficient, or final cause of marriage. This will then be applied to the Tsonga's view of marriage and the particular customs that accompany it.

1.4 Methodology

Comprehending and interpreting New Testament texts like Ephesians 5:21-33 necessitates careful study and a reliable methodology. This is an exceptionally difficult job because of the plethora of views and perspectives regarding this crucial passage on marriage. With this barrier, how is the careful exegete to progress when there are so many enemies of biblical marriage today? The answer lies in passionate exegetical inspection, prudent understanding of the Bible's theology of marriage and a finger that is close to the pulse of African culture.

1.4.1 Presuppositions

Two presuppositions of this study are as follows. First, Paul was the writer of Ephesians. Hoehner (2002:1-68) argues for Pauline authorship, as does Barth (1974:36-50) and Guthrie (1965:490-507). Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1 clearly call St. Paul the author: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ…Paul, a prisoner for Christ…."

For many, however, Pauline authorship is still not clear. Setyawan (2007:51) writes: "I must say it is not easy to define who the author of the 'letter' of Ephesians was." Many contemporary scholars[2] aver an anonymous imitator of Paul wrote Ephesians because, they claim, the writing style is not Pauline and the author is strongly unaware of his recipients. This latter view is so ubiquitous within modern scholarship that Wright (2013:60) appears bold simply to suggest Ephesians *might* belong within the Pauline corpus, saying: "It is time, I believe, that we allow at least the possibility that Ephesians and Colossians, rather obviously companion pieces of one another and, in the case of Colossians, possessing an obvious link to Philemon, should be brought back into the fold [of the Pauline Epistles]." Besides "style" as listed above, Setyawan (2007:52) gives language and theological differences as reasons why Paul may not have written

[2] Hoehner (2002:9-18) has a helpful chart listing over one hundred scholars from the last two centuries alone who do not think Paul was the author of Ephesians. This list includes influential liberal men like Schleiermacher, Käsemann, and Bultmann. Lincoln (1990: lix-lxxiii) also argues this way.

Ephesians. The Epistle to the Ephesians was also most likely a companion letter with Colossians and Philemon (Fee, 2017: 4).

The parameters of this study cannot interact with this above debate, though there are three common arguments for Pauline authorship, including (1) the ambiguous and incomplete criticism regarding "style", (2) the transitory nature of towns over the years, and (3) the comprehensive acceptance of Pauline authorship by the early church and most Reformed heavy weights (viz. Luther, Calvin, Hodge etc.). This is not to say that the letter could not have been encyclical to a particular area (like Galatia in Galatians 1:2). The argument holds, however, that the letter is addressed to the Ephesians and the burden of proof is on the opponents to prove otherwise.

A second presupposition is that Ephesians was written to those in Ephesus. While some argue the phrase "ἐν Ἐφέσῳ" in 1:1 is invalid because some manuscripts omit it, it has good external and internal evidence.[3] This study proposes *what* the Ephesian culture believed, not *if* she was the recipient. This is significant because Ephesus at the time of Paul's writing was the metropolis of a very populous city, the capital of Asia, and home to three very distinct cultures: Jewish, Roman and Greek.

1.4.2 The approach of the study

In the realm of exegesis, this study will follow the grammatico-historical method of interpretation[4] and specifically Hoehner's (2002) synchronic and diachronic study of words, in which each significant Greek word is examined first by its usage in Ephesians, then in Paul, then in the NT, and finally in the LXX. With a reference to Barr (1961:109), Hoehner (2002:ix) gives the following caution:

[3] For example, some argue that Ephesus was not the recipient because if it had been, why would Paul have so few greetings to a place in which he had previously spent so much time? But the number of greetings does not automatically rule out the level of previous personal interaction. For example, the letter to the Romans has the *most* greetings in Pauline literature, and he had never been there!

[4] This is contrary to, for example, the perspective of Bowman (1947:442-447), who views significant portions of the *Haustafel* marital roles in Eph 5:21-6:9 as allegory, a term he explicitly uses. For example, Bowman (1947:446) writes: "The *Christian wife* respresents, as we have seen, that spirit of subjection which in Christian circles goes by the name of *husband* (5:22)…. The *Christian husband* equally stands for the all-embracing Christian power of *love*."

While the etymology of a word provides a history of the word, it does not signify the word's meaning in various periods of history and (2) the meaning of a word must also be derived from its context rather than given one meaning for all contexts.

This is in contrast with other methods of biblical interpretation popular in scholarship today. For example, Campbell-Reed (2001:265) gives five categories for interpreting Scripture: (1) Rejectionist (Scripture is corrupt), (2) Loyalist (all Scripture is true)[5], (3) Revisionist (social factors matter but not theological), (4) Sublimationist (eternal feminine divine in Scripture), (5) Liberationist (guiding principle is human liberation). She takes the liberationist approach as her hermeneutical principle.

In the realm of Greco-Roman cultural analysis, this study will follow Gibson (2011) in his observations of Paul's tri-cultural setting, especially Roman, Jewish, and Greek culture.

In the realm of Tsonga application, this study will follow the methodology of Junod (1962). Junod (1962:3) writes: "My documents are not books. They are living witnesses." Since Tsonga culture is an *oral* culture, as with most African cultures, the findings in this thesis will come not only from pens but also from the mouths and lives of the Tsongas themselves.

A brief word is necessary regarding the author of *The Life of a South African Tribe* because this work so forcefully influences the methodology of the closing chapters in this dissertation. Henri Junod arrived in Mozambique from Switzerland at the close of 1889 in an era when exploration was ending (e.g., David Livingstone) and conquest was beginning (e.g., Cecil Rhodes). He spent four decades of his life compiling his *magnum opus* on the Tsonga people, which the anthropologist E.W. Smith called the finest monograph written on any African tribe" (Junod, 1967:vii). He has considerable content on a host of marriage principles, including the *lobola* feasts and ceremonies, sexual rites, taboos, conjugal rights, matriarchy vs. patriarchy and rules for polygamy.

[5] This would essentially be my own view. In describing this position, Campbell-Reed (2001:265) writes: "The *loyalist* view will not reject any of scripture, insisting that because it is God's word, it cannot be oppressive by nature. This position minimizes passages like Eph 5 either by claiming that the historical problem has been with the interpreters, not the scripture, or by claiming that the text says something that is not clearly evident."

This is important because, of the hundreds of Bantu peoples in southern Africa, the Va-Tsonga are unique in that they have a thorough historical compilation of their culture superior to most, if not all, others.

1.5 Problem statement

A key research problem is as follows: Was Paul primarily *engaging* or *countering* culture in Ephesians 5:21-33? Will the exegetical conclusion from this reshape what one allows and disallows within matrimony in Tsonga culture?

To answer this question, a thorough exegesis will explore Paul's points in Ephesians 5. Then the question will be answered on the basis of African literature on marriage, including Junod's seminal work, observations from Tsonga culture and a host of African and Western observations. Contrary to many feminist authors today (Weber-Han, 1977; Campbell-Reed, 2001), authors that will be later cited at length, this study will later argue that Paul stood often (but not always) against the customs and attitudes of his day. He was often *countercultural.* And because Scripture was going against the grain of contemporary society, it will then be easier to show how modern cultures, in this case Tsonga culture, must also move contrary to long-held cultural customs regarding marriage.

1.6 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study is that a biblical, exegetical approach to Eph 5:21-33 (and especially its quotation of Ge 2:24) that at the same time examines historical, philosophical, and cultural aspects of marriage can proffer an answer to the difficulties of defining marriage in Tsonga culture today. The study will seek to prove from Scripture that the formal cause of covenant marriage, regardless of culture, is commenced by consent, continued by commitment and concluded by consummation.

1.7 Research plan

After the opening remarks in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 will exegete the Greek-Tsonga text on marriage in Eph 5:21-33, giving special attention to the nature of submission in v. 21, the duties of the wife in vv. 22-24, and the duties of the husband in vv. 25-32. The

opening observations of how marriage is formed in v. 31 will serve as a foundation for later chapters in the study on the formation of marriage.

Chapter 3 will overview marriage in Paul's tri-cultural setting, including insight into the city of Ephesus itself as well as the marriage customs and male/female relationships within Roman, Greek and Jewish culture.

This will be followed in Chapter 4 by a theology of marriage throughout Scripture, including John Frame's triperspectivalism and insight into the four "causes" of marriage. Chapter 5 will address marriage specifically within Tsonga culture, both in the past and present. Chapter 6 will give implications of the study as well as conclusions on difficult marriage questions within Tsonga culture.

The chapter division of the study will be as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Exegesis: Marriage in the Greek-Tsonga text of Eph 5:21-33
3. Context: Marriage in Paul's Tri-Cultural Setting
4. Theology: Marriage in Covenant Terms
5. Application: Marriage in Tsonga Culture
6. Conclusion

Chapter 2
Exegesis: Marriage in the Greek-Tsonga text of Ephesians 5:21-33

Eph 5:21-33 is a benchmark New Testament text concerning the roles of husband and wife, the others being Colossians 3:18 and 1 Peter 3:1-7. More importantly for this present discussion, it is a key passage on the meaning of marriage and seeks to discover the proper Scriptural roles of husband and wife within their union. Mack (1977:1) says Eph 5:31 should be the blueprint for matrimony[6], in part, because it is the only statement about marriage that God includes four times in the Bible (see also Ge 2:24, Mt 19:5 and Mk 10:7-8). Barth (1974:715) holds Eph 5 in the highest regard and praises its place in history. He writes: "If ever there was a joyful affirmation of marriage, without any shadow and misgiving, then it is found in Eph 5. A greater, wiser, and more positive description of marriage has not yet been found in Christian literature."

With it has come significant disagreement about the meaning of roles within marriage, especially within the egalitarian/feminist world. McFarland (2000:346,353) suggests this passage may be "the most aggressively patriarchal text in Scripture" and wonders aloud how this passage can even be "profitable" when it presents a picture of interpersonal relations that is so "theologically untenable." Weber-Han (1977:167) asks: "So where do some people get the idea that there is to be a hierarchy within the Christian church? Where do we find the often-used guidelines indicating that women are to serve men and in doing so serve Christ?" The apparent answer (to which she would disagree) is Eph 5.

Though the *Haustafel* covers Eph 5:21-6:9, the vast amount of literature on the husband/wife relationship as compared to parent/child and master/servant relation tells the reader that the marriage union is a point of great concern and interest to the evangelical world. As an example, Barth's (1974:607-753) magisterial second volume commentary on Ephesians devotes nearly 150 pages to the husband/wife relationship and just five pages combined to the parent/child and master/servant connection.

[6] The English word matrimony comes from the Latin *matrimonium,* based on *mater* (mother).

A brief paragraph overviewing the purpose of Ephesians is in order. Before God made the world he loved and chose believers in Christ in order that they might be holy and without fault in his eyes (Eph 1:4). This is done by the Father's sovereign choice, Jesus' cross work, and the Spirit's guarantee (1:4-14). God accomplishes this by graciously giving life to dead sinners (2:1-10) and putting them within the church, a new body made up of regenerated and justified Jews and Gentiles (2:11-3:13). This newly organized, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural church is to walk in harmony (4:1-16), purity (4:17-32), love (5:1-6), light (5:7-14), and wisdom (5:15-6:9). All that was planned before the foundations of the earth will come to fruition when Christ presents to himself the pure and blameless church in all her glory (5:27).

Many believe the first three chapters of Eph address doctrine and the final three chapters detail duty. Thus, the passage (Eph 5:22-6:9) lies in the paraenetic section of Eph running through 4:1-6:20. Because chapter four begins with οὖν ("Now, therefore"), Keown (2016:48) is correct that Paul is drawing inferences from the first half of Eph. In other words, Paul is exhorting the believers in Ephesus *in light of* or *because of* the gospel blessings laid out in Eph 1-3. Moreover, 5:21-33 is the third of five exhortation paragraphs within the hortatory (exhortation) section (5:15-6:9) of Eph.

In fact, before even arriving at the crucial imperative in 5:18 (which will clear the way for vv. 21-33), Paul has already given a number of instructions to both men and women on Christian living. After instructing the believers to walk in a worthy manner (4:1) and urging them not to walk as the Gentiles do (4:17ff), Paul unleashes a flurry of twenty-five imperatives from 4:25 to 5:17:[7]

	Vs	Greek Imperative	English Imperative	Tsonga Imperative
1.	25	***λαλεῖτε*** *ἀλήθειαν*	**Speak** the truth	*A vule ntiyiso*
2.	26	*ὀργίζεσθε*	**Be angry**	*Hlundzuka*
3.		*μὴ ἁμαρτάνετε*	**Do not sin**	*Mi nga weli eku dyoheni*
4.		μὴ **ἐπιδυέτω**	**Don't let the sun go**	*Dyambu ri nga tshuki ri pela*

[7] There was only one imperative (in 2:11) in all of chapters 1-3: "remember" (μνημονεύετε, *anakanyani*). This is similar to the doctrine/duty divide in the book of Romans, which has only one imperative verb (in most translations) between Ro 1:1-6:11—"be true" (γινέσθω...ἀληθής, *ku tiviwa xi ri xa ntiyiso*) in 3:4.

5.	27	μηδὲ **δίδοτε** τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ	**Give no opportunity** to the devil	*Mi nga nyiki Diyavulosi nkarhi*
6.	28	κλέπτων μηκέτι **κλεπτέτω**	Let the thief no longer **steal**	*Loyi a a toloverile ku yiva a nga ha engeti a yiva*
7.		**κοπιάτω**	**Labor**	*Tirha*
8.	29	λόγος σαπρὸς...μὴ **ἐκπορευέσθω**	Let no corrupting talk **come**	*Mi nga khomisi Moya lowo Kwetsima wa Xikwembu tingana*
9.	30	μὴ **λυπεῖτε** τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον	**do not grieve** the Holy Spirit	*Mi nga tshuki mi vavisa Moya lowu kwetsima*
10.	31	πᾶσα πικρία...**ἀρθήτω**	Let all bitterness… **be put**	*Leswo bava…a swi susiwe*
11.	32	**Γίνεσθε** [δὲ] εἰς ἀλλήλους χρηστοί	Be kind to one another	*Twelanani vusiwana*
12.	5:1	**Γίνεσθε** οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ	be imitators of God	*Ringetani ku fana na xona*
13.	2	περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ	**walk** in love	*Hanyani hi moya wa rirhandzu*
14.	3	μηδὲ **ὀνομαζέσθω** ἐν ὑμῖν	**…must not even be named** among you	*A swi laveki exikarhi ka n'wina*
15.	5	**ἴστε** γινώσκοντες	**you may be sure** of this	*Tivani mhaka leyi*
16.	6	Μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς **ἀπατάτω**	Let no one deceive	*Ku nga vi na munhu loyi a mi kanganyisaka*
17.	7	οὖν **γίνεσθε** συμμέτοχοι...	**do** not **become** partners	*Mi nga tshuki mi tolovelana…*
18.	8	τέκνα φωτὸς **περιπατεῖτε**	**Walk** as children of light	*Hanyani ku fana ni vanhu va ku vonakala.*
19.	11	μὴ **συγκοινωνεῖτε**...	**Take no part** in …	*Mi nga tshuki mi tolovelana…*
20.		**ἐλέγχετε**	**expose** them	*Swi soleni erivaleni*
21.	14	**ἔγειρε**	Awake	*Pfuka*
22.		**ἀνάστα** ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν	**arise** from the dead	*Pfuka exikarhi ka vafi*
23.	15	**Βλέπετε**	**Look** carefully	*Xiyani swinene*

24.	17	μὴ **γίνεσθε** ἄφρονες	do not be foolish	*Mi nga vi lavo pfumala mano*
25.		**συνίετε** τί τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου.	**understand** what the will of the Lord is	*Ringetani ku twisisa leswi Hosi yi rhandzaka swona*

The theme of Ephesians 5:22-6:9 is walking Spirit-filled lives in the relationships God has placed us in. Verse 18 contains the final two imperatives—a negative and a positive command—until 5:25 ("love your wives"): "do not get drunk with wine" (μεθύσκεσθε, *Mi nga nwi vhinyo yi mi pyopya*) and "be filled with the Spirit" (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, *mi tala Moya*).

The fruit of such Spirit control is four-fold: (1) Speaking to one another in songs (v. 19). This is the horizontal aspect of corporate singing, (2) Singing and making melody to the Lord (v. 19). This is the vertical aspect of corporate singing, (3) Thankfulness that is consistent, comprehensive, and Christ-centered (v. 20), (4) Properly ordered submission (v. 21).

As we shall see later, v. 21 is the launching point whereby Paul moves into this teaching on marriage. Since that is the focus of this paper, this verse is therefore the place whereby we will commence our exegesis of the passage.

2.1 The nature of v. 21

21 Ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ,

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

[21] *Titsongahateni, van'wana eka van'wana exichabyeni xa Kriste.*

Before embarking on the main section of the *Haustafel* in vv. 22-33, it is imperative that the reader comes to a proper interpretation of v. 21. This verse is crucial to maintaining a proper understanding of this passage. Snodgrass (1996:286) writes: "Failure to understand the structure [of this passage] has made this section one of the most misappropriated texts in the Bible."

It is so important that Keener (1992:168-69) argues that coming to a mutual submission interpretation is the key to understanding the entire Eph 5:21-33 passage.

Stagg (1979:544) agrees, writing: “Verse 21 not only belongs to the Domestic Code, but it is foundational to the interpretation of the whole passage.” Sumner (2005:59) avers: “This disagreement [about verse 21] is significant because the first line of the paragraph, particularly in this case, may determine the practical meaning of the passage.”

Thus, if one can prove that mutual submission is the purpose of v. 21 (most specifically “hard submission”, that is husbands and wives submitting to themselves equally and in the same way), then it will be easier to show that the wife is not bound to obey her husband. Campbell-Reed (2001: 271) agrees when she writes: “So if the real issue of the passage was in fact mutual submission, out of reverence for Christ and mutual love and respect, then insisting on submission of women alone is wrong….”

In sum, the student of vv. 22-33 must first determine the region, result, recipient, and reason of v. 21. Here, we will attempt to ask and answer four crucial questions: (1) Where does v. 21 belong? (2) What is the meaning of “submit”? (3) To whom ought we to submit? (4) Why ought we to submit?

2.1.1 The region: where does verse 21 belong?

There is much debate as to where v. 21 fits in the context of Ephesians 5. The NIV, NA27, RSV, NLT, TEV include it as the first verse in the section that follows (5:22-6:9) while other translations (ESV, NASB, NET, KJV) place it as the final verse in 5:17-21, as does ML and TS29. Another way of stating the issue is: should there be a comma or a period after v. 20?

Merkle (2017:180) observes that virtually everyone “agrees that verse 21 is a transitional verse or hinge verse” or, as Lincoln (1990:365) calls it, a verse that is a “transitional…link.” The question is if the text should be broken before or after v. 21. Is the verse associated more with the following passage or with the preceding context?

Those who divide the text before v. 21[8] use at least six arguments. The first reason is syntactical. Since v. 22 has no conjunction, it seems less likely this verse would begin

[8] Among the commentators that hold this position include: T.K. Abbott, *Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897; Markus Barth, *Ephesians: Translation and Commentary on Chapters 4-6*. The Anchor Bible. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1974; F.F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and the Ephesians*.

a new section. Wallace (2000:639) observes that this is the only time since 1:3 that a section does not begin with a conjunction. The second reason is lexical. Since v. 22 does not have its own verb and borrows ὑποτάσσω from v. 21, this seems to create a closer link whereby v. 21 would be the heading of this new section.[9] The third reason is structural. The "reverence/fear" in v. 21 forms an inclusio with the "reverence/fear" in v. 33. Larkin (2009:129) following Heil's analysis, says: "The entire passage, beginning at 5:21, can be understood as a chiastic structure."

A 5:21–22 φόβῳ
B 5:23a ἀνήρ … γυναικὸς … Χριστὸς … ἐκκλησίας
C 5:23b σώματος
D 5:24–27 ἐκκλησία … Χριστῷ … καθὼς … Χριστὸς … ἐκκλησίαν … ἐκκλησίαν
E 5:28a ἀγαπᾶν … ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας … ἑαυτῶν
E′ 5:28b ἀγαπῶν … ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα … ἑαυτὸν … ἀγαπᾷ,
D′ 5:29 καθὼς … Χριστὸς … ἐκκλησίαν
C′ 5:30 σώματος
B′ 5:31–32 ἄνθρωπος … γυναῖκα … Χριστὸν … ἐκκλησίαν.
A′ 5:33 φοβῆται

The fourth reason is contextual. Since vv. 5:22-6:7 deal with the matter of submission (wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters), it follows then that v. 21 and its "submission" would begin the new section.

The fifth reason is verbal. Verse 22 lacks its own verb, is dependent on ὑποτασσόμενοι in v. 21 and thus borrows it when stating, "wives, **submit** to your own husbands." Whatever the meaning of ὑποτάσσω is in v. 21, then, must be the meaning of ὑποτάσσω in v. 22. Keener (1992: 169) writes: "It is clear that the submission of verse 22 cannot be other than the submission of verse 21 from the simple fact that the word

Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984; William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. BHGNT. Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009; A. T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary. Dallas: Word, 1990; Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010.

[9] After discussing the manuscript evidence of the long and short reading, the NET study note for "submit" in v. 22 reads: "It is not insignificant that early lectionaries began a new day's reading with v. 22; these most likely caused copyists to add the verb at this juncture."

‘submitting’ does not even appear in the Greek text of verse 22: it has to be borrowed from verse 21.”

The sixth reason is theological. As will be observed more in depth below, if it can be proved that the submission of v. 21 is the heading of the domestic code for husbands and wives and furthermore that this submission is mutual, then it will be much easier to demonstrate that the “submission” a wife owes to her husband is really not the placing of one’s self under the authority of another. Verse 21, then, becomes a kind of governing verse or “interpretive grid” (Merkle, 2017: 181). It sets the stage for what will come.

Those who divide the text after v. 21 offer at least nine arguments of their own. The first reason is contextual. The Greek word ὑποτασσόμενοι is the fifth of five anarthrous present tense participles flowing from the last main imperative “filled with the Spirit” (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι, *mi tala Moya*) in v. 18. The argument is that when someone is being controlled by the Holy Spirit, the results will be “addressing” (λαλοῦντες,), “singing” (ᾄδοντες,), “making melody” (ψάλλοντες,), “giving thanks” (εὐχαριστοῦντες,), and “submitting” (ὑποτασσόμενοι,). Thus, it seems forced to emancipate the final participle from the flow of the previous argument and place it instead in a new section.

The second reason is syntactical. Just as the previous view used the chiasm[10] as proof to break the text *before* verse 21, a similar argument is used to break the text *after* verse 21. Larkin (2009:130) suggests a chiasm in vv. 19-21:

5:19a	relation of believers to other believers
5:19b	relation to God
5:20	relation to God
5:21	relation of believers to other believers

The third reason and closely linked to the first, is grammatical. Though some Bible versions translate ὑποτασσόμενοι as an imperative (“submit”; NIV) or an indicative (“be subject”; NASB), per Wallace (2000:659 n.6), imperatival participles are rare.

[10] Omanson and Ellington (2001) define a chiasm (i.e. chiasmus or chiastic structure) as “a reversal of the order of words in a parallel construction in order to create some special literary effect (such as focus or emphasis) or to serve as a discourse boundary marker.”

Robertson (1934:1133-34) observes the following about giving a participle imperatival force: “In general it may be said that no participle should be explained in this way that can properly be connected with a finite verb”. It is best translated as a dependent adverbial participle (“submitting”; ESV, KJV, NLT) upon the main verb (in this case, πληροῦσθε) following on the heels of the other four adverbial participles. Therefore, if ὑποτασσόμενοι is dependent on v. 18 and is not imperatival, then it could not begin a new section. Thus Barth (1974:608) writes: “For grammatical reasons 5:21 belongs to the preceding verses.”

A fourth reason is vocabulary. Verse 22 begins with the vocative “wives” (αἱ γυναῖκες, *vavasati*). This is a common way of beginning new sections, as can be seen in in 6:1 “children” (Τὰ τέκνα, *vana*) and 6:5 “bondservants” (Οἱ δοῦλοι, *malandza*). The fifth reason relates to the textual variants of v. 22. Merkle (2017: 191), along with most commentators, favor the omission in v. 22 of the imperatival form of ὑποτάσσω in the original Greek text, saying, “the original probably lacked the verb.”[11] Thus, since most Greek manuscripts now have inserted the word, it is most likely because they believed v. 22 was the beginning of the new section and needed a verb, for it would be awkward to begin a new reading verbless.

The sixth reason is consistency. Keener (1992:169) is correct that whatever the meaning of ὑποτάσσω is in v. 21 must also be the meaning of ὑποτάσσω in verse 22. One cannot change the meaning arbitrarily, especially from just one verse to the next.

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[11] The NET Bible First Edition Notes (2006) observes the following regarding “submit” in v. 22: “The witnesses for the shorter reading (in which the verb “submit” is only implied) are minimal (□[46] B Cl Hier[mss]), but significant and early. The rest of the witnesses add one of two verb forms as required by the sense of the passage (picking up the verb from v. 21). Several of these witnesses have ὑποτασσέσθωσαν (*hupotassesthōsan*), the third person imperative (so א A I P Ψ 0278 33 81 1175 1739 1881 *al* lat co), while other witnesses, especially the later Byzantine cursives, read ὑποτάσσεσθε (*hupotassesthe*), the second person imperative (D F G □ sy). The text virtually begs for one of these two verb forms, but the often cryptic style of Paul’s letters argues for the shorter reading. The chronology of development seems to have been *no verb*—third person imperative—second person imperative. It is not insignificant that early lectionaries began a new day’s reading with v. 22; these most likely caused copyists to add the verb at this juncture.”

In a similar vein, McFarland writes: “It should be noted that there is textual evidence for the presence of a finite form of *hypotassesthai* in v. 22 (third plural in the Codices Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus, and second plural in the Byzantine textual tradition); but the absence of any such form from the oldest extant MS (Chester Beatty papyrus II, which is followed by the Codex Vaticanus) combines with the principle of *lectio difficilior potior* to support the judgment that these forms represent later additions” (2001:350).

McFarland (2001:349) recognizes this unstable view when he writes: “The problem is that this summons [in v. 21] to *mutual* subordination in Christ appears to be inconsistent with the writer's ensuing argument for the unilateral subordination of wives to husbands.” Watson (1999:234) is so convinced of the hard mutual submission view from v. 21 that he believes it spells the “abolition” or “at least the *deconstruction* of patriarchal marriage.”

The seventh reason is logical. It is impossible for all Christians to be subordinate to each other in the same way at the same time. If one is subordinate, then by definition the other person has authority. As McFarland (2001:355) says, “The very act of subordinating oneself implicitly elevates someone else.” This is why “one another” must be viewed as “one another *within their proper roles*.”

The eighth reason is canonical. Scripture never commands husbands to submit to their wives, though elsewhere wives are commanded to submit to their husbands (vv. 22, 24). Col. 3:18 says virtually the exact thing as Eph 5: “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” It would be surprising, then, if Paul commanded husbands to submit to their wives in just this one verse.

The ninth reason is precision. A number of commentators interpret v. 21 through v. 24 so broadly that it ceases to have any real meaning. Supposedly it means to be humble, to be loving, to be sacrificial, and to be respectful. McFarland (2001:355) points to Jesus washing his disciples’ feet as an example of “subordination to others (John 13:13-14).” But this is not an example of Jesus placing himself under the authority of his disciples, as though he had to obey them in some way. Jesus was showing love and humility. Scripture never uses the word ὑποτάσσω to describe this action of Jesus.

Thus, v. 21 is both a conclusion and an introduction, a hinge verse. For the nine reasons listed above, it is mostly likely more associated with the previous section and thus should not be included in the following segment of 5:22-33.

	V. 21 attached to what follows (5:22-33)	**V. 21 attached to what precedes (5:18-20)**
1.	NIV	ESV
2.	NA^{27}	NET
3.	RSV	KJV

4.	NLT	NASB
5.	TEV	HCSB
6.		TNIV
7.		ML
8.		TS29

2.1.2 The result: what is the meaning of "ὑποτάσσω"?

A proper definition of ὑποτασσόμενοι in v. 21 is crucial. One's interpretation of this word often sets the course for the rest of the passage. Before laying out the main views, a lexical analysis of the word is in order.

First, ὑποτασσόμενοι (nom. pl. masc of pres. mid/pass ptc. of ὑποτάσσω), as we saw earlier, modifies πληροῦσθε (5:18) and is most likely expressing result. It shows the outcome of a Spirit-filled life. While some have argued for means, manner, and an imperatival thrust, Wallace (1996:639) argues against this: "Result may fit well both syntactically and exegetically. Result participles are invariably present participles that follow the main verb; as well, the idea of result here would suggest that the way in which one measures his or her success in fulfilling the command of 5:18 is by the participles that follow." He also suggests these participles have progressive difficulty, thus showing the continuous and increasing nature of what a Spirit-filled Christian looks like.

Second, though strong arguments can be made that the voice of ὑποτασσόμενοι could be either passive ("be submissive"; NASB, RSV; Thielman, 2010: 372) or middle ("submit yourselves"; KJV, TEV, NIV; Merkle, 2016: 177), the difference between the two is negligible. Hoehner's (2002:717) argument for the middle is strong: "The passive could connote that the subject has no control of the action as a drunken person controlled by wine. The middle expresses the idea of cooperation where the subject acts as a free agent. The latter is more in keeping with the context, for the previous four participles (λαλοῦντες, ᾄδοντες, ψάλλοντες, εὐχαριστοῦντες) are active indicating the subject is taking action under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit." Larken (2009:129) also takes it as middle (contra BDAG:1042; this takes it as a passive) because it expresses "volitional self-involvement" thus emphasizing more personal responsibility.

Third, ὑποτασσόμενοι comes from ὑποτάσσω. Hoehner (2002:716) observes that ὑποτάσσω is part of a word group signifying order or arrangement and with the prepositional prefix ὑπο-, the world literally meaning to put oneself under a leader. Louw-Nida (1996:467) defines the word as "to obey, to submit to, obedience, submission." Delling (1985:1159) observes in *TDNT* that this term has a "wide range of meaning centering on the idea of enforced or voluntary subordination". In sum, ὑποτάσσω "regularly describes the submission of someone in an ordered arrangement to another who is above the first—that is, in authority over that person" (Nordling, 2013:329).

Several observations can be made from the chart below. First, in the New Testament the word is found thirty-eight times in thirty-one verses. Second, the word is used only in Luke, Pauline writings, Hebrews, James 4:7 and 1 Peter. Third, the word is found in all five cases, most often in the indicative (fourteen times, as it is in Eph 5:24) and second most as a participle (eleven times, as it is in Eph 5:21). The imperative is found six times, including Col 3:18 where Paul commands wives to submit to their husbands. Fourth, the ESV almost always translates ὑποτάσσω as "submit" or "subject." Hoehner (2002:717) believes "submission" is a better word than "subordinate" (which is not used in the ESV) because it could imply inherent inferiority.

Fifth, *Mahungu Lamanene* (ML) uses four different words to translate ὑποτάσσω: *ku yingisa* (to obey), *ku nyika* (to give/be given), *ku tiveka ehansi* (to put oneself below) and *ku titsongahata* (to humble oneself). The latter idea is used ten times in the NT, including both times in Eph 5:21 and 24. Sixth, while ὑποτάσσω may carry with it ideas beyond placing oneself under the authority of another (such as humility), it never means *less* than this. For example, in Romans 13:1, citizens must place themselves under the authority of government. While this carries with it a posture of humility, the idea of subjection is never removed.

Use of ὑποτάσσω in the New Testament

	Ref	**Case**	**NA27**	**English (w/context)**	**Tsonga**
1.	Lk 2:51	Part	ὑποτασσόμενος	[Jesus] was **submissive** to [his parents]	Yingisa
2.	10:17	Ind	ὑποτάσσεται	Demons are **subject** to us	Yingisa
3.	10:20	Ind	ὑποτάσσεται	Spirits are **subject** to you	Yingisaka
4.	Rm 8:7	Ind	ὑποτάσσεται	[Mind] does not **submit** to God's law	Yingisa
5.	8:20	Ind	ὑπετάγη	Creation was **subjected** to futility	Nyiketiwile

6.	8:20	Part	ὑποτάξαντα	Him who **subjected** it	Nyiketeke
7.	10:3	Ind	ὑπετάγησαν	Did not **submit** to God's righteousness	Tivekanga ehansi
8.	13:1	Imp	ὑποτασσέσθω	Let every person be **subject** to [govn't]	Tiveke ehansi
9.	13:5	Inf	ὑποτάσσεσθαι	One must be under **subjection**	Tiveka ehansi
10.	1Co14:32	Ind	ὑποτάσσεται	Prophets are **subject** to prophets	
11.	14:34	Imp	ὑποτασσέσθωσαν	[Women] should be in **subjection**	Titsongahata
12.	15:27	Ind	ὑπέταξεν	God has put all things under **subjection**	Vekile ehansi
13.	15:27	Ind	ὑποτέτακται,	All things are put in **subjection**	Vekiwile ehansi
14.	15:27	Part	ὑποτάξαντος	All things in **subjection** under him	Vekeke ehansi
15.	15:28	Sub	ὑποταγῇ	When all things are **subjected** to him	Vekiwile ehansi
16.	15:28	Ind	ὑποταγήσεται	[Son] will also be **subjected** to him	Vekiwa ehansi
17.	15:28	Part	ὑποτάξαντι	All things in **subjection** under him	Vekeke ehansi
18.	16:16	Sub	ὑποτάσσησθε	Be **subject** to such as these	Tiveka ehansi
19.	Eph 1:22	Ind	ὑπέταξεν	He **put all things** under his feet	Vekile ehansi
20.	5:21	Part	ὑποτασσόμενοι	**Submitting** to one another	Titsongahateni
21.	5:24	Ind	ὑποτάσσεται	The church **submits** to Christ	Titsongahataka
22.	Phil 3:21	Inf	ὑποτάξαι	To **subject** all things to himself	Veka ehansi
23.	Col 3:18	Imp	ὑποτάσσεσθε	Wives, **submit** to your husbands	Titsongahateni
24.	Tit 2:5	Part	ὑποτασσομένας	**Submissive** to their own husbands	Yingisa
25.	2:9	Inf	ὑποτάσσεσθαι	To be **submissive** to their own masters	Yingisa
26.	3:1	Inf	ὑποτάσσεσθαι	To be **submissive** to rulers	Tiveka ehansi
27.	Heb 2:5	Ind	ὑπέταξεν	God **subjected** the world	Vekanga
28.	2:8	Ind	ὑπέταξας	Putting everything in **subjection**	Vekile hansi
29.	2:8	Inf	ὑποτάξαι	Putting everything in **subjection**	Vekile ehansi
30.	2:8	Part	ὑποτεταγμένα	Everything in **subjection** to him	Swi ri hansi
31.	12:9	Ind	ὑποταγησόμεθα	Be **subject** to the Father	Titsongahati
32.	Jms 4:7	Imp	ὑποτάγητε	**Submit** yourselves therefore to God	Titsongahateni
33.	1Pt. 2:13	Imp	Ὑποτάγητε	Be **subject**…to every human institution	Tivekeni ehansi
34.	2:18	Part	ὑποτασσόμενοι	Servants, be **subject** to your masters	Titsongahateni
35.	3:1	Part	ὑποτασσόμεναι	Wives…**subject** to your own husbands	Titsongahateni
36.	3:5	Part	ὑποτασσόμεναι	By **submitting** to their own husbands	Titsongahata
37.	3:22	Part	ὑποταγέντων	Having been **subjected** to him	Swi ri ehansi
38.	5:5	Imp	ὑποτάγητε	Younger be subject to the elders	Titsongahateni

Setyawan (2007:56) defines ὑποτάσσω as "to be subject out of one's heart, voluntarily to the other who has power". He later uses the term "voluntary submission" to define

his view of v. 21. There are two significant issues here. First, it is difficult to determine what he means by “voluntary”. If he means believers must make a conscious free choice to submit, then of course *every* command in Scripture is voluntary. But if he means by “voluntary” that one has the moral permissibility to submit or not submit, then he is against the obligatory weight of the verse. Second, his phrase “who has power” implies the one under subjection has authority. Try substituting this with parents and children: “A parent must subject their heart voluntarily to their children that have power.” Surely if this cannot be what Paul means with the parent/child relationship, it cannot be what he means with the husband/wife relationship.

One must be careful not to define ὑποτάσσω so generically that it loses all of its meaning. For some, ὑποτάσσω means broad humility. For others, it means even more than that. Setyawan (2007:60) suggests that ὑποτάσσω applied to the wife in v. 21 “should be considered as having the same value and quality as the word *agapate* in verse 25 that is applied to the husband.”

2.1.3 The recipient: to whom ought we to submit?

Considerable debate among scholars arises when Paul tells the Ephesians to submit “to one another.” The dative pronoun ἀλλήλοις clearly refers to some kind of mutual submission, but what exactly does this mean? Though there are many nuanced perspectives of this idea, three primary views emerge which this study will call (1) hard mutual submission, (2) soft mutual submission, and (3) properly ordered submission.

2.1.3.1 Hard Mutual Submission

This view defines ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις not only as basic mutual humility in v. 21 but also as the definition of submission throughout the rest of the pericope in vv. 22-33. This “no hierarchy” view is common in feminist and egalitarian circles. It mitigates most gender-ordered differences, especially those between husband and wife. Stagg (1979:544) says bluntly: “The subordination demanded in verse 21 is inclusive of all the church. It is egalitarian, appealing to all to place themselves in a subordinate position to all others.”

Weber-Han (1977:170) argues that men should put themselves under the authority of the wife and vice versa: “As Christ subjected himself to the church, Paul is saying to

the husbands, they are also to subject themselves to their wives. ‘Subject yourselves to one another’ is Paul's call for equality rather than hierarchy in a hierarchal culture.”

There are three central arguments for this view. First, the pronoun ἀλλήλοις suggests that submission goes both ways between spouses. Thus, a husband should submit to his wife in the same way a wife is to submit to her husband. Setyawan (2007:57), for example, argues ἀλλήλοις refers to subjection “practiced by the two sides equally.” Second, ὑποτάσσω does not only mean “placing oneself under the leadership of another” but, according to Gerhard Delling, can also mean love—that is, “to renounce one’s own will for the sake of others…and to give precedence to others” (TDNT 8:45). Third, some of the apostolic fathers held this view, such as 1 Clement (Bauder, 2018). Fourth, Christ and the church are in fact mutually submissive (that is, humble) towards each other.

Should wives submit to their husbands? Yes, says this view, but only in the ways that husbands are to likewise submit to their wives. Campbell-Reed (2001:274) writes: “Only when we live in equality and mutuality is it acceptable that wives submit graciously, that husbands submit graciously, and that all Christians submit to one another in grace.” This view addresses “headship” in v. 23 in one way or another but always emphasizes the role of humble servant the husband is to show toward his wife that is supposedly taught in v. 21. Mutter (2018:20) concludes his article by saying that husbands are not to act as lords and masters, but rather as servants. Indeed, he says, men are called to lay down their lives for their wives even as Christ laid down his life for his church.

It is true, of course, that men are to be humble, but Mutter sees no sense in “headship” to mean “lordship”. There is no humble lordship. Moreover, since it is true that Christ laid down his life for the church *while at the same time* retaining his lordship, why then should husbands not maintain their lordship/headship while giving their lives for their wives?

2.1.3.2 Soft Mutual Submission

This view defines ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις in the same way as “hard mutual submission”, but only in v. 21. Starting in v. 22, this view would then switch the definition for “submission” to mean properly order subordination. This view recognizes

gender and hierarchical roles among the sexes but nonetheless sees v. 21, as does Lincoln (1990:365-367) as advocating a kind of general humility.[12] Padgett (2011:41-42) concurs that v. 21 carries the meaning of give-and-take, stating that husbands should submit to their wives out of "self-sacrificial love and voluntary self-submission" and wives should "return the same."

Bauder (2019) holds this position and disagrees with what he sees as two extreme views on either side: "I think [the properly ordered submission view] is wrong to say that Eph 5:21 does not teach mutual submission. I also believe that egalitarians are wrong when they assume that mutual submission obviates authority structures. The most straightforward reading of Eph 5:21- 6:10 is that God does require mutual submission, but that mutual submission is fully compatible with the exercise of authority."

In addition to the arguments above, two additional explanations are put forth. First, this view can coexist within the hierarchy of roles within the household. That is, Paul is telling husbands (who are to rule) that they should be humble in the process. Lincoln (1990:366) says: "Believers should not insist on getting their own way, so there is a general sense in which husbands are to have a submissive attitude to wives, putting their wives' interests before their own, and similarly parents to children and masters to slaves."

Second, this view has support from other passages. Paul urges his listeners to "serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). "In humility" believers are to "count others more significant" than ourselves (Phil. 2:3). Peter tells the younger to "be subject" (ὑποτάγητε, *tivekeni ehansi*) to the elders, then follows this promptly with a command for "all" to be clothed with humility (1Pt. 5:5). The former command does not negate the latter. Instead, per Lincoln (1990:366) "there is a general sense n which elders are to serve their flock."

Still, it must be remembered that humility and lordship are not mutually exclusive. Jesus Christ is Lord and rules and reigns over his church. Even Gibson (2011:177),

[12] Conservative pastors that hold this view include John MacArthur (1997:271-283) and Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1973:70-84).

who has no sympathies for the feminist position, falls into this trap.[13] He writes: "Instead of being the ruler of the household, [the husband] is to be its servant." Phrases like "servant lordship" or "humble rulership" or "meek supremacy" appear as oxymorons to the majority of biblical interpreters today. However, this is exactly what the following viewpoint believes the passage teaches.

2.1.3.3 Properly Ordered Submission

This view (Hill, 2001:52; Ellicott, 1859:126; Robinson, 1904:123; O'Brien, 1999: 402-403; Walden, 2003:254; Hoehner, 2002:717; Merkle, 2016:177) defines "submitting to one another" not as everyone submitting to everyone but each person submitting to their proper hierarchical authority.[14] That is: "Submit to whom you are to submit." Clark (1980:76) says it means to "'let there be subordination among you' (i.e., 'each of you subordinate himself or herself to the one he or she should be subordinate to')." According to O'Brien (1999: 403), Paul was essentially teaching: "Submit to one another, and what I mean is, wives submit to your husbands, children to your parents, and slaves to your masters."

There are five strong arguments for this position. The first is etymology. The verb ὑποτάσσω always describes the submission of someone who is over or under the authority of that person. While it is true that Delling, as noted above, does offer a

[13] Gibson's paper on marital unions in Roman, Greek and Jewish cultures is excellent except for the for the last couple paragraphs. He loses his way be defining submission in ways foreign to Scripture. The Bible doesn't say the husband is to submit to his wife. He is to "love" her, which Gibson just assumes to mean submission or humility. This is slight of hand on Gibson's part. He writes in his conclusion (2011:177): "This is not a form of equal, mutual submission. This is not a marriage in which husbands submit to their wives in the same way wives submit to their husbands. This is instead a type of marriage in which the submission of husband to wife is *greater* than the submission of wife to husband. The wife is to submit to her husband, and not to her father. She is to submit to her husband, and not embrace an emancipation that separates her from her husband. But the husband's submission to his wife is far more comprehensive. In the new οικονομία of God, the husband is called on to be willing to sacrifice everything for his wife, up to and including his life. For the husband, this is what it means for him to love his wife." Gibson would be much clearer if he wrote: "The *love* of husband to wife is greater than the submission of wife to husband" and "the husband's *love* to his wife is far more comprehensive…" He interchanges the words love and submission to effortlessly to the point that they essentially mean the same thing. In the end, they mean very little. Highlighting the whole page distinguishes nothing.

[14] The hard mutual submission position hardly can conceive of a position whereby a husband does not "submit" to his wife in some way. Davidson (2007:642, n.35), after giving the various views of mutual submission in v. 21, nonetheless says: "Regardless of what position is taken on this point, the context of Eph 5 indicates that the husband's role is one of a submissive servant leader."

couple textual examples in TDNT where ὑποτάσσω could mean essentially "love" or "humility", it is difficult to square this definition with the verses he provides. "Wives submit to your husbands" (Col. 3:18) certainly involves humility and love, but this is an example where the wife should place herself under the authority of her husband. "Be subject…to every human institution" (1Pt. 2:13) clearly speaks of hierarchy as well. *Mahungu Lamanene* misses the central thrust of v. 21 when it translates ὑποτάσσω as *titsongahata* (humility). *Tivekeni ehansi* (subject yourself) would have been a better translation, which ML uses of Christ in Eph 1:22 and which TS29 uses of the younger toward the older in 1Pe 5:5.

Second is the general use of ὑποτάσσω in the NT corpus. Jesus was subject to his parents (Lk 2:51), demons were subject to the disciples (Lk 10:17-20), citizens were subject to government (Rm. 13:1), the universe was subject to Christ (1Co. 15:27), Christ is subject to the Father (1Cor. 15:28), and church members are subject to their leaders (1Pt. 5:5). Never is this reversed. Never, for example, is the Father subject to Christ and never are the disciples subject to demons. As Nordling (2013:330) rightly observes: "Therefore, according to the textual evidence, ὑποτάσσω does not describe 'symmetrical' relationships at all, but rather ordered relationships wherein some persons are 'over' and others 'under'. Some make a curious argument at this point, as Stagg (1979: 544) does, that "Jesus rejected any disposition to subordinate another to oneself." But ὑποτάσσω is only used three times in the Gospels and just once from the lips of Jesus (Lk 10:20). One could hardly look to Christ to build a case on the meaning of ὑποτάσσω. Instead, if one should look to the Apostle Paul, who uses the word twenty-three times, it would be easy to find him urging proper submission to the leadership of those above them (e.g., "Wives, submit to your husbands"; Col. 3:18). Piper and Grudem (1991:493) concur:

> *The word [ὑποτάσσω] is never 'mutual' in its force; it is always one-directional in its reference to submission to an authority…. So we may ask, why should we assign ὑποτάσσω a meaning in Ephesians 5:21 that it is nowhere else shown to have? Therefore, it seems to be a misunderstanding of Ephesians 5:21 to say that it implies mutual submission. Even in Ephesians 5:22-24, wives are not to be subject to everyone or to all husbands, but to 'their own husbands"—the 'submission' Paul has in mind is not a general kind of thoughtfulness toward others, but a specific submission to a higher authority. But should not the verb in verse 22 (whether implicit or explicit) take the same sense it does in verse 21?*

Third is the specific use of ὑποτάσσω in the NT as it relates to husbands and wives. Paul explicitly teaches wives elsewhere to put themselves under the leadership of their husbands. Never is this reversed.

> Wives, submit to your husbands [Αἱ γυναῖκες, ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν], as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18).
>
> …to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands [ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], that the word of God may not be reviled (Tit 2:5).

The submission of a wife to her husband is not only the teaching of one individual in Scripture but is to found in writings outside of Pauline literature.

> For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands [ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], **6** as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1Pet 3:5-6).

Fourth is the nature of ἀλλήλοις. This pronoun is not always fully reciprocal. For example, in Galatians 6:2 (“bear one another’s burdens”), one person is bearing the burden and the other is having his burden relieved. Everyone is not bearing everyone’s burdens at the same time but some that are stronger should be carrying the burdens of those that are weak. In Luke 12:1 when the crowd is trampling one another, some are being trampled and others are doing the trampling. Confessing sins one to another (Jas 5:16) may simply mean one person is to confess to another person but not that it should always be reciprocal. A pastor is not disobeying this verse, for example, if a parishioner confesses sins to him but he fails to in turn do the same to that person.

Fifth is the context. Since “submit” is linked with the following section (with v. 22 borrowing the word), the context defines *how* one is to submit to one another. It is by caring out one’s social and gender roles. Burk (2019) writes: “The context makes it clear that Paul uses ‘one another’ in the non-reciprocal sense, for the very next verse specifies who is to submit to whom, ‘wives to your own husbands as to the Lord’ (v. 22).” Moreover, per Lincoln (1990:365), since “submission” is only used in the Pauline corpus as the attitude of specific groups (e.g. women, children, slaves), this would be the only place in Paul where “submit” is used for mutual relationships among believers.

But the contextual argument goes even further. If “submission” does not mean “under the authority of another”, one wonders what it means for a child to honor and submit to his parents. How then can a slave submit to his master? The only apparent solution would be that these verses really don’t mean anything for today’s reader, a view for which some authors argue. For example, Campbell-Reed (2001:271) writes: “We would not try to reinstitute slavery in order to obey the commands of Eph 6:5-9.”

2.1.3.4 An analysis of E Baloyi’s position on “submission”

E Baloyi is a Tsonga professor that has written extensively on theological issues pertaining to African culture. It is, therefore, important that this chapter interact with his writings, most especially his work on the nature of submission entitled, "The Biblical exegesis of headship: a challenge to Patriarchal understanding that impinges on women's rights in the church and society” (2008).

Since Baloyi interacts with a plethora of arguments on submission[15], including (but not exclusively) the issue of mutual submission in Eph 5:21-22 and the “deep meaning of gender equality…[and] women’s rights and gender equality in Africa Christian churches and families” (2008:1), this section will categorize his arguments below within seven headings, with each division stating Baloyi’s position, followed by comments by the author.

2.1.3.4.1 Eph 5:21 teaches egalitarian submission

It has been argued in 2.1.3.1 above that this view argued by Baloyi (called “hard mutual submission” or the “no-hierarchy” view) is most common in feminist circles. This view states that everyone must submit to everyone in the same way and at the same time. Baloyi (2008:5) says v. 21 “instructs every person to submit to others, regardless of gender or age.”

Baloyi’s position here is concerning on at least two fronts. First, if “every person” is to “submit to others”, one wonders if Baloyi believes that parents should submit to children and teachers should submit to students. This is difficult to tell, which leads to

[15] Baloyi (2018:10) gives one of his most direct statements arguing for a feminist view of submission thus: “The church must be the first institution to condemn the abuse and subordination of women.” However, 1 Corinthians 14:34 (RSV) specifically says: “women…should be subordinate…” The Greek word for “subordinate” is ὑποτάσσω, which was discussed at length above and is translated “submit” in Ephesians 5.

the second concern, because, though the much of the Baloyi's thesis is addressing the meaning of ὑποτάσσω, Baloyi never defines the word. Interestingly, Baloyi (2008:9) attempts to define the *English* meaning of "submission" as "always willing to obey someone", but never the Greek word ὑποτάσσω, which was defined above as placing oneself under the authority of another.

2.1.3.4.2 Some Scriptures promotes female abuse and feelings of inferiority.

Baloyi (2008:2) uses the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 to prove (in part) why it is a common practice today of "subjecting women to abuse and creating in the women an inferiority complex". According to Baloyi, Jewish men could not even allow women to be counted, which is why Matthew 14:21 says: "Those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children." Since the author of Matthew was Jewish, this proves that Jews, and Matthew specifically, were complicit in their views that women are inferior.

However, there are at least four reasons to question Baloyi's view here. First, God is the author of inerrant Scripture, merely using men and their personalities to pen the words (2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:20-21). Therefore, if *Matthew* was chauvinistic and in error, then God is as well, which cannot be true.

Second, if the failure to count men and women is only mentioned in Matthew, thus pointing to the Jewish immoral view of women, what do we say about the Gospels of Luke and John, which were also written by Jews but did not include this passage?

Third, not counting women and children does not prove Matthew and other Jews saw women and children as so inferior as not even to be counted. It may simply show that the men were in the vast majority. Hendriksen (1973:596-597) writes: "It is probable that the reason—at least one of the reasons—why the men alone were counted was that they constituted the overwhelming majority. One can hardly imagine that many women to whom the care of the little ones was entrusted would have walked all the way from Capernaum and surroundings to the northeastern shores of the Sea of Galilee."

Fourth, Matthew is not the only author that speaks this way. Exodus 12:37 says: "And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand

men on foot, besides women and children." So, to chastise Matthew is to chastise not only Moses but all of the Old Testament as well, which Baloyi later does. He (2008:3) writes: "In the Old Testaments the incidents, laws and stories depict the treatment of women in Hebrew culture as less than human."

2.1.3.4.3 The majority, historical view within the Church supports egalitarian leadership

Baloyi (2008:3) implies this position when he writes: "African people, including some Christians, are still of the view that women must not be allowed to take leadership roles in the church and community." By saying "some" Christians "still" hold this view, he insinuates that the male headship position is a minority view and that to hold this outlook "still" is antiquated.

In fact, male-only church leadership has been the majority view throughout Church history. There is no evidence that female church leadership is embraced by any of the early Church Fathers, the Reformers, nor any of the historic confessions like the Westminster, Savoy, or Baptist Confession of 1689. Grudem (2006:262) writes: "The vast majority of churches, and of evangelicals in particular, clearly rejected the idea of women as pastors throughout church history."

2.1.3.4.4 "In the same way" in 1 Peter 3:1 argues for hard, mutual submission

First Peter 3:1 says: "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands." Baloyi believes "likewise" (or, as he quotes from the NIV, "in the same way") shows that husbands and wives should both submit to each other. He (2008:5) writes: "This phrase places responsibilities on both husbands and wives."

But husbands are not being addressed at all in this verse. "In the same way" isn't saying husbands and wives are to submit *to each other* in the same way, but that "in the same way" citizens should submit to government rulers (2:13) and slaves to their masters (2:18), women should submit to their husbands (Schreiner, 2003:148).

2.1.3.4.5 Male headship encourages treating women as children and slaves

Baloyi (2018:7) says the Ephesians 5:21-22 passage "cannot be used as a proof to support the idea that women must be treated as minors or inferior beings by men." Elsewhere Baloyi (2008:2-3) says the male headship view is used to "oppress" women and to substantiate husbands "beating" their wives.

These are straw man arguments that exaggerate the male headship viewpoint so as to easily knock it down. The scholars cited above at length that argue strongly against Baloyi's egalitarian position nowhere use such harsh, abusive language toward women. This line of reasoning by Baloyi is also guilty of "the excluded middle" fallacy, which assumes there are only two options. In this case, Baloyi supposes that either (1) women are allowed to preach in churches, hold office and receive submission from their husband *or* (2) they will be abused and disrespected. But in fact, there is a *third* position, which is argued for above called "properly ordered submission".

2.1.3.4.6 Conjugal rights in 1 Corinthians 7:4 supports mutual submission

Baloyi (2018:7) says this passage proves both man and woman have equal authority over each other "in marriage".

It is true v. 4 teaches that within the marriage covenant the husband and wife have authority over each other's bodies in sexual intimacy. But it does not follow that just because they have authority over each other's bodies in sexual intercourse that they therefore have equal authority in the marriage covenant as a whole. The husband is never explicitly told to submit to the wife in Scripture; the wife *is* explicitly told to do this in Scripture.

2.1.3.4.7 Submission is "voluntary"

Baloyi often argues for "voluntary submission". For example, he (2018:9) writes: "Submission in this context [of 1Ti 2:8-12] has no connection with slavery, but is voluntary submission in which men and women are equal before God."[16]

[16] Though it is outside the parameters of this thesis to address at length, it should be noted that Baloyi does not believe that the contest of 1Ti 2:12 prohibits female preachers in church. Baloyi (2018:9) is correct that "1 Timothy 2:8-12 refers to all women, including married and unmarried." He is also correct (2018:10) to say that "1 Timothy 2:12 must not be read out of their context." But then he never looks at

Baloyi's meaning of "voluntary" is ambiguous. Does he mean submission is "voluntary" in that a woman should submit without needing physical force? If so, then of course, every view agrees with this. No biblical scholars are arguing for bodily coercion. More likely, however, as in keeping with his argumentation, Baloyi uses the word "voluntary" as a subtle way of saying a wife can obey her husband *if she wants to,* but it's not required. It's "voluntary". If the latter is his view, then Scripture is opposed to this, as moral imperatives are never voluntary. Humans never have the *moral* option to obey or disobey.

In sum, Baloyi's arguments for complete, egalitarian, mutual submission throughout the New Testament are not convincing.

2.1.4 The reason: why ought we to submit?

The need to submit should not be taken frivolously. It should be done "out of" (ἐν, *hikokwalaho ka*) reference for Christ. This points us to the ground, cause, and motivation for the submission just spoken about (Larkin, 209: 130).[17]

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the context. He does not seem to realize that *the context* is the strongest argument against women preaching and leadership role in the church. In the very next verse (v. 13) he roots his argument not in a particular culture but in the created order. According to Grudem (2006:173) "The reason he gives is the order that God established when He created Adam and Eve."

[17] "Fear" is just one of many motivations Scripture gives for doing right. Kevin DeYoung (2008: 56-60) gives a helpful list of other motivations. (1) Duty. "The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:13). (2) God knows and sees all. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecc. 12:14). (3) It is right. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph. 6:1). (4) It is for our good. "Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God" (Dt. 12:28). (5) God's example. "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32) (6) Christ's example. "And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2). (7) Assurance. "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall" (2Pt. 1:10). (8) To lift up a nation. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Pr. 14:34). (9) For the public good. "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" (Mt. 5:13). (10) To win our neighbors. "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (1Pt. 2:12). (11) The love of the Lord. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1Jn. 4:11). (12) To please God. "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Hb. 13:16). (13) For eternal reward. "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, [19] thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take

“Reverence” (ESV, NET, NIV, NRSV) is sometimes translated “fear” in other translations (KJV, NASB[18]). “Reverence” (φόβῳ, *xichavo*) is directed toward Christ. Never again in the NT is “fear of Christ” found.

“Reverence” comes from φόβος, is found forty-seven times in the NT and in one other place in Ephesians (6:5, “Obey your earthly master with *fear* and trembling”). Because there is a wide spectrum of meaning behind this word (with the idea of both fear and reverence to man and God both present), many argue whether the noun should be translated “fear” or “reverence.” Most translations side with the idea of “reverence”, as seen in the above examples. Moreover, they aver that because God is a father to his children, there is no need to fear him as a slave would a master (Rm. 8:15).

Those who advocate for “fear” say τιμάω could have been used (as it was in Eph. 6:2: “*honour* your father…”) if respect was the idea the author was trying to communicate. Barth (1974:608-609) argues vigorously that “fear” is the only suitable translation. Hoehner (2002: 718-19) argues that in the NT whenever φόβος is followed by one of the persons of the Godhead as the objective genitive (Ac. 9:31; Rm. 3:18; 2Cor. 5:11; 7:1), the word “respect” is never sufficient but instead carries a stronger idea like fear, reverence and awe. Furthermore, in response to the Romans 8:15 argument above, advocates of this view say there are good and bad kinds of fear. The fear of man is evil and leads to many sins (Pr. 29:25). The fear of God (Mk. 4:35-41) is righteous and is praised throughout Scripture (Pr. 8:13; Job 28:28).

Perhaps ‘fearful respect” or “reverential fear” carries the best idea, though these are admittedly clunky for a translation.

2.2 The duty of the wife

Here in Eph 5:22-6:9 Paul is following the common structure of the *Haustafal* found in Col 3:18-4:1; 1 Tim 2:8-15; 6:1-10; Titus 2:1-10; and 1 Pet 2:18-3:7. According to Merkle (2016: 180), this pattern includes (1) naming the addressee in the vocative

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hold of that which is truly life” (1Tm. 6:18-19). (14) To have God’s favor. “A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns” (Pr. 12:2). (15) To avoid the devil’s snares. “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, [27] and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph. 4:26-27).

[18] Surprisingly, while the NASB translates φόβος “fear” in v. 21, it does not translate the verb form φοβέω as “*fears* her husband” but instead “*reverences* her husband.”

case, (2) exhorting the addressee, and (3) providing a rationale or motive for the exhortation.

This passage is significantly longer than those written to children/parents and slaves/masters. Thielman (2010: 370), agreeing with Lincoln (1990: 364-65), believes there are a number of reasons for this, the primary one being the mysterious parallel between the wife-and-husband relationship with that of Christ and the church.

Moreover, according to Merkle (2016:180), "this passage (5:22-33) contains the longest sustained teaching in the NT concerning the relationship between wives and husbands with forty-seven words directed to wives and 143 to husbands."

2.2.1 What: A wife should submit to her own husband (v. 22a)

22 αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands

22 *N'wina vavasati, yingisani vavanuna va n'wina*

There are three crucial words in Eph 5:22a. The first is the vocative[19] "wives" (αἱ γυναῖκες, *vavasati*) and the noun "husbands" (ἀνδράσιν, *vavanuna*). The Greek noun for "wife" and "woman" (γυνή) is the same, as is the Greek noun for man/husband (ἀνήρ). The context clearly tells the reader this is speaking to wives and not women in general. Since she is to submit to her "own husband", this is speaking of submission from wife to husband. Barth (1974:610-611) believes that the special subordination specifically of the wife only to her husband (viz. 1Pe 3:1, 5) is not an unusual noose around the neck of the woman but in fact a drastic restriction and liberation in a society that often expected this of all women in general to all men in general.

Similarly, a husband only "owes" marital love to his wife (vv. 25, 28, 33). Paul could have used the words "male" (ἄρσην) and "female" (θῆλυς) as he did in Gal 3:28 but didn't. ML and TS29 both use the more generic *vavasati* (women) instead of the more

[19] The vocative is the Greek case of direct address and, as stated earlier, is another indication that v. 22 begins a new section. The next two new sections (6:1 and 6:5) in Eph are also marked by vocatives. ML does a good job of notifying the reader of a new section by adding *N'wina* at the beginning of v. 22: *N'wina vavasati* (You, wives).

specific *vasati* (wives). There are times later in the passage that both translations use *vasati* (e.g., v. 25 and 28) but there doesn't seem to be a pattern for when "women" and when "wives" is used. Though most readers get the idea that wives are being addressed here ("*Women,* submit to your own husbands"), the more precise *vasati* would have been a better translation.

The second key word is "submit" (ὑποτάσσεσθε, *titsongahateni*). The imperative verb ὑποτάσσεσθε is present in the majority of early manuscripts but absent in a few others, including NA27. If the verb was in fact absent in the original manuscripts, there are two reasons it would be natural for the verb to be added. The first would be for clarity's sake, as Metzger (1994:541) suggests. The second reason is that it would directly align with the imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε in Col 3:18: "Wives, submit to your husbands."[20] Nonetheless, the shorter reading is still complete with the verb implied from v. 21, in which case it would carry an imperatival force.[21] As argued earlier, it is best to keep the same definition of ὑποτάσσω from v. 21: subjection or subordination.[22] As Nida

[20] ML is consistent at this point, also translating ὑποτάσσεσθε in Col 3:18 as *titsongahateni.*

[21] After stating that the verb is lacking (e.g. the shorter reading) in a few early fathers but present in other manuscripts including the Byzantine text, Merkle (2016:182) says the UBS committee preferred the shorter reading because it "accords with the succinct style of the author's admonitions, and explained the other readers as expansions introduced for the sake of clarity, the main verb being required especially when the words αἱ γυναῖκες stood at the beginning of a scripture lesson."

[22] Peter also gives insight into the practical outworking of this kind of submission. He uses "submit" (ὑποτάσσεσθε) and "obey" (ὑπήκουσεν) synonymously (1Pt. 3:5-7). In order to encourage the women in the context to submit to their husbands with a gentle and quiet spirit, Peter gives them an example of holy women from the past. They are "holy" in that they pleased God. These women were most likely the matriarchs like Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel. They "hoped in God" not because they thought their husbands were morally pristine but because they trusted in God's Word and plans. They "used to adorn themselves" (or, "make themselves beautiful", NLT), the imperfect tense pointing to a continual habit. They did thys by submitting themselves to their *own* husbands with (going back to v. 4) a meek and quiet spirit. V. 6 gives a specific way this looked. Sarah "obeyed" her husband (ὑπήκουσεν), showing submission contains the idea of obedience. This is like unbelievers are hostile to God because the will not "submit" to (or obey) God's law (Rm. 8:7). Now submission isn't *only* obedience. It is possible to be obedient and not submissive. A wife must be *more* than obedience but never less. You can't have a submissive wife that doesn't make a habit of obeying her husband. We're given an example of Sarah's obedience when she called Abraham "lord" (v. 7). She did this in Gn. 18:12 after she had just been told she would have a child in her old age the next year. There are at least four reasons the respect and dignity she show Abraham was remarkable. (1) She was unprepared. She was caught off guard. (2) She was alone. (3) She was accustomed. She was married for a long time. (4) She was unbelieving. This was a low point in her spiritual life most likely, yet she still honored her husband. In sum, Sarah made such a habit of respect to her husband that even when unguarded, alone and fleshly, she still honored him.

and Bratcher (1993:139) point out: “This verb is used in military contexts of a subordinate’s relationship to his superior in the army hierarchy.” It is unlikely Paul would change the meaning from general humility to submission in the space of just one verse, especially if the verb is borrowed from v. 21.

Feminists, however, continue to balk at this definition of ὑποτάσσω. Some, like Kroeger (1987:281), argue this verb may also mean to attach oneself to another. And since it was the wife that was expected to leave her family and attach herself to her husband, this is essentially what Paul was arguing for. In this reading, when Jesus was “submissive” (ὑποτασσόμενος) to his parents, Luke was simply saying Jesus had attached himself to them. Others say Paul purposefully avoids using “obey” (ὑπακούω) as he does with children/parents in 6:1 and slaves in 6:5 because he is trying to make a distinction between ὑποτάσσω and ὑπακούω in order to show a greater equality among husbands and wives. Barth (1974:2:611) makes this argument, saying Paul never uses verbs like “obey” and “serve” as synonyms for “subordination” expected of wives. He continues to weaken the meaning of ὑποτάσσω by equating the “submission” a wife is to show to her husband with the “yielding” a senator may offer to a fellow senator, but not just to any government spokesman.

Hoehner gives three arguments against this. First, he says ὑποτάσσω has been used historically to show a subordinate role of one person to another.[23] Second, Paul and Peter elsewhere use ὑποτάσσω as “to be subject” in regards to slaves within household codes (Titus 2:9; 1Pet 2:18). Third, Peter uses ὑποτάσσω and ὑπακούω virtually synonymously in 1 Pet 3:5-6.

The third key word is “own” (ἰδίοις), referring to the “exclusive property of someone” (Louw-Nida, 1997:558). Paul often uses this word to show the possession spouses have of each other. In Titus 2:5 Paul tells wives to be “self-controlled, pure, working at

[23] He cites Delling in TDNT (1972: 8:39-46) where there are lengthy sections on the use of ὑποτάσσω in both the Greek world and the early church.

home, kind, and submissive to their own (ἰδίοις[24]) husbands." This includes all women.[25]

He says a similar thing in 1 Co 7:2, though using a different pronoun with the wife: "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own (ἑαυτοῦ) wife and each woman her own (ἴδιον) husband." This possessive adjective in Eph 5:22 is more confirmation that "wives" and "husbands" are in view and not just "women" and "men" in general.

2.2.2 To whom? A wife is ultimately submitting to the Lord (v. 22b)

…ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ,

…as to the Lord.

… *kukotisa loko mi yingisa Hosi*.

The latter half of v. 22 gives both the recipient of this submission and the motivation. When a wife obeys her husband, she is ultimately submitting to Christ. The conjunction "as" (ὡς, *kukota*) is not causal (contra Lincoln, 1990:368) but instead is drawing a comparison ("…as you do to the Lord"; NIV). The motivation for a wife to obey does not come from the character, wisdom, or compassion of the husband, though of course this will help. Rather, wives must submit because as they do, they are simultaneously submitting to the Lord. An example of this is found in Matthew 25:35-40. Jesus said that when was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison…his disciples helped

[24] There is no way to communicate "own" husband in Tsonga so neither TS29 nor ML attempts to do so. Instead, they simply translate Titus 2:5 with the less precise rendering *vanuna va vona* (their husbands).

[25] This would include: (1) Older women (by teaching younger ladies with their lives and words how to honor their husbands, Tit. 2:4-5). (2) Lonely women (by honoring their husbands as Sarah did, even if the husband and wife are rarely together). (3) Single women (by practicing submission to their future husband by submitting to fathers and pastors. (4) Divorced women (by not dishonoring their former husband in front of the children). (5) Unequally-yoked women (by submitting to husbands that are not yet converted, for God may use this to lead him to Christ, 1Co. 7:14, 16). (6) Women with children (by teaching your childrens how to honor men and warming them of common mistakes). (7) Young women (by learning from the godliest women in her life).

him. How did they do this? Each time they served and showed compassion to other believers they were really serving Christ.

2.2.3 Why: The husband is the head of the wife (v. 23)

23 ὅτι ἀνήρ ἐστιν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος·

[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.

[23] *Hikuva nuna i nhloko ya wansati, kukotisa leswi Kriste, na yena, a nga nhloko ya Kereke, yena a nga Mukutsuri wa miri.*

Most commentators agree the conjunction "for" (ὅτι, *hikuva*) introduces a causal clause (Larken, 2009: 131; Merkle, 2016: 182) to show that this verse will answer the question: "Why should a wife submit to her husband?" The reason is "because" (NET) the husband is the head of the wife (*"hikuva" wanuna i nhloko ya wansati*).[26]

2.2.3.1 Arguments for "κεφαλή" as source

There is much debate regarding the meaning of the word "head" (κεφαλή, *nhloko*). Some have argued that κεφαλή means "source", like the head of a river.[27] For example, just as Christ is the source of blessing for the church (Eph 4:15-16), so the husband is the spring from which wives should find their fulfillment. Westfall (2016:80-102), for example, tries to make the case that the meaning of κεφαλή in both Eph 5 and 1Co 11 is best understood as source or origin.

[26] The context shows that ἀνήρ refers to a husband, just as it does in the preceding verse.

[27] See esp. Stephen F.B. Bedale, "The Meaning of κεφαλὴ in the Pauline Epistles," *JTS 5* (1954): 211-15; Berkeley Mickelsen and Alvera Mickelsen, "What does *kephalē* Mean in the New Testament?" in *Women, Authoirty and the Bible* (ed. Alvera Mickelsen; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1986), 97-110; Gilbert G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 215-52; Catherine Clark Kroeger, "The Classical Concept of Head as 'Source,'" in *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (ed. Gretchen G. Hull; Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H Revell, 1987), 267-83 and Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 502-3.

There is a sense in which Christ is the source of the church and the husband is the source of the woman. Eve came from Adam (Gen 2:22). The question is whether this passage uses κεφαλή in this way.

2.2.3.2 Arguments for "κεφαλή" as superior rank

There are five reasons that κεφαλή should be defined as "head", one having superior rank. The first reason is etymology. The word κεφαλή often refers to "superior rank" (BDAG 542b). Thielman (2010:376) observes κεφαλή is used as a metaphor for a leader in the LXX in Jdg 11:11 ("The people made [Jephthah] *head* and leader over them") and 2 Sa 22:44 ("You kept me as the head of the nations") among others. It often refers to a ruler, "one who is of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command—'one who is the head of, one who is superior to, one who is supreme over.'" (Louw-Nida, 1996:738). This is most clearly seen in 1Co 11:3, written in the context of problems regarding women participating in worship with their heads uncovered. "The head (κεφαλὴ) of every man is Christ, the head (κεφαλὴ) of a wife is her husband, and the head (κεφαλὴ) of Christ is God." Here, κεφαλὴ[28] is used thrice, each time referring to one with superior authority over the other. Thielman (2010:377) calls the overtones of authority from this verse a conclusion that "becomes virtually unavoidable." Of course, this "does not connote any sense of qualitative superiority to the wife" (Hoehner, 2002:740) but only in role.

Nida and Bratcher (1993:139) correctly observe that since there are a number of languages in which there is no easy way to translate "authority over," the closest equivalent may be "for a husband has the right to tell his wife what to do just as Christ has the right to tell the church what to do" or "for a husband has the right to command his wife just as Christ has the right to command the church." However, *nhloko* in Tsonga carries the same idea as "leader" or "authority" as it does in English and Greek.

The second reason is context. Since the context of this passage is submission, it makes sense that "head" would refer to one in superior rank over another. Moreover, the context of Paul's cultural hearers would have understood this as well. In Paul's Greco-Roman world of *paterfamilias,* the husband was the ruler. Aristotle (2017:

[28] For a thorough treatment, see Grudem, "Does Kephele ('Head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *Trinity Journal* 6 [1985] 38-59.

2420) said: “The rule of the household is a monarchy, for every house is under one head.”

The third reason is usage in Ephesians. The word κεφαλὴ has already been used twice previously in Ephesians to refer to a person of superior authority. Ephesians 1:22: “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head (κεφαλὴ) over all things.” Here we see that Christ is the authoritative authority over all things (including his church) because God the Father has placed all things under his feet. Ephesians 4:15: “Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head (κεφαλὴ), into Christ.” Who is the authoritative leader of the church? It is the head. It is Christ. It makes sense, then, that Paul would continue to use the same definition of κεφαλὴ in Ephesians 5:23.

The fourth reason is the genitive of subordination (τῆς γυναικὸς). The husband is said to be head “of the wife”, that is, head “over” the wife (Merkle, 2016:182).

The fifth reason is Christ’s analogous protective, headship over the church. At this point there may be confusion as to what this practically means. Paul doesn’t give practical reasons to motivate a wife’s submission. Instead, he turns to Christology and gives a comparison, an example, to help us understand. This headship of the husband over the wife is comparative and analogous (“even as”, ὡς καὶ) to the way Christ is head of the church (Best, 199:535; Larkin, 2009:132). This is contra Barth (1974:613-14) who sees it as comparative and argues vigorously for the translation “for [only] in the same way the Messiah is the head of the church.” In other words, for him, Jesus is not the supreme example of male superiority over the woman in this passage. Headship for Barth is not absolute. He is head “of” or “over” the church (genitive of subordination) just as the husband is head over the wife. Per Larkin (2009:132), Christ is head of the church in that he provides instruction, defense and nourishment and we should see the husband as head of the wife in similar practical ways. Thielman (2010:378).points to reconciliation (2:13,16) and equipping (4:7-16) as the key practical benefits of Christ’s headship of the church.

This is where a faulty view of ὑποτάσσω in v. 21 comes into play. For example, Setyawan (2007:58) argues for hard mutual submission (ὑποτάσσω = humility) from v. 21 but then says of the “headship” passage here in v. 23: “The husband’s authority is still respected at this point”. One asks the question: What authority?

2.2.3.3 The Church as synonymous with Christ's body

Paul then steps aside to give two significant ecclesiastical points. In fact, v. 23c seems to be a kind of parenthesis, an additional thought that redirects the flow of argument in order to give more information about Christ's relationship to the Church.

First, the church is equated with Christ's "body." Five times previously in Eph the church has been equated with the body (1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16).

Second, Christ is the Savior (σωτὴρ*, muponisi*)[29] of the church. This is applied to Christ five times elsewhere, four times in the Pastorals (2Tm. 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13; 3:6) and once in Philippians (3:20) (Schreiner, 2010: 87). The use of this particular word is indeed difficult. Most commentators believe this is referring solely to Christ, as is common in the NT (2Tm. 1:10; Tit 1:4; 2:13; 3:6; 2Pe 1:1, 11; 2:20; 3:2, 18) and the LXX (Dt. 32:15; 1Sm. 1019; Ps. 24:5; Isa. 12:2; 45:15; 62:11; Mic. 7:7; Hb. 3:18). In one sense, the husband is certainly not the "savior" of his wife in the way that Christ is the Savior of his body, the church. Hoehner (2002:742-743) gives a number of reasons why "savior" can't refer to the husband but only Christ, including (1) the appositional position of *autos*, (2) the wife isn't the husband's body, (3) the different context of 1 Corinthians 7:16, and (4) the usage of "savior" always referring to Jesus.

This "Saviorship" is limited, then, in two ways. First, it is restricted in *who* is saved. Jesus is the Savior of "his body" (τοῦ σώματος, *miri wa yena*). This aligns with other particular redemption passages that speak of redemption for "his people" (Mt. 1:21) and "his sheep" (Jn. 10:15), which is why he did not pray redemptively "for the world (Jn. 17:9).

Second it is limited in *who* can do the saving. Indeed, only Christ can save his people from eternal damnation in hell. The husband cannot do this for his wife and cannot be her savior in the way Christ is the "savior of the world" (Jn. 4:42). It is only Jesus that can "save" to the uttermost (Hb. 7:25) and "save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). It was Christ alone that was born a "Savior" (Lk. 2:10-11). Still, many commentators are too quick to miss the application to the husband/wife relationship. Barth (1974:615-

[29] See Appendix A for an exegetical analysis of this word

16) works tirelessly to show that “savior” in this verse only refers to Christ. Even if true, in the end there is still a way it may refer to the husband because of the Christ/husband analogy. “He is not his wife’s lord and savior,” says Barth (1974:619). But Sarah calls her husband “lord” (1Pe 3:6). Husbands must be willing to “save” their wife’s physically, the ultimate sign of love (Jn 15:13).

There appear to be practical ways that this description of Christ points to a husband’s role toward his wife. For Thielman (2010: 378-379), headship here is most closely aligned with the idea of protection and deliverance because of the parallelism found in v. 23.[30]

Subject	**Predicate**	**Genitive qualifier**
ὁ Χριστὸς (Christ)	κεφαλὴ (is [implied] the head	τῆς ἐκκλησίας (of the church)
αὐτὸς (he himself)	σωτὴρ (is [implied] the savior	τοῦ σώματος (of the body)

2.2.4 How: The wife submits as the church submits to Christ (v. 24)

24 ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν

[24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should

[30] We shall explore this idea more deeply in the section addressed to husbands, but briefly we can see that the husband should and must protect his wife in at least four ways: (1) Emotionally: Women are good at thinking through social dynamics and experiences and often *feel* something strongly before reasoning it through logically. This has the potential of leading to hasty decisions. Moses legislated laws whereby a husband could protect his wife from carrying out rash vows (Num. 30:6-14). (2) Spiritually: Adam should have protected his wife from being deceived by the serpent. Instead, he went along with her plan (Gn. 3:1-6). (3) Physically: In Scripture, it is always the men that go out to fight for and protect the women and children (Deut 24:5; Jn. 15:13). (4) Theologically: Should a wife be confused on a particular theological point, she is to to privately and ask her husband for clarification (1Cor. 14:35).

24 *Kutani kukotisa leswi Kereke yi yingisaka Kriste, vavasati na vona, a va yingise vanuna va vona*

The fact that the opening of 24a is translated so many different ways reveals the confusion commentators and translators have regarding how v. 23b and v. 24a relate to one another. The Greek conjunction ἀλλὰ is variously translated thus:

Translation	**Version**
"Now as the church…"	ESV; NIV; HCSB
"But as the church…	NASB; NET
"Just as the church…"	NRSV
"Therefore just as the church…"	KJV
"As the church…"	NET
Kutani, tanihi leswi Kereke	ML
Kutani kukotisa leswi Kereke	TS29

The conjunction ἀλλὰ is significant. Barth (1974:619) is correct that this conjunction bears more weight than δὲ ("but", "and", "that is") and καὶ ("and"). He is also correct that ἀλλὰ is often used to (1) introduce a positive counterpart after a negative clause (or vice versa), (2) signal a question or objection, (3) mark the end of an argument, or (4) resume an argument. But his argument is unconvincing that ἀλλὰ is used to limit the force of 23b where Christ is the Savior of the body. He believes v. 24 is a hard contrast to the wifely "crouching subservience of a bootlicker who has lost all sense of dignity." Barth (1974:619) writes:

> *If some people thought—as indeed the history of interpretation shows…--that in a restricted sense the husband could be his wife's savior and become her Christ, then vs. 24 'demythologizes' both the husband and marriage. In opposition of*

many a vain man's opinion, the human male is not given a 'power of command…unlimited.' He is not his wife's lord and savior.

The context, however, makes it easy to understand why Paul would use ἀλλὰ. He began by addressing wives in v. 22, shifted to the husband as head in v. 23a and then shifted again to Christ as head and Savior in 23b. In order to return to his original audience (the wives), he uses an adversative conjunction that is actually employed to *resume* his original point (Larkin, 2009:133). Thielman (2010:379) argues convincingly that Paul uses this conjunction to pull his train of thought back on track. The purpose is that the wife is to submit to her husband based on the church's submission to Christ.

We already discussed the meaning of ὑποτάσσω. The purpose of v. 24 is to show *how* a wife is to submit to her husband. Paul tells us. She is to do so as the church submits to Christ. There is no better way to glimpse how she does this than to look in the previous chapter of Ephesians where the church's relationship with Christ is on display. From chapters 3-5 at least ten examples are seen as to how the church submits to Christ—and thus wives should submit to their husbands. The church (1) trusts Christ (3:17), (2) longs to know the depth of his love (vv. 18-19), (3) graciously receives his gifts (4:7), (4) serves and edifies God's people through the gifts they've been given (v. 12), (5) grows in maturity (v. 13), (6) follows Christ's example (5:2), (7) is determined to please the Lord (5:10), (8) understands what Christ wants her to do (v. 17), (9) praises Christ (v. 19), (10) is thankful to Christ (v. 20).

2.2.5 When: A wife should submit to her husband in everything (v. 24)

24 … οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί.

24 … so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

24 *… vavasati na vona, a va yingise vanuna va vona etimhakeni hinkwato.*

Another challenge arises from the word "everything" (ἐν παντί, *etimhakeni hinkwato*). The sweeping nature of this word makes some bristle. Some say the word should be ignored, while others say it should be qualified. For those that want to disregard ἐν παντί, they say Paul—in his excited and unrealistic view of marriage—overreached (Best, 1998:490). Others correctly assume Paul is urging full and complete submission, while allowing for obvious exceptions should the husband demand her to

sin (Ac. 5:29). “Everything” certainly must mean everything that Christ expects of her. The qualification of πᾶς is not unusual in Paul’s writings.

Uses of πᾶς		
Passage	**Text**	**Clarification**
1. **2 Cor. 4:8**	We are afflicted in every way (ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι)	Paul faced much trouble, not every known earthly affliction
2. **2 Cor. 7:5**	We were afflicted at every turn (ἐν παντὶ θλιβόμενοι)	Paul often faced trouble, not every single moment in every
3. **Col. 3:20**	Children, obey your parents in everything (Τὰ τέκνα, ὑπακούετε τοῖς γονεῦσιν κατὰ πάντα)	Children are to obey their parents in all non-sinful ways
4. **Col. 3:22**	Bondservants, obey in everything… (Οἱ δοῦλοι, ὑπακούετε κατὰ πάντα)	Servants are to obey their masters in all non-sinful ways
5. **Phil. 4:13**	I can do all things… (πάντα ἰσχύω...)	Paul was content in everything said in the prior verses.

Paul expected his audience to understand the expansive nature of language and appreciate the broader point that wives should consistently and comprehensively submit their husbands (Thielman, 2010: 380). It is inconsequential if her husband is a believer.[31]

2.3 The duties of the husband

Paul now shifts the focus from the wife to the husband. He follows the same pattern here as he does within the new relationship sections of v. 22 (to wives), 6:1 (to children), and 6:5 (to servants).

[31] In the 17th century Gouge (2013:35) wrote a helpful Q and A regarding the extent of “everything”:
Question: Is mortal and sinful man to be obeyed as the Lord Christ, the eternal Son of God?
Answer: This extent is to be limited to the generality of the things in question. As in other places, where the apostle says, ‘all things are lawful for me’ (1Cor. 6:12; 10:23) he means all indifferent things, for that is what he was discussing. When again he says, ‘Whatsoever is set before you, eat’ (1Cor. 10:27), he means, whatever good and wholesome meat, for of that he spoke.”

Fee (2017:5) argues that Paul is obviously more concerned about the role of the husband rather than the wife because he devotes four times as many words in this section to him instead of the wife. Nonetheless, the focus of the husband's duties is on love. Love is the greatest Christian virtue (1Co 13) as taught by Jesus ("You shall love your neighbor as yourself", Mt 22:39), Peter ("Above all, keep loving one another earnestly", 1Pe 4:8), and Paul ("The whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'", Gal 5:14).

2.3.1 A husband must love his wife unconditionally (v. 25a)

25 Οἱ ἄνδρες, ἀγαπᾶτε τὰς γυναῖκας, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church

25 *N'wina, vavanuna rhandzani vasati va n'wina, kukotisa leswi Kriste, na yena, a nga rhandza Kereke*

One might expect Paul to follow the section to wives on submission with the command for husbands to rule and have dominion over their wives. Instead, he implores the husband to love.

The nature of this love is unconditional. The meaning of the verb ἀγαπάω is rich. It is used 210 times in the canonical LXX, 143 times in the NT, thirty-four times by Paul and ten times in Ephesians (including six times in this section). At its core, the word means seeking the highest good of the one loved. It makes a free choice upon its object, whereas *erao* is in bondage to impulse and seeks satisfaction of self wherever the object can be found (Hoehner, 2002:180). In sum, ἀγαπάω is selfless; *erao* is selfish. While φιλέω (used twenty-five times in the NT) is love most often connected to friendship, ἀγαπάω is broad enough to refer to love within the Godhead (Jn. 3:35), God's love for humanity (Jn. 14:21), humanity's love for God (Rm. 8:28) and people among each other (2Cor. 11:11).

The key distinctive of ἀγαπάω is its affection for the unworthy. It does not love based on merit. It is willful, unconditional love that wants the highest good for the object that does not merit it. In this sense, a husband is to love his wife in the way a wife is to submit to her husband in that their action is not dependent on the other person. As

Bratcher and Nida observe (1999:141), some languages make a distinction between the love among spouses and the love Christ would have for his church. This is not the case in Tsonga. The Tsonga term of affection *ku rhandza* is used which means to love or like. In fact, there is no vocabulary word in Tsonga to distinguish the two ideas. That is, there is nothing in the etymology of *ku rhandza* to show its unconditional nature, which is like the English "love" but unlike the Greek (ἀγαπάω).

Six observations can be made about the unconditional love found in the phrase "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church."

2.3.1.1 This unconditional love is marital.

This speaks not of general love between men and women but between spouses—a husband for a wife. The noun "husbands" (ἀνήρ, *vavanuna*) is in the vocative, a case used for direct address. ML emphasizes this by saying *N'wina, vavanuna* (You, men!). Though ἀνήρ in the NT can be translated "men" or "husbands", the context clearly shows this is speaking about a husband's love for his wife. It is unclear why TS29 and ML both translate this as *vavanuna.*[32] In fact, ἀνήρ and γυνή are used a combined sixteen times in Eph. 5:22-33 and there does not seem to be any cohesion as to why the translators use *nuna/wanuna* and *nsati/wansati.*

Passage	**Men/Husbands**				**Women/Wives**			
Eph. 5	Greek	ESV	TS29	ML	Greek	ESV	TS29	ML
1. 22a					**γυνή**	Wives	Vavasati	Vavasati
2. 22b	**ἀνήρ**	Husband	Vanuna	Vanuna				
3. 23a	**ἀνήρ**	Husband	Nuna	Nuna				

[32] Van Rooy (2020) wrote the following to the writer in an email: "Venda can use *munna* for both 'man' and 'husband' and and *musadzi* for both 'woman'and 'wife'. Interesting is that isiZulu uses the term *umkami/umkakho/umkakhe* for my/your/his(her) spouse. Sometimes the Venda use the more polite forms *mukalaha wanga* 'my old man' for 'my husband' and *mufumakadzi wanga* ('my lady') for 'my wife'."

4. 23b					**γυνή**	Wife	Wansati*	Nsati*
5. 24a					**γυνή**	Wives	Vavasati	Vavasati
6. 24b	**ἀνήρ**	Husbands	Vanuna	Vanuna				
7. 25a	**ἀνήρ**	Husbands	Vavanuna	Vavanuna				
8. 25b					**ἀνήρ**	Wives	Vasati	Vasati
9. 28a	**ἀνήρ**	Husbands	Vavanuna	Vavanuna				
10. 28b					**ἀνήρ**	Wives	Vasati	Vasati
11. 28c					**γυνή**	Wife	Nsati	Nsati
12. 31a	**ἀνήρ**	Man	Wanuna	Wanuna				
13. 31b					**γυνή**	Wife	Nsati	Nsati
14. 33a					**γυνή**	Wife	Nsati	Nsati
15. 33b					**γυνή**	Wife	Wansati	Wansati
16. 33c	**ἀνήρ**	Husband	Nuna	Nuna				

2.3.1.2 This unconditional love is narrow

There is a particular and precise element in whom the husband is to love. This affection should be directed towards “your wives”, not “the wives.” Though ἰδίοις is not used as it was in v. 22 (“own” husbands) the accusative article τὰς is translated as a possessive pronoun. First Corinthians 7:2 gives warrant for this: “Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.”

Either ἰδίοις or the article translated as a possessive pronoun (e.g. τὰς) is used to communicate the idea of “own” (Gouge, 2016:50). Wallace (2000:216) notes: “The article is also generic in a distributive sense: each husband is to love his own wife.”

This is then a tacit argument for monogamy, as some inaccurately argue that it is legitimate for a man to take many wives but not for a wife to take many husbands.

2.3.1.3 This unconditional love is commanded

This unconditional love is commanded. The verb ἀγαπάω is the only imperative in the entire husband/wife section in 5:22-33. In fact, the reader must go back to the command to be filled with the Spirit in 5:18 to find another imperative. The rest of the verbs in this section are participles, indicatives, infinitives or subjunctives. ML uses the imperative "*rhandzani"* to emphasize the command. Chapter three will show just how countercultural this command to love is. Paul restates this command two more times to show its significance (vv. 28, 33).

2.3.1.4 This unconditional love is Christ-like

V. 25b shows *how* the husband is to love his wife. The adverbial conjunction "as" (καθὼς, *kukota leswi*) is a marker of similarity (Louw-Nida, 1996:618). Some (Lincoln, 1990:374) believe the καθὼς most likely refers to cause ("Husbands, love your wives *because* Christ loved the church…") while others believe it is evidence of a comparison (Hoehner, 2002:750-751; Merkle, 2016:184). That is, Christ's love for the church is the manner in which the husband is to love his wife. Christ's love is the standard and illustrative of how husbands should love their wives. Barth (1974:622) argues that both comparison and cause could be in view here.[33]

Gouge (2013:51) argues that this unconditional love is "like" that of Christ's not in *measure* but in manner. Although the analogy with Christ's sacrifice may indicate the degree of the husband's mandated love, the focal point is on its manner (Larkin, 2009:133). Husbands will never attain a love for their wives on par with Christ's love for his children. This should serve as a motivation for men, as they can never love their wives enough. The *manner* in which they love their wives ought to be like Christ's love

[33] Though Christ's love for believers is parallel to a husband's love for his wife, this illustration should not be taken too far, as we have already seen in the latter phrase of v. 23. Just because an idea is illustrative doesn't mean it is illustrative *in every way.* This picture is given to show the self-sacrificial nature of a husband's love. But it does not mean that a husband can sacrificially die and atone for his wife. By way of application, he can protect her physically and even die for her if need be. He must care and protect her.

for his bride. A husband's love for his wife, according to Gouge (2013: 51) must be "[initiating], true, free, pure, exceeding, and constant."

2.3.1.5 This unconditional love is reiterated through Scripture

The urgency for a husband to love his wife is repeated throughout this section (5:28, 33). It is also commanded one time elsewhere in Scripture (Col. 3:19) and *implied* a number of times, but never commanded. Isaac loved his wife Rebekah (Ge 24:67). The slave loves his wife (Ex. 21:5). Samson's wife wept because he did not love her (Jdg. 14:16). We are to enjoy life with our wife whom we love (Ecc. 9:9). A man who divorces his unloved wife thoughtlessly is under God's judgment (Mat. 2:16).

2.3.1.6 This unconditional love was culturally unusual

A husband being required to love his wife is largely absent from Jewish and Greco-Roman literature (Merkle, 2016:184). It may have been assumed, but "ancient household codes never list love as a husband's duty; such codes told husbands only to make their wives submit" (Keener, 1993:551). Again, this will be discussed at length in chapter three.

2.3.2 A husband must love his wife sacrificially (v. 25b)

καὶ ἑαυτὸν παρέδωκεν ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς,

and gave himself up for her

kutani a tinyikete rifu hikwalaho ka yona,

The conjunction "and" (καὶ*, kutani*) is epexegetical, as it explains how, why, and to what extent Christ loved the church (Merkle, 2016:184).

It is important to highlight two aspects of Christ's sacrificial death. First, it was voluntary. It is difficult for one to imagine an act as loving when that person gave up their life *by coercion.* Jesus was not forced to give up his life. He gave it up willingly, which the reflexive pronoun ἑαυτοῦ makes clear ("gave himself up for…"). This pronoun is also emphatic in order to highlight the volitional aspect of Christ's death. Jesus "gave" of himself, which comes from παραδίδωμι, which the TEV translates as

“gave his life” for the church. This same idea is found in John 10:11, 15, and 17 and 15:13.

TS29 captures the reciprocal nature with the verb *tinyiketa,* while ML succeeds at showing Jesus “gave his life” (*Ú nyiketile vutomi bya yena*) rather than TS29 “giving himself to death” (*U tinyiketa rifu*).

Jesus gave himself up in ways beyond the cross. He gave himself up in the incarnation when he took on human nature and came to earth as a baby. He gave himself up in temptation in that he subjected himself to Satan’s enticement, yet without sin. He gave himself up in humiliation in that he was subject to hunger, thirst, and fatigue. He gave himself up in the crucifixion in that he died for sinners on the cross. He gave himself up in inhumation in that his body was laid to rest in a tomb.

Gouge (2016:54) gives ten evidences of Jesus’s willingness to die. (1) When Peter urged Jesus to spare himself, Jesus called him Satan (Mt. 16:22-23). (2) Jesus told Judas to go about betraying him “quickly” (Jn. 13:27). (3) Jesus prayed at a common spot so as to be found easily (Jn. 18:2). (4) When asked by his enemies if he was Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus said, “I am he” (Jn. 18:5). (5) When Jesus miraculously drove the soldiers back, he didn’t try to escape (Jn. 18:6). (6) Though he could have, Jesus did not call on twelve legions of angels to save him (Mt. 26:53). (7) Jesus would not come down from the cross when provoked to do so (Mt. 27:42). (8) Jesus could have stayed alive longer if he wished, as evidenced by his loud voice just before death (Lk. 23:46). (9) Jesus said no one takes his life from him. He lays it down himself (Jn. 10:18). (10) What is most acceptable before God is that one gives cheerfully (2Cor. 9:7).

Second, Christ’s death was sacrificial because it was costly. That which Jesus gave up willingly was his own life. This speaks of the sacrificial nature of Christ’s love. He “gave himself up” for the church.[34] This refers to penal substitution, the idea that “Jesus

[34] This is a key Particular Redemption text because it avers Jesus died for particular people, “the church” (v. 25; Ac. 20:28). Elsewhere Paul says Jesus died for “me” (Gal. 2:20), “his people” (Tit. 2:14), “us” (Rm. 5:8; Tit. 2:14) and “many” (Rm. 5:15, 19). Though elaboration is outside the confines of this paper, here are eleven additional but brief arguments for Limited Atonement. (1) OT examples. The blood of the Passover was not for outsiders (Ex. 12-13). The Day of Atonement was for God’s chosen people (Lv. 16). The Suffering Servant gave atonement for “many” (Isa. 53:11-12). (2) The Gospels. Jesus saves “his people” (Mt. 1:21) and was a ransom for “many” (Mt. 20:28). Jesus did not pray for

willingly went to his death, in the full knowledge of what would be entailed." (Jeffery, Ovey, & Sach, 2007:230).

2.3.3 A husband must love his wife purposefully (vv. 26-27)

26 ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι, **27** ἵνα παραστήσῃ αὐτὸς ἐαυτῷ ἔνδοξον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, μὴ ἔχουσαν σπίλον ἢ ῥυτίδα ἤ τι τῶν τοιούτων, ἀλλ' ἵνα ᾖ ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος.

[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.

[26] *Ú endlile leswi leswaku a ta yi hlawulekisa hi rito ra yena, a yi endla leyi tengeke hi ku yi khuvula hi mati. Ú naverile ku yimisa Kereke emahlweni ka yena, hi ku saseka ka yona hinkwako, yi nga ri na xivati kumbe minkonya, kumbe xin'wana lexi fanaka na swona, kambe yi ri leyi hlawulekeke, leyi nga riki na xisandzu.*

Christ didn't love the church because they are lovable but instead to make it that way (Westcott, 2009:85). Verse 26 begins with the first of three purpose clauses (v. 26a, 27a, 27b), each triggered by the conjunction ἵνα. Christ has chosen to love believers for a reason. The goal in mind is found in the following two verses. In this sense, then—as Thielman (2010:382) argues—vv. 26-27 really serves as a kind of digression. The

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the world (Jn. 17:9) and laid down his life for his sheep (Jn. 10:11). (3) The order of decrees. Election precedes redemption in the order of decrees (2Tm. 1:9). Electing grace restricts Christ's cross work. Jesus' death is the *means* to accomplish election. (4) Weakness of "universal texts". Most "all" or "world" texts either speak about the audience of the preaching (not the extent of the atonement) or teach "all without distinction" instead of "all without exception." (5) The Trinity. The Godhead cannot work at cross-purposes. The Father cannot extend the atonement to the elect only, but then the Son atone for all, and then the Spirit apply only to the elect. Salvation is one unbroken chain (Rm. 8:28-30). (6) Logic. There is a necessary cause-effect relationship within the atonement. Redemption accomplished does of necessity influence redemption applied. (7) The nature of God's will. When debating Limited Atonement, God's *secret* will (not revealed will) is under discussion. (8) Fate of the unevangelized. One can't consistently embrace limited revelation and deny limited atonement. Per PR, those for whom Christ died are guaranteed to hear and believe the gospel. (9) Double payment argument. Judas and Jezebel cannot suffer in hell for sins that were paid for (2Cor. 5:10). (10) The weakness of Hypothetical Universalism (Amyraldism). It places the decree of election *after* the decree of redemption instead of before. (11) Church history. PR reached confessional status in the Synod of Dordt. Neither Calvin nor Augustine define "whole world" in 1Jn. 2:2 as every single person.

reader already found an excursus in vv. 22-23 (though much shorter), when Paul departed from his call for women to submit to their husbands and detoured by elaborating on Christ as “Savior” of the body.

These three purpose clauses answer the question, why? Why did Christ give himself for the church? He gave because he wanted to sanctify her. Why did Christ sanctify the church? He sanctified her because he wants to present her to himself as glorious. And why does he want to present her to himself as glorious? He presents because he wants her to be holy.

2.3.3.1 Christ’s first purpose: sanctify

The first goal is that Jesus “might sanctify” (ἁγιάσῃ, *hlawulekisa*) believers and is found in v. 26. The pronoun αὐτὴν is fronted for emphasis, perhaps to show Christ’s intimate and initiating role with believers. ML captures this by fronting v. 26 with *Ú endlile leswi leswaku…* (“He did this so that…”) while TS29 simply says *leswaku a…* (“that he…”).

The word for sanctify is ἁγιάσῃ (VAAS3S) from ἁγιάζω, which doesn’t necessarily mean inherently holy but consecrated to God (Hoehner, 2002:751) and caused to be holy (Louw-Nida, 1996:744). The TEV says “dedicate” the church to God while the NIV says “make her holy.” The verb occurs 166 times in the canonical LXX, the majority of which translate the Hebrew verb שָׁדַק. Items “set apart” or “consecrated” include Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:23), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:5), Aaron (1Chr. 23:13), his garments (Ex. 29:21), and the Sheep Gate (Neh. 3:1) and the priests (Ezek. 48:11). The verb is used for God’s name (“hallowed by your name”, Mt. 6:9) to be revealed in holiness (Procksch, *TDNT 1,* 1964, 111). Most of the time, however, in the NT ἁγιάζω is used for the consecration of people (e.g. Jn. 17:17). It is only found here in Ephesians. TS29 uses *kwetsima,* which may capture the idea of “holy” for Bible readers but often means to glow or to shine. ML focuses more on the idea of consecration with the verb *hlawulekisa,* which means to hallow, perfect, choose or consecrate (Junod, 1974:129).

Though the verb form of ἁγιάζω is found only this once in Ephesians, the noun form ἅγιοι (“saints”) used to describe believers set apart for God is found all over Ephesians (1:1, 15, 18; 2:19, 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18).

This subjunctive verb is followed by the participle καθαρίζω, meaning to clean. This presupposes humanity’s sinfulness, as the righteous have not need for cleansing.

Hoehner (2002:752; cf. Larkin, 2009:135; Abbott, 1897:168) argues these words present two sides of the same coin, as ἁγιάζω shows the positive aspect (God has specially set the church apart for a purpose) and καθαρίζω shows the negative aspect (the means this was done was by the cleansing of their sins on the cross). καθαρίσας is an aorist, active, participle—thus showing (logically) that only after the church was cleansed of its sin was it then "sanctified" as God's people.

But *how* are believers "cleansed"? Paul uses the word λουτρόν**,** which is an adverbial participle of means (Thielman, 2010:383). It is only found twice in the canonical LXX (both times in Song of Solomon meaning "to wash") and one other time in the NT (Titus 3:5). A long history of commentators believes this refers to baptism. Louw-Nida (1996:538) defines the word as "a ceremonial washing referring to baptism" because "literal washing of an object by means of water would not be a means of ritual purification in the sense in which the church would be dedicated or consecrated to God." Both TS29 ("*loko a yi basisile hi ku yi khuvula hi mati…"*) and ML ("*a yi endla leyi tengeke hi ku yi khuvula hi mati*") define it literally as "baptism." Perhaps the translators of the Tsonga Bible believed the article preceding λουτρόν (*the* bath) proves this is speaking about the specific moment of baptism (Lincoln, 1990: 275; Best, 1998: 543).

A number of others see this as a spiritual cleansing (Thielman, 2010:384; O'Brien, 1999:422-24). Over several pages, Hoehner (2002:752-754) presents ten detailed arguments why "by the washing of water" does not mean baptism but instead is a metaphorical expression of redemption. A summary of his arguments is located below:

(1) "Baptism" reads the patristic view of baptism into the meaning of λουτρόν. (2) The context says nothing of baptism. (3) The biblical canon shows that baptism does not cleanse one from sin. (4) Spirit baptism is not in the context. (5) Titus 3:5 ("according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration")—the only other place in the NT where λουτρόν is found—indicates cleansing comes from regeneration. (6) In First Corinthians 6:11, "washing" (though ἀπολούω not λουτρόν) is followed by believers that are sanctified and justified by Christ. (7) "Washing" is a natural, picturesque way the cross expresses the cleansing of sin. (8) There is significant difference between the kind of washing meant by λουτρόν, and baptism. Baptism is just a brief dip or sprinkle, while λουτρόν reflects a kind of bathing. (9) The difference in participants. Baptism is always administered individually in Scripture, though this passage is

speaking about the body of believers. (10) The connection to the prenuptial bath in Jewish marital customs and God's marriage to Israel (Ezek. 16:4-14). In the end, Hoehner's arguments are convincing.

As it relates to marriage, Keener (1993:552) is correct that this "washing" most likely alludes figuratively to the bride's prenuptial washing, after which she was perfumed, anointed and dressed in wedding clothes. In fact in Judaism the betrothal ceremony came to be called "the sanctification of the bride" whereby she was set apart for her husband.

The last prepositional phrase of v. 26 is "with the word."[35] The word ῥῆμα is used far and wide throughout Scripture, including sixty-eight times in the NT but only eight times in Paul. With the exception of 2 Corinthians 13:1, each usage refers to the word of God. Again, as in the previous phrase, most commentators see this as referring to the word at one's baptism—either as a confession of faith (Bruce, 1984: 116) or the baptismal formula (Abbott, 1897: 169) What is more probable is that this "word" refers to the gospel as found in the Scriptures. It is the "means" (Larkin, 2009: 135) by which this cleansing comes. Paul often uses ῥῆμα this way: "the *word* of faith" (Rm. 10:8), "hearing through the *word* of Christ" (Rm. 10:17). "The sword of the Spirit, which is the *word* of God" (Eph. 6:17). Simon Peter referred to the "*words* of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68). Never is it used in the NT as a baptismal testimony or oath.

Some believe ῥῆμα should be connected to the main verb "sanctify" (e.g., Bratcher and Nida, 1993:143). This interpretation is absent in TS29 but used in ML, where ῥῆμα is bumped from the end of the Greek sentence and place toward the front: "*a ta yi hlawulekisa hi rito ra yena*." Because of the distance between the main verb and ῥῆμα, however, this seems unlikely (Hoehner, 2002:756; Larkin, 2009:135). In sum, "Christ died, then, to sanctify the church by cleansing it with a water bath in the gospel" (Thielman, 2010:385).

[35] Bratcher and Nida 1993: 142) says there is no way decisively to determine the correct interpretation of "with the word" but give four views along with the the interpretation of various commentators. "(1) The proclamation of the gospel; (2) the words which a Jewish bridegroom addressed to the bride at the wedding*; (3) the baptismal formula spoken by the minister at baptism; (4) the confession of faith spoken by the person receiving Christian baptism."

2.3.3.2 Christ's second purpose: glorify

The second goal of Christ's love for believers through the cross is that he presents believers to himself as glorious, "in splendor", or "in glory" (NASB). The second ἵνα clause beginning in v. 27 triggers this to show *purpose* (Larkin, 2009:135; Hoehner, 2002:757; Bratcher and Nida, 1993:143; contra Best, 1998:544). Christ redeemed the church (1) in order to sanctify her and now, (2) in order to present her as a glorious church.

Here, παρίστημι carries the idea of a father presenting a bride, similar to what Paul does for the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:2. Here, it is Christ presenting the church to himself "as a glorious church" (NLT). Jesus is both the best man/father and the groom himself (Lincoln, 1990:377). God presented Eve to Adam (Gn. 2:22). Esther was presented to the king (Esth. 2:13). One day Christ will present the church to himself.

The word "glorious" or "splendor" has been used to describe magnificent clothing (Lk. 7:25) and Jesus' glorious works (Lk. 13:17). The idea is of a young bride presented in absolute stunning beauty. This probably refers to a stage in a Jewish wedding when the bride is removed from her father's house and taken to the groom's house where she is introduced in her glory (Keener, 1993:552). Here, ἔνδοξος refers to the glorious church. The purpose is that Jesus prepares, presents and receives the church "in all her glory" (NASB), similar to the way God clothed Israel luxuriously in Ezekiel 16:10-14. However, Thielman (2010:386) notes how the Ezekiel passage actually presents in reverse order what Jesus does in Ephesians. In the former, the illustration moves from good to bad. God had taken Israel and bathed, cleansed and anointed her—only for this rebellious nation to turn back into spiritual prostitution. In the latter, the story moves from bad to good. Christ (in place of God the Father) takes a previously stained and sinful people and—through the cleansing work on the cross—has transformed them into his saints.

This is the picture of a bride being fantastically prepared for a wedding. ML is certainly stronger with "*hi ku saseka ka yona hinkwako"* than TS29's rendering, *…Kereke leyo kwetsima.*

Paul continues. What does Christ's death on the cross do? It glorifies. First, Paul states this negatively: believers in heaven will have no more ugliness upon their souls. The cross cleanses any blemish, any imperfection, any "spot or wrinkle." These are two rare words, with "spot" or stain (σπίλος) occurring only here and in 2 Peter 2:13 (false teachers are "blots") and "wrinkle" (ῥυτίς) as hapax in the NT and absent from the LXX as well. Thus, it is difficult to interpret the exact meaning. "Wrinkle" may refer to the wrinkle in the skin of the elderly, its absence thus showing the vibrancy of the church.[36] Unlike a man with a stained garment, or pock-faced image, or wrinkled skin or scarred skin, the church will be in heaven free of any moral defilement. The church will be perfect. The old man is totally gone and the Savior has washed all tears from the eyes of believers (Rv. 7:17). TS29 and ML both refer to "*xivati ni mikonya".* As a catchall, Paul adds, "or any such thing." Simply put, "the church is like a person who has no spot or wrinkle or anything else wrong" (Bratcher and Nida, 1992:144).

2.3.3.3 Christ's third purpose: purify

The third and final ἵνα conjunction comes at the end of v. 27: "That she might be holy and without blemish." The previous phrase gave the negative side of her gloriousness (the church is *without* "spot or wrinkle"). This phrase gives the positive side: "holy and blameless" (NASB). The wordplay with "holy" (ἁγία) reminds the reader of Christ's first purpose in v. 26 to "sanctify" (ἁγιάζω). Believers will be like "just men made perfect" (Hb. 12:23). "Adam in his innocence was not more pure than the saints shall be in heaven. They shall far surpass Adam, both in the measure, and in the stability and perpetuity of purity" (Gouge, 2013: 88).

The final question is this: when do the actions of vv. 26-27 take place? Though some believe this refers to the present time (Best, 1998:545; Lincoln, 1990:377; Thielman, 2010:393), this is unlikely since the church is not holy and without blame today. Everything is open and naked before the all-seeing God (Hb. 4:13). For Christians to deny their present sin would be self-deceit (1Jn. 1:8). Therefore, it must be speaking

[36] The idea of not wanting wrinkles is understood among the Tsongas. Referring to Shaka Zulu, Meredith (2014: 242) writes: "He felt a constant need to demonstrate his power by ordering executions. He was also concerned to conceal any sign of age and to cultivate a youthful, vigorous appearance. He instructed one of the Port Natal traders to obtain jars of Rowland's Macassar Oil which he had been told had the effect of turning grey hair black. A king, he explained, 'must neither have wrinkles, nor grey hairs, as they are distinguishing marks of disqualification for becoming a monarch of warlike people."

of the future (Barth, 1974:628; 669; Bruce, 1984:389; Hoehner, 2002:761). This matches with other Scriptures pointing to the future glory of Christ's bride. Rev. 19:7-8, "For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure." This shows that glorification follows justification and sanctification (Rm. 8:30). Verse 26 speaks of justification and verse 27 speaks of glorification, not sanctification.

Still, though final sanctification (glorification) is future, here on earth believers are in the process of becoming more like Christ. The more we become like Jesus on earth, the more we will be like the glorified believers in heaven.

2.3.4 A husband must love his wife affectionately (vv. 28-30)

28 οὕτως ὀφείλουσιν [καὶ] οἱ ἄνδρες ἀγαπᾶν τὰς ἑαυτῶν γυναῖκας ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα. ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἑαυτὸν ἀγαπᾷ. **29** Οὐδεὶς γάρ ποτε τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σάρκα ἐμίσησεν ἀλλὰ ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει αὐτήν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, **30** ὅτι μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.

[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.

[28] *Hi mukhuva wolowo, vavanuna na vona va fanele ku rhandza vasati va vona, hilaha va rhandzaka miri wa vona hakona. Loyi a rhandzaka nsati wa yena, wa tirhandza, hikuva a ku si tshama ku va ni munhu la vengaka nyama ya yena, kambe wa yi fihluta, wa yi kufumeta, tanihi leswi Kriste na yena a endlelaka Kereke, hikuva hina hi swirho swa miri wa yena. Matsalwa ma vula sweswo, ma ri:*

It was shown that the previous two verses were a kind of detour from main verb "love" (ἀγαπᾶτε) in v. 25a whereby Paul elaborated upon the kind of affection Christ has for the church, though of course there are a litany of applications in that section for husband and wife. While that theologically rich, two-verse diversion was abounding in Christology, it must be remembered that it was only meant to illustrate how husbands are to love their wives. Because of the sizable distance between vv. 25 and 28, Paul begins v. 28 with "in the same way" (οὕτως, *Hi mukhuva wolowo*). While some think

this urges the reader to look *ahead,* in fact, the apostle is pointing his audience back to the previous section.

This is the second of four times in this section Paul speaks of husbands loving their wives (v. 25, v. 28 [twice], v. 33). However, v. 28 is slightly different than v. 25 because Paul inserts the imperative "should" or "ought to" (ὀφείλουσιν, *fanele*). Husbands are therefore under unconditional obligation to love their wives regardless how submissive they may or may not be. The word speaks of "owing" something to others in Romans 13:8.

Another detail in v. 28 is the command for husband to love their "own" wives (NASB). This reflexive pronoun (ἑαυτῶν) points to the exclusive nature of marriage and corresponds to "own" (ἰδίοις) husbands in v.22 (Thielman, 2010:387). Most English translations miss this nuance. It is almost impossible to translate in Tsonga.

This next phrase highlights the general argument and proposition in vv. 28 and following: a man has much natural affection for himself. This latter assertion Paul will put forward in v. 28. Paul will then *prove* this point in v. 29 in two ways. First, he will show negatively that "no one ever hated his own flesh" (v. 29a). Second, he will show this positively because he "nourishes and cherishes" his own body (v. 29b).

First, Paul shows that man has a natural affection for himself. There is considerable disagreement about the meaning of the phrase "as their own bodies" (ὡς τὰ ἑαυτῶν σώματα, *hilaha va rhandzaka miri wa vona hakona*). Confusion does not revolve around the meaning of "body" (σώματα, *miri*), for though it is always used elsewhere in Ephesians metaphorically (e.g., "the body of Christ", 4:12), v. 28 clearly refers to the literal, physical body. The controversy centers on the meaning of the conjunction ὡς. Is Paul saying a husband it to love his wife because she *is* himself or is he to love his wife in the same way he loves his own body?

Some commentators believe it should be translated "as being" or, better, "since" (Barth, 1974:630; Thielman, 2010:387). Husbands are to love their wives *since* they are their own bodies anyways*.* The case for this view comes from the fact that a husband and wife are one flesh (v. 31; Gn. 3:23; Mt. 19:5-6). Primarily, however, it is rejection of the kind of selfish love the other view appears to offer. But if bodies=wives,

how can it be said no one ever hated his flesh (wife) in v. 29. Bratcher and Nida (1993:145) say this is "obviously untrue."

Others, however, interpret ὡς with the comparative "as" found in the majority of translations (Lincoln: 1990:378; Larkin, 2009:137; Merkle, 2016:187). They are to love their wives in a way similar to the way they love their own bodies. Barth (1974:629-630) distains this view, referring to this kind of self-love as "egotism" and "selfishness" and calls it "ambiguous, inaccurate, and contrary to the intent of the context". Is Barth's argument fair?

Here are five arguments to show not only that natural self-love is good but is the tool Paul uses to encourage husbands to love their wives. First, natural self-love is assumed, not commanded, in v. 28. Verse 29 says bluntly: "For no one ever hated his own flesh."[37] The conjunction "for" (γάρ, *hikuva*) shows this is a continued explanation from the previous verse. Natural self-love and concern should be obvious and self-evident to the reader. It acknowledges that just as it is natural for humans to nurture and protect self, so should it be natural for a husband to look out for the care and protection of his wife. The final phrase ("he who loves his wife loves himself") is similar to the preceding but not identical and probably highlights the personal benefits that come when he loves his wife who *is* himself.[38]

Second, natural self-love is assumed throughout Scripture. This is true with Jesus, when he said the second greatest commandment was to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt. 22:39). He was quoting Leviticus 19:18. Barth (1974:633) gives Mt. 10:39 ("Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it") as an example of why natural self-love should not motivate a husband's love for his wife. But in fact, there *is* a kind of self-interest in this verse. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." There is a *reward* for

[37] Though there is a transition from "body" (σώματα, *miri*) to "flesh" (σάρκα, *nyama*) in v. 29, most commentators agree these terms are used interchangeably (Merkle: 187) as is the case in 1 Corinthians 6:16 ("Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body [σῶμα] with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh [σάρξ].'") The change perhaps anticipates "one flesh" in v. 31.

[38] Barth (1974:630) makes an interesting connection here to Job 2:5-9. He believes that when Satan said to God, "Stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh…", he was actually speaking of Job's wife. Per Genesis 2, the wife is the bone and flesh of the husband. Just a few verses later, Satan was apparently given "permission to turn [Job's] wife against him."

this person: eternal life. Many have suffered (2Cor. 11:27) and gone without (1Cor. 9:27) so that they may obtain a greater prize. Jesus was happy to refresh himself with sleep (Mt. 8:24), food (Lk. 14:1) and rest (Jn. 4:6). It is not wrong but, instead, natural to reward self with the fruit of one's labor (Eccl. 2:24; 3:13).

Third, the absence of self-love is rebuked in Scripture. Only a madman has no concern for himself. The man in Gadarene that cut himself with stones (Mk. 5:5) brings pity and even scorn, not praise. He had no interest in self. The prophets of Baal that cut themselves with knives (1 Kings 18:28) and the monastics that flog their backs are acting in ignorance.

Fourth, evil self-love is condemned in Scripture. Natural self-love can be evil and thus condemned in Scripture if it attaches itself to sinful actions or lusts or has no concern for holiness or others. The Bible rebukes "lovers of self" (2Tm. 3:2), those that "seek their own interests" (Phil. 2:21) and those that "seek their own good" (1Cor. 10:24).

Fifth, natural self-love is illustrated in v. 29. *How* does a man show self-love? And by application, what are some practical ways a man is to love his wife? "But" (ἀλλὰ, *kambe*) shows contrast. It takes the reader from the negative ("no one ever hated his own flesh") to the positive. First, he "nourishes" (ἐκτρέφει, *fihluta*). In the LXX the word is used for training children (2Kgs 10:6) and similarly in the NT in its only other usage (Eph. 6:4: "Fathers, do not provoke your children…but *bring them up…*). The NIV and TEV translate the word as "feed" but may be limit it too much to the physical realm (Hoehner, 2002:767).[39] The second word, "cherishes" (θάλπει, *kufumeta*) means to warm or cherish. It is found one other time in 1Thess. 2:7, where Paul describes himself as a gentle, nursing mother *taking care of* his children. Thielman (2010:388) says, "These two terms were commonly used to describe the physical nurture and emotional warmth that one person gives to another."

This is not selfish, as true love is selfless (1Cor. 13:5). Rather it speaks to the oneness of the marriage union. Just as the elect are members of Christ's body (Eph. 5:30), so is the husband and wife one flesh.

[39] Gouge says the two verbs carry the idea to feed and to clothe and connects it to 1 Tm. 6:8. For Paul, food and clothing is shorthand for everything we need. "If we have food and clothing, with these we will be content." Thus, a husband is to provide for his wife's needs.

Sixth, Christ cares for the body ("the church") in the same way a person would care for his own body (vv. 29c-30).[40] "Just as" (καθὼς καὶ, *tani hi leswi/hi laha*) continues the comparison from the previous thought. Just as it is natural for many to care for his own body, so it is nature for Christ to love and nurture "members of his body" (μέλη ἐσμὲν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, *hina hi swirho swa miri wa yena*).[41] "Members of his body" here resembles "members of one another" in Eph 4:25. How? Hoehner (2002:768) writes: "He redeemed it (1:7-12; 2:1-10), sealed it (1:13-14), empowered it (1:19-23), brought it into one body (2:16), filled it with God's fullness (3:19), gifted it (4:7-16), and loved and sanctified it (5:25-26). Even with all its imperfections Christ nurtures and takes tender care of his body, the church.'[42]

[40] The Roman Catholic Church is especially deceptive with their nuns when it comes to the idea that believers are the bride of Christ. "The church deceives the nun with the fiction that she is the 'bride of Christ,' or 'wife of Christ.' She is even given a 'wedding' ring, which she wears as a symbol of her union with Christ" (Boettner, 1962: 316-317).

[42] There is a shorter and longer reading for v. 30. Almost all modern English translations follow the shorter reading, as does the Greek NA27. Most Western witnesses, as well as the majority of Byzantine mss and a few others (e.g. KJV) add the following words to the end of the verse: ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ ("of his flesh, and of his bone"). It should not be surprising that TS27 also has the longer reading: *leswi hi nga nyama ya yena, ni marhambu ya yena.*" ML has the shorter reading, though it includes an introductory formula (*Matsalwa ma vula sweswo, ma ri*).
The Notes for the New English Translation says the Alexandrian text is solidly behind the shorter reading (□[46] א* A B 048 33 81 1739* 1881 *pc*). "As is often the case with OT quotations, the scribal clarification missed the point the author was making; the shorter reading stands as original." Metzger (1995:541) says: "Although it is possible that the shorter text, which is supported by early and good witnesses (including □[46] א* A B 33 81 1739* cop[sa, bo]), may have arisen by accidental omission occasioned by homoeoteleuton (αὐτοῦ … αὐτοῦ), it is more probable that the longer readings reflect various scribal expansions derived from Gn 2:23 (where, however, the sequence is "bone … flesh"), anticipatory to the quotation of Gn 2:24 in ver. 31". Although Barth (1974:724) considers the longer reading a gloss added by a hand other than Paul's, he earlier avers that the "flesh and bones" allusion from Ge 2:23 in v. 30 has "enormous potential relevance." Barth (1974:720) then surely overstates the case by saying: "The allusion to Gen 2:23 gives the flux of thought and development in 5:21-33 an unexpected twist which has grave consequences for the interpretation of the whole passage, perhaps even the whole epistle itself."

2.3.5 A husband must love his wife completely (vv. 31-32)

ἀντὶ τούτου καταλείψει ἄνθρωπος [τὸν] πατέρα καὶ [τὴν] μητέρα καὶ προσκολληθήσεται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν. **32** τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο μέγα ἐστίν· ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω εἰς Χριστὸν καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.

"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.

"Hikokwalaho, wanuna ú ta sukela tata wa yena ni mana wa yena, a namarhela nsati wa yena, kutani lavambirhi va ta va nyama yin'we ntsena." Xihundla lexi i xikulu, kambe ndzi vulavurisa sweswo hi ku fananisa Kriste ni Kereke.

Man is the head and woman is the crown upon that head (Pr. 12:4). Paul has thus far given four ways a husband is to love his wife. He is going to give one more manner in which a husband can do this, a way which is really a reiteration of what he has said in vv. 28-30: he is to love her intimately as one flesh.

Paul is going to do in v. 31 exactly what Moses did in Ge 2:24. Moses clinched his argument from v. 23 (i.e. woman comes from man and is bone of his bones) by stating their one-flesh union in v. 24. Likewise, Paul clinches his argument from vv. 28-30 (i.e. man is to love his wife as he loves his own body and because she *is* his own body) by stating their one-flesh union in v. 31.

In v. 31 Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, though somewhat surprisingly he uses no introductory formula such as "For the Scriptures says…" Such an opening was not needed, however, since Genesis 2:24 was such a well-known verse. Moreover, it is quoted three times elsewhere in the NT (Mt. 19:5-6; Mk. 10:7-8 and 1Cor. 6:16).

Paul is quoting Genesis 2:24 almost exactly from the LXX, with two slight differences. First, the two possessive pronouns ("his") are removed after "mother" and "father." Second, "therefore" (*Hikwalaho-ke*), is translated *ἀντὶ τούτου* instead of ἕνεκεν τούτου. Lincoln (1990:380) calls these changes "insignificant." Merkle (2016:188) calls them "minor."

There is some disagreement not only about the question of how to translate *ἀντὶ τούτου* but also about to which previous verse it points. Regarding the former question,

there are a host of various translations: “For this reason” (NASB, NET, NIV), “for this cause” (KJV), and “therefore” (ESV). Regarding the latter, some say it points back to vv. 28-30 (Bruce, 1984:292-293; Hoehner, 2002:771). Others say it points to v. 30 only (Barth, 1974:238ff; Lincoln, 1990:380; Merkle, 2016:188). Thielman (2010:388), for example, agrees that while these differences do not change the meaning, Paul’s slight difference in translating “therefore” is “important” because he believes Paul is purposefully making a forceful argument to connect v. 31 to the v. 30.

In other words, is v. 31 pointing back to the unity of the husband and wife or to the unity of Christ and the church? Most think it is both, with a greater emphasis on the latter. Merkle (2016:189) writes: “The quotation applies to the relationship between Christ and the church *and* the relationship between a husband and his wife.” As Gouge would put it, there is a literal and a mystical application.

2.3.5.1 The definition of marriage

There are three verbs in v. 31. The first verb speaks of the exclusivity of marriage. The verb “leave” (καταλείψει, *sukela*) is from the Greek root καταλείπω. This verb is found twenty-four times in the NT. DBL Greek lists six meanings for this word: (1) to leave (i.e. depart), (2) to leave behind (i.e. to abandon), (3) to be left (i.e. to remain), (4) to neglect (e.g. when the apostles where neglecting preaching, Ac 6:2), (5) no longer relating to (i.e. to avoid association), (6) to leave someone without help. DBL puts Eph 5:31 in the fifth category, that is, causing a particular relationship to cease.

Louw-Nida (1996:450) says: “In rendering Eph 5:31 it is important to avoid an expression which will suggest abandoning or deserting. It is the limitation of a particular relationship which is involved”. The word is found 220 times in the canonical LXX, including Ruth 1:16 where Ruth urges her mother-in-law: “Do not urge me to *leave* you….” Per DBL, the Hebrew verb עָזַב in Gn 2:24 is a forceful term meaning to abandon, leave behind or forsake, often pointing to Israel’s obligation to abandon false idols.[43] It is also found three other times in Paul, including 1 Th 3:1 where it means to be left behind. In the context, it is the “husband” that is to do the leaving and it is his

[43] Passages include Dt 28:20 (“The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do…because you have forsaken me), Jdg 10:13 (“Yet you have forsaken me and served other gods”), 2Ch 34:25 (“Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods”), Isa 1:4 (“They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged”).

parents to whom he is to leave so that he might start a new relationship. Frame (2008:748) says to "leave" is to begin a new household, with its own authority structure whereby honoring the spouse takes precedence over honoring the parents. In reference to Gn 2:24 Davidson (2007:43) says "leave" indicates "the necessity of absolute freedom from outside interferences in the sexual relationship."

What is peculiar is that it is the *man* that is leaving mother and father, though in most societies the opposite is true. This revolutionary statement has caused some, like Smith (1903:82-87), to argue that "leaving" in Ge 2:24 (and by extension Eph 5:31) is pointing to a primitive matriarchy.[44] The man "leaves" the authority of his parents to join the authority of his wife. But this form of matriarchy is never found in the Old Testament. In fact, Ge 3:16 directly contradicts it. "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." Others believe this leaving refers to *erēbu*[45] marriage (Gordon, 1981:159). Here, the husband enters the father-in-law's house as a kind of adopted son. Apparent examples of this are Jacob (Ge 29), Moses (Ex 2-3) and Samson (Jdg 14).

This view is unlikely, however, not only because this kind of marriage would be rare in Scripture, but the examples given upon closer examination are exceptions to the rule. Jacob was on the run (Ge 28:1-5), as was Moses (Ex 2:15), so it makes sense they would initially live with their in-laws. In time, they both made their own homes outside the house of their father-in-law. Samson's wife was eventually given away by the father-in-law due to his temporary absence (Jdg 15:2). In effect, "both [husband and wife] are to leave—to cut loose from the ties that would encroach upon the independence and freedom of the relationship (Davidson, 2007:44).

To "leave" does not primarily refer to a literal change of spacial location (though it usually includes this) but instead to a "radical change" of one's "loyalty" (Hugenberger, 1994:159). In requires not only an outward break but an inward, psychological departure, which—as Allender and Longman aver (1995:218)—includes "starting a

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[44] Though they ultimately fail to prove their hypothesis, some other works arguing for matriarchal social structure include: Jacques B. Doukhan, "Women Priests in Israel: A Case for Their Absence," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, (edited by Nancy Vyhmeister; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 32.

[45] *Erēbu* is the Akkadian word "to enter" and thus the picture of the husband "entering" into the house of his father-in-law.

whole new relationship in which the core loyalty is not the parents' priorities, traditions, or influence but to an entirely new family that must set its own course, form, and purpose." In Ge 2:24, the Targum Onkelos of the Pentateuch refers to a man leaving his father and mother's bedroom or sleeping abode (בֵּית מִשְׁכְּבֵי) perhaps to show that it is still possible to obey this verse yet still "leave" within marriage according to Ge 2:24. There are many places in Scripture where "leave" is used figuratively (Ge 24:27; Dt 31:8, 16, 17; Jos 1:5) and even in covenant contexts (Dt 29:24).

The second verb points to the permanence of marriage. "Hold fast" or "cleave" (προσκολληθήσεται, *namarhela*) carries the meaning of a firm fastening, not like hammering a nail but instead to glue, cement, or weld. It can carry the idea of sexual intercourse[46] (as it does in 1Co 6:16, "*joined* to a prostitute") but goes beyond that to mean loyalty, according to Günther and Krienke in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1978:253).

In Gn 2:24 the Hebrew word **וְדָבַק** means to cling. It is sometimes used in the OT[47] "as a technical covenant term for the permanent bond of Israel to the Lord" (Davidson, 2007:45). The word is translated in non-sexual ways such as "Ruth *clung to her"* mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 1:14) and aimed to "*keep close"* by the young men (Ru 2:21). The men of Judah followed after David heartily (2Sa 20:2) Christians are to "*hold fast* to that which is good" (Ro 12:9). The actor is the husband and the object is the wife.

The third verb and phrase stresses the intimacy of marriage. This centers on the closeness and affinity of the sexual union[48], which is sexual intercourse: "the two shall become one flesh" (*ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν*, *lavambirhi va ta va nyama yin'we ntsena*). This seems to be the sign of the marriage covenant. Lawrence (2005:137-138) writes: "Now if marriage is a covenant, then that covenant must have a sign, something that makes visible the invisible reality of this one-flesh union…. The sign of that unique covenant relationship is the physical act of becoming one flesh in sexual

[46] So Kidner: "Note the order: 'eaving' before 'cleaving'; marriage, nothing less before intercourse" (1967:66. n.1).

[47] Take note e.g. of several passages such as Dt 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; Jos 22:5; 23:8; 2Sa 20:3; 2Ki 18:6.

[48] See for example, Waye J.H. Stuhlmiller, "'One Flesh' in the Old and New Testaments," *Consensus* 5 (1979).

intercourse." According to Wenham (2006:20), it describes the relationship between close relatives (cf. Ge 29:14), which endures whatever changes occur to the related individuals.

Hoehner (2002:774) writes: "This verse, both in the present context and in the context of Ge 2:24, is speaking of the union between husband and wife and not Christ and the church. Second, in this text the subject is the responsibility of the husbands Christ and the church are used only for the purpose of illustration." Though the husband and wife are one flesh, this union does not resemble something like concrete, for example, where the separate parts of sand and cement are no longer distinguishable after being mixed together. The husband and wife are still distinct persons with separate features.

"One flesh" does not refer only to the sexual act, for this one flesh union is a continuous and lifelong reality (Mt 19:5-6). Instead, it appears likely that, according to Hugenberger (1994:163), "become one flesh" refers to "the familial bondedness of marriage which finds its quintessential expression in sexual union". Davidson (2007:47) believes it shows a cohesion and closeness in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a congruence and union with each other in everything. It is the most sincere and deepest kind of union and relationship that yields complete transparency between marriage partners.

2.3.5.2 The "mystery" in v. 32

Paul tells us that "this" verse just explained (v. 31) is a great mystery (v. 32). The word "mystery" (μυστήριον, *xihundla*) refers to the once hidden plan of God that is now revealed in Christ. *Xihundla* in Tsonga is a secret. Indeed, a mystery is something that *was not known* and *cannot be known* except by special revelation. It is a truth that cannot be unraveled by mere human ingenuity or wisdom. This is the same definition of μυστήριον as found in Ephesians 1:9, 3:3, 4, 9 and 6:19 where believing Jews and Gentiles have been revealed as fellow heirs that dwell in the same body of Christ. It is also the same definition μυστήριον in Romans 11:25, where Israel is said to be hardened until the filling of the Gentiles.

2.3.5.3 μυστήριον as sacrament in the Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church follows the Latin Vulgate that translates μυστήριον as *sacramentum.* Because they take Eph 5:32 to say "this is a great sacrament", they

have for centuries taught that marriage is one of the seven sacraments of the Church of Rome. Since marriage is a sacrament and only the church can administer sacraments, then all marriages outside of the Catholic Church (including civil marriages) are considered unlawful, non-existent, and abominable.[49]

For Catholics, then, marriage as sacrament gives actual validity to a union between a man and a woman as well as conveying grace. But this cannot be, as the latter half of v. 32 clearly says the mystery is referring to Christ and the church. Calvin (1997:646) says no man ever saw marriage to be a sacrament until the time of Gregory. While it is a good and holy ordinance (as is shaving, shoemaking and architecture), Calvin is emphatic that marriage is not a sacrament.[50] Moreover, if it was, then would it not be absurd for the Catholic Church to bar their priests from partaking of a sacrament?

The mystery, therefore, *does* point back to the marriage in v. 31 but only to show that it is a picture of Christ and the church. Merkle (2016:190) writes: "Just as the first Adam was joined to his wife and they became one flesh, so also the last Adam is joined to his bride so that they are one with him." Knight (1991:176) agrees: "Paul saw that when God designed the original marriage He already had Christ and the church in mind. This is one of God's great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people forever "

[49] Boettner (1962: 334) says, "Since at the time of the Council of Trent the Roman Church did not acknowledge the validity of Protestant marriage, the Council simply declared that any marriage not performed by a priest was null and void". Boettner (1962:298-299) earlier in his chapter on celibacy points to the conflicting logic the Church of Rome has regarding marriage as sacrament. "By a strange inconsistency the Church of Rome holds that marriage is a sacrament, that is, something regarded as in a special sense sacred or holy, yet she denies marriage to her priests, monks, and nuns, who supposedly are the most holy people. She holds that celibacy is a state superior to marriage, and the Council of Trent even pronounced an anathema against all who teach that the married state is preferable to that of virginity or celibacy. Thus on the one hand she exalts marriage, while on the other she degrades it."

[50] Calvin writes (1997:4:647) in his *Institutes:* "For in a sacrament, the thing required is not only that it be a work of God, but that it be an external ceremony appointed by God to confirm a promise. That there is nothing of the kind in marriage, even children can judge."

2.3.5.4 Parallels between the divine covenant and marriage covenant

When a wife is unfaithful to her husband, it is adultery. When the people of God are unfaithful to their Maker, it is spiritual adultery. Thus, idolatrous Israel is called the unfaithful wife of God (Eze 16; 23). Jer 3:6-9 says:

> *6 The Lord said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? 7 And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. 9 Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.*

The same heart of treason that makes spouses leave each other is the same heart that forsakes the true God. Besides this passage in Ephesians 5, there are a number of passages in Scripture that make a link between the covenant of God and his people and the covenant of a man and his wife. That is, marriage is often connected to redemption.

> *For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you. (Isa 62:5)*

> *16 "And in that day, declares the Lord, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' 17 For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. 18 And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. 19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord. (Hos 2:16-20)*

> *For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. (2Co 11:2)*

2.3.6 Closing in verse 33

Biblical authors often close a book or section with a summary. Paul gives a synopsis of 5:21-32 here in v. 33 by reiterating the wife's duty (respect the husband) and the husband's duty (love the wife). "Love" (ἀγαπάω) is the only one imperative verb in this section (5:21-33). It is found in v. 33 and v. 25.

It is interesting that Paul uses the imperative to "obey" (ὑπακούετε, *yingisani*) in the very next verse (6:1) when speaking to children regarding their parents but does not use this verb or the imperative form when speaking of the submission a wife must show her husband. He uses the indicative form of ὑποτάσσω in v. 24, then the subjective verb "respect" (φοβῆται, *xichavo*) in v. 33.

Although Paul uses this verb in Col 3:22 in reference to "fearing the Lord", almost all Bible versions translate the verb here as "reverence" (KJV) or "respect" (ESV, NASB, NRSV, NET, NIV). Larkin (2009:143) catches the balance between the fear and respect a wife should show her husband, saying it refers "to a profound measure of respect, with special reference to a fear of offending."

2.4 Impact: conclusion

Feminism, especially feminist theology, has forced the church to think much more carefully about the roles within marriage and the definition of marriage itself. Had Arius, for example, never attacked the deity of Christ, the church would have far fewer tomes defending the orthodox view of the Trinity. While there are many sources defending evangelical feminism in Eph 5, there are even more standing firm of the hierarchical roles of spouses in vv. 21-33.

This chapter began by giving nine reasons that while v. 21 is a bridge to the following passage, it is more closely attached to the previous context. Verses 22-24 discuss the duties of the wife. She is to "submit" (ὑποτάσσω) which refers to a properly ordered submission and means to place oneself under the authority of another. Wives are to do this out of fear of Christ. Contrary to some beliefs, this verse is actually quite liberating to women because it refers only to a wife's submission to her husband and not a general womanly submission to every man.

The motivation for this submission is that it is “to the Lord” (v. 22). The reason she is to do this is found in the preposition “for” (v. 23). The husband is the head, the one with supreme authority in the relationship. Five reasons were given for this. Verse 24 explains *how* she is to submit to her husband. She is to submit as the church submits to Christ. Ten contextual examples of how the church does this were given from earlier in Ephesians. She is to do this in everything, provided it does not contradict Scripture.

Vv. 25-32 details the duties of the husband. First, six observations were given about the unconditional way a husband is to love his wife (v. 25a). He must also love her sacrificially (v. 25b). This is a love that is voluntary and costly. Third, he is to love her purposefully, namely with the goal to sanctify, glorify and purify (vv. 26-27). Fourth, the husband is to love his wife affectionately (vv. 28-30). Six arguments were given for the natural self-love interpretation. Finally, he is to love his wife completely (vv. 31-32). He clinches this argument with the one-flesh union. The three verbs in v. 31 define marriage.

This chapter has shown that men and women are equal in value but most certainly not equal in role. To argue the latter is to cheapen the duties of both husband and wife. De Tocqueville (2003:211) wrote the following several centuries ago: “Attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women.”

Chapter 3
Context: Marriage in Paul's Tri-Cultural Setting

Like most of Paul's epistles, Eph is an occasional letter. It is written with specific events or occasions in mind.[51] It was not penned in a vacuum but directed to meet certain immediate, pressing needs of the church in Ephesus. Eph, therefore, is an immensely practical letter because it deals with real life problems, in real life cultures, within the real world, with a real local church, with real sinners converted to Christianity.

If *sola Scriptura* is true (the Bible is the Christian's sole standard for faith and practice) and consistent (Scripture agrees with Scripture)[52] and if Paul teaches truth about marriage in Eph 5 that is contrary to the cultural norms of his day, then it can and must be concluded that truths about marriage in Eph 5 that are contrary to our *modern* day must be embraced in exclusion to popular thought. That is, if Paul's view of marriage in Eph 5 is counter-cultural, then in the spirit of Ac 5:29, Christians also must be willing to act counter to their own culture when it comes to biblical norms on marriage.[53] The goal of this chapter is to show that the simple argument of "this is how my culture does it" may not be sufficient for an action to be right and pleasing to God.

The various facets of marriage and home life in the culture of Paul's day will be discussed at length below, but an initial example of Paul's counter-culture ethos can

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[51] First Corinthians, for example, is also an occasional letter. Garland (2003:19) says of it: "It serves a particular purpose in a particular moment in time when a particular decision had to be made."

[52] This point is particularly important to make here because of the literature that suggests Paul's household code in Eph 5 contradicts other portions of Scripture, such as Gal 3:28 which says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In fact, these passages do not disagree at all but are in perfect unison, though speaking of different situations. Galatians is speaking about humanity's standing before God. In this sense, both men and women, slaves and free are equal. All humans are equal *in value* and find equal ground at the foot of the cross. But this does not exclude different lines of authority, whch is what Paul is addressing in Eph 5:21-33.

[53] Setyawan (2007:60), who believes subjection of wives to husbands and lordship of husbands to weives is that of bondage, oppression and exploitation, implicitly argues that Ephesians 5:21-33 is significantly less stringent than the Greco/Roman and Jewish cultures of Paul's day when he writes that the passage is "liberation for woman…and husband from the bondage of the patriarchal/hierarchical culture."

be seen in Eph 5:25, where the Apostle says: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Keener (1993:553) writes:

> *Although it was assumed that husbands should love their wives, ancient household codes never list love as a husband’s duty; such codes told husbands only to make their wives submit. Although Paul upholds the ancient ideal of wifely submission for his culture, he qualifies it by placing it in the context of mutual submission: husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, by willingly laying down their lives for them. At the same time that he relates Christianity to the standards of his culture, he subverts his culture’s values by going far beyond them. Both husbands and wives must submit and love (5:2, 21).*

The first main heading below will give a broad overview of Ephesus in Paul’s day. These are the people to whom he was penning the letter of Ephesians. The second main heading will take a more detailed look at Paul’s tri-cultural setting—Roman, Greek, and Jewish.

3.1 Paul’s Ephesian Audience

In order to answer current questions about the place of men and women in the church and how marriage should be displayed, it is critical to ask what social policies in marriage existed in the early church. What was the nature of marriage to Paul’s original hearers?[54]

[54] Though the confines of this paper will not allow for a discussion of other cities that received Paul’s letters, it should be noted that there were many other churches to whom Paul ministered that had widely aberrant views of marriage and sexuality. Atop the list was the Crecian city of Corinth. Greenfield (1983:36) writes: “The immoral conditions of the city of Corinth are well documented. Sexual immorality was rampant due to the worship festivities which centered around such temples there as those of Apollo and Aphrodite….Paul's warning of ‘the temptation of immorality’ (v. 2a) was no idle comment.” Barth (1974:661) has more to say about the sexual immorality of Corinth: “In following this tendancy of many Corinthian church members [to seek a kind of higher ‘wisdom’], some women of Corinth used the worship service for a displpay of the gained emancipation. Paul mentions that in a disturbing manner they liked to ask questions during the assemblies for worship rather than in the privacy of their homes (1Co 14:33-35), and that they refused to wear that kerchief or veil which in Jewish and Jewish-Christian congregations signified a married woman’s subordination to her husband (1Co 11:5-10).”

3.1.1 What was the city of Ephesus like?

Ephesus was founded by Greek colonists in 1044 B.C. and became part of the Asia province (located in the western portion of Asia Minor) in 133 B.C. and in time became the capital of the province. In the time of the Romans it bore the title of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia (Easton, 1996).

Ephesus was a free city, meaning it had home rule with a Greek constitution instead of Roman officials. It was a well-known seaport town that was third largest in the Roman Empire with a population of about 400,000. It was not as big as Rome (one million), Alexandria (600,000), Carthage or Antioch (both 500,000) but not as small as Smyrna or Thessalonica (both 200,000).

Today, because of years of silting, the city is located 4 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. It had a massive theater where the silversmith Demetrius protested again Paul and his preaching (Acts 19:23-41). This theater was 145 meters wide by 30 meters high. It had 36 pillars and could seat 24,000 people. Ephesus was home to the temple of Artemis (Diana), which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Gangel (1998:332) says that Artemis of Ephesus bore only inexplicit similarity to the huntress goddess of Greek mythology. “Instead, the grotesque, multibreasted image represented a Near Eastern mother-goddess of fertility, probably centering in worship of a meteorite vaguely resembling that image.” It was the largest building in the world at the time, boasting 127 columns 18 meters high and 2 meters in diameter. The city had many cults and religions, including emperor worship.[55]

Because Ephesus was so influential due to its commercialism and the temple of Diana and commercialism, it is not surprising that Paul visited there during his second missionary journey. He remained for a short time, then left Priscilla and Aquila there before departing (Acts 18:18-21). Paul's second visit to Ephesus was during his third missionary journey (Acts 19). During the two years he was there, he preached the Gospel. Some people repented and burned magic books worth 50,000 day's wages.

[55] Coneybeare (1895:465-466) gives more details: “The folding-doors were of cyprus-wood; the part which was not open to the sky was roofed over with cedar; and the staircase was formed of the wood of one single vine from the island of Cyprus. The value and fame of the Temple were enhanced by its being the treasury where a large portion of the wealth of Western Asia was stored up. It is probable that there was no religious building in the world in which was concentrated a greater amount of admiration, enthusiasm, and superstition.”

He also left his young disciple Timothy there to watch over the church. On the way to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, Paul met with the pastors of Ephesus at Miletus (Acts 20:15-38). Jews from this province were present at Jerusalem during Pentecost (Ac 2:9).

According to Jeffers (1999:265), not only did this province contain lands heavily influenced by Greeks from the Bronze Age, but cities with large Jewish communities. Slaves had no official right to marry but still married informally. The senatorial class could not marry freed slaves. The *paterfamilias* was the head of the household (Jeffers, 1999:228).

3.1.2 How diverse was the Ephesian culture?

The first century setting to whom Paul wrote was complex and complicated. According to Gibson, the metropolitan center of Ephesus would have included people in a variety of forms of marriage in close proximity with one another. Members of each culture would have been aware of these disparities. Gibson (2011:163) writes: “The merits of each system would doubtless have been debated in the forum, home, and bathhouse. This would have included Christians from all three cultures—Roman, Greek, and Jewish.”

The question may then arise: which culture did Paul favor? Which cultural viewpoint did Paul adopt? Did he embrace holistically any particular cultural viewpoint on marriage, ignore each society all together, or make a mixture of all three? The reader can see for himself with the descriptions of each culture below.

3.2 Paul’s tri-cultural audience

It should not be assumed that Paul’s writings in Eph are given to an audience with a monolithic view of marriage. In fact, he is addressing a church of believers that was at least tri-cultural: Roman, Greek, and Jewish. Sometimes people conflate the first two cultures into one, calling it Greco-Roman culture. This is because there was such a close interaction between Roman society and Greek-Hellenistic culture that it was sometimes viewed as a whole. In fact, Jeffers (1999:13) says that much of the New Testament era where Paul ministered was a “society still influenced by Hellenistic ideas, customs, religion and language but dominated by Roman law, governmental

forms, ideas of class and status, and the military." For our purposes here, however, Greek and Roman culture will be distinguished and given their own categories. At times this will be like separating Siamese twins. Usually these cultures will clearly show their own unique facets.

It would not be unusual for someone in Paul's day to speak Greek (the language of the Hellenists), Latin (the language of the Romans), and Aramaic (the language of the Jews). This multiple acculturation was evident when one man could wear Greek clothing, own Roman citizenship and worship the Jewish God.

A brief timeline is in order to show how this diverse cultural milieu came into being. King David, his son Solomon and their successors made the Jewish kingdom independent and wealthy. Centuries of rebellion against God led to Assyrian and Babylonian captivity.[56] The Jews became servants to world powers. They adopted many of the customs and ideas of their captors as well. Then the Persians became their masters but they allowed Israel to rebuild a Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Following this came the Greek influence of Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic culture that permeated the entire region. Next arrived General Pompey and the Roman Empire. Judea became her servant. The Romans were unlike other conquerors in that they were more than willing to adopt superior cultural aspects of their enemies and incorporate their captives into Roman society. By 143 B.C. Judea was allied with Rome.

3.2.1 Roman culture

Setyawan (2007:60) believes Paul's words in Eph 5 will liberate the husband and wife from the "bondage of the patriarchal/hierarchical culture" from where they live. The summary below of Roman society's worldview of marriage and gender roles will help the reader determine if Setyawan's words are true.

3.2.1.1 On marriage

As far as *formal* marriage, Rome would only recognize a marital union as legal if both partners were Roman citizens. Dudrey (1999:37) argues that in the early days of the

[56] Davis and Whitcomb (1980:479-494) give a helpful overview of the biblical steps that led to the Babylonian Captivity.

Roman Empire the norm for marriage was *cum manu* whereby the wife would come under the authority of the husband at marriage. Essentially the authority the father used to have over his daughter was now transferred to the husband, as though she was her husband's daughter. Specifically, in this *manus* marriage, full parental authority was reassigned from the father to the husband only after the wife had lived with the husband for one uninterrupted year (*usus* or "use"). The word "uninterrupted" is crucial, since the woman could disrupt *usus* if she did not want to enter *manus* by spending three nights away from her husband each year (Gibson, 2011:165).[57]

It is then argued that around the middle of the first century B.C. an ancient woman's movement resisted this supposedly oppressive form of marriage whereby the most common form of legal marriage became "without manus". Here, the father retained *patria potestas* over his daughter and remained her legal guardian from the day of her birth to the day of his death. The husband was not her chief authority. According to Jeffers (1999:238), this gave a Roman woman more freedom than she had ever known, especially compared to the Greek women throughout most of their history. Under this kind of marriage, the woman (1) did not belong to her husband or his family and (2) would often retrieve her dowry if the marriage ended.[58] Still, regardless of what kind of marriage was obtained, Roman wives were expected to be obedient to their husbands.

There also seemed to be a considerable difference between marriages in the upper class and marriages in the lower class in Roman society. Without *manus* marriages rose to popularity in part because of property issues. The father wanted to retain property gifted to his daughter should there be a divorce, something lower-class spouses didn't have to worry about. Informal lower class or slave marriages were common within and between households and were considered "husband" and "wife."

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[57] Also see Treggiari (2002:15-28) for an excellent overview on Roman marriage.

[58] Myers (1987:292) defines dowry as "a gift of money or property usually extended by the bride's family to the groom at marriage" and Pharaoh's daughter (1Kgs 9:16) and Leah (Ge 29:24) as examples. He continues: "The Old Testament also mentions the gift (Heb. *mōhar*) the husband extended to the father of the bride." He gives Shechem/Dinah (Ge 34:12) and David/Michal (1Sa 18:25) as examples. He concludes: "Although some scholars have considered the *mōhar* a purchase price intended to compensate the bride's family for loss of their daughter and subsequent offspring, the groom's marriage present was merely reciprocation for the dowry, thus completing the exchange as expected in Israel's "gift economy."

These kinds of marriage offered little refuge since slaves could be sold at any time. However, it allowed women within these informal marriages to flee the relationship whenever she wanted without intrusion by the state. Because the woman would almost always get custody of the children after such a "divorce", according to Jeffers (1999:244) "many lower-class families were fatherless, requiring the mother to take full responsibility to provide for and raise her children, thus bestowing on her the rights and duties of a head of household."

From here it is clearly seen that a wife in Roman society was usually under some kind of subordination. Either she was (1) under the authority of her father (*paterfamilias*) or (1) her husband (*patria potestas*). But due to new legislation at the turn of the century, there was a third option for a female married Roman citizen: she could be legally liberated (*sui iurus*) from both her father and husband. A freeborn woman could obtain the supposedly high honor of independence from her father and husband if (1) she had at least three children or (2) her father died and she was without *usus.*

3.2.1.2 On divorce, polygamy and childbearing

Polygamy was illegal in Roman society. Arranged marriages were common, though appeal, compatibility, trust and affection were important in the choice. Childbearing was the central goal of Roman marriage but not the only one. According to Roman law, the minimum marrying age for males and females was twelve and fourteen respectively—though girls usually married in their mid-teens and men in their mid-twenties.

Divorce in early Rome was somewhat rare, could only be initiated by the husband and was only allowed for serious issues like adultery. Unlike Jewish culture, leaving a barren wife was somewhat frowned upon. But as in most cultures, morals about divorce waned and in time divorce became more common,[59] with wives allowed to initiate the separation.[60] Divorce became rampant and easy to obtain. Since the key

[59] This is in spite of Caesar Augustus making adultery a criminal offense in 18 B.C. This was meant to promote the production of legitimate children. Husbands were required to divorce guilty wives and could prosecute her if he so chose. Wives could often get her dowry back from guilty husbands.

[60] According to Jeffers (1999:244). "[By] the New Testament era, the procedure for divorce was simple. One need only send one's spouse a letter of intent to divorce. It was not necessary to state the reason for the divorce, and normally the reasons were not made public. Romans generally divorced for the following reasons: failure to have children (generally assumed to be the woman's fault), political reasons

to Roman marriage was *consent,*[61] the key to divorce was also consent. Gibson (2011:167) believes the reason Augustus felt the need to pass legislation requiring marriage is because marriage was on the decline.

Though Roman upper and lower classes could divorce with equal ease, Jeffers (1999:246) believers the reason divorce was so rare among the lower class is that legal divorce was not required to break the union. Thus, broken families were common especially in the lower class.

3.2.1.3 On gender roles

The father, the *paterfamilias*, controlled the Roman family and had almost absolute power over everyone in the home. For a time this even included *patria potestas* (the power of life and death), though by the time of Jesus this authority was largely absent. He alone was allowed to own property. He had almost complete authority over his wife, children, slaves and workers in his household. When his children married, they would typically begin their own household but would still remain under the legal authority of the *paterfamilias* until his death. Families were usually small and remarriages were common because of the low age for life expectancy and the high divorce rate.

Women were more sternly disciplined for immorality in Roman society. According to Jeffers (1999:242), the Greek philosopher Plutarch and the Roman satirist Juvenal both suggested the wife should overlook her husband's affairs, but should herself not cheat on her spouse or seek sexual satisfaction with other men outside the household.

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like those that dictated many marriages, continued adultery by the spouse and to initiate a desired new marriage."

[61] In Roman law a marriage was legitimate as long as both the husband and wife and each of their fathers (if still alive) consented. According to Cicero (1942-1948:239) in *De Oratore*: "Sleeping together does not make marriage, but consent does."

3.2.1.4 Similarities and Differences with Eph 5

As in some forms of Roman marriage (*manus*), Eph 5:23 teaches that the husband is the "head of the wife" and leader of the home. A wife is to submit to his in a way that is not reversible.[62]

But without *manus* marriages, which were the most common in Paul's day, matrimony was much different than Paul's teaching in Eph 5.[63] First, the woman did not submit to her husband as v. 23 says but instead submitted to her father. Second, the *paterfamilias* in Roman culture had far more authority over his married children that what Eph 5 stipulates. When Paul (and Moses) tells the husband to leave his parents and cleave to his wife, he is not speaking of a complete break of parental ties but instead is urging an entirely new family unit whereby primary loyalties lie between husband and wife, not children and father. Moreover, if Roman law had emancipated the wife completely, she had then would have had authority over her—either by her husband or father.

Thus, when a Roman woman would have first heard Eph 5:24 read ("so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands"), she would immediately have concluded that Paul was urging *manus* marriages. She could easily procure this by not disrupting *usus* and instead choosing to remain with her husband the whole year, which v. 31 commands her to do.

Another difference is that the double standards in Roman society are not found in Scripture. Men were given a long moral leash; women must be strictly chaste. Per Titus 2, however, Paul says older men are to be self-controlled (v. 2), older women are to be "reverent in behavior" (v. 3), younger women are to "love their husbands" (v. 4), "be self-controlled, pure…and submissive to their own husbands" (v. 5), and younger men are "self-controlled" (v. 6). Again Paul says in 1Co 7 that both spouses

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[62] The following statement by Keener (1993:551) only makes sense with the *assumption* that Ephesians 5:21 teaches the hard hard mutual submission viewpoint. "But although it was customary to call on wives, children and slaves to submit in various ways, to call all members of a group (including the *paterfamilias,* the male head of the household) to submit to one another was unheard-of."

[63] Wiley (2019:loc.1076) points out the fallacy that Ephesians 5 was merely parroting a common bias in Roman culture during Paul's day: "Most contemporary commentators inform us that the codes were a concession to the prejudices of the time. Just why Paul should do this when he could instigate a riot just by showing his face, people don't care to discuss."

are required to give each other conjugal rights (v. 3). The wife has authority over her husband's body and vice versa (v. 4). The apostle follows his teaching from Titus and Corinthians and carries it over to Ephesians 5. Each husband (v. 33) is to love his wife (singular) and each wife is to love her "own" husband (v. 22).

Paul's ethos of marriage in Eph 5 is one of permanency and thus in contradiction of the easy divorce rules in Roman society.

Jeffers (1999:241) says that because marriage for most Jews and Christians was not legitimate in the state's eyes, Roman law (which reinforced the patriarchy) would not help Jewish or Christian men.

3.2.2 Greek culture

Greek culture was so predominant in Paul's day, per Dudrey (1981:27-28), that some believe Aristotle's three-fold division of husbands/wives, parents/children, and masters/slaves helped form the *Haufstafel* in Eph 5.

3.2.2.1 On marriage

It was not unusual for the parents to arrange marriage for their children. The woman was bound to marry the man her father had chosen for her. Upon marriage the authority over the wife passed from the father to the husband. Greek wives were expected to obey their husbands.

3.2.2.2 On divorce, polygamy and childbearing

Divorce in Hellenistic culture (as with Roman culture) was largely bilateral and easy to obtain, contra Jewish laws which only allowed the husband to initiate—though in time divorce became easier among the Jews as well.

Plutarch saw some value of love in marriage but encouraged wives not to chastise their drunken husbands that committed adultery.[64]

[64] In one place Plutarch (2011:loc.1256) describes a sad Greek scene of marriage, most specifically toward the Spartans, a prominent city-state in ancient Greece: "In their marriages, the husband carried off his bride by a sort of force; nor were their brides ever small and of tender years, but in their full bloom and ripeness. After this, she who superintended the wedding comes and clips the hair of the bride close round her head, dresses her up in man's clothes, and leaves her upon a mattress in the dark; afterwards

3.2.2.3 On gender roles

The Greek father was still head of the home, though he did not have near the authority over the wife and children as did the Roman *paterfamilias.* The Hellenistic family or household (*oikos*) was more multigenerational than the Roman family, with married children and grandchildren often living under the same roof.

The father and then upon marriage, the husband, had authority over the woman in the home. A foundational text is found in Aristotle's *Politics* (2017: 2417-18):

> *[T]he male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind….For although there may be exceptions to the order of nature, the male is by nature fitter for command than the female, just as the older and full-grown is superior to the younger and more immature….Clearly, then, moral virtue belongs to all of them; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying. . . . All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women, 'Silence is a woman's glory', but this is not equally the glory of a man.*

According to Lefkowtitz and Fant (1982:104), a Neo-Pythagorean text of the third-second century BC says:

> *A woman's greatest virtue is chastity. Because of this quality she is able to honor and to cherish her own particular husband— Courage and intelligence are more appropriately male qualities Chastity is more appropriately female. [T]he most important quality for chastity is to be pure in respect to her marriage bed, and for her not to have affairs with men from other households. If she breaks the law in this way, she wrongs the gods of*

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comes the bridegroom, in his every-day clothes, sober and composed, as having supped at the common table, and, entering privately into the room where the bride lies, unties her virgin zone, and takes her to himself; and, after staying some time together, he returns composedly to his own apartment, to sleep as usual with the other young men. And so he continues to do, spending his days, and, indeed, his nights with them, visiting his bride in fear and shame, and with circumspection, when he though he should not be observed; she, also, on her part, using her wit to help and find favorable opportunities for their meeting, when company was out of the way. In this manner they lived a long time, insomuch that they sometimes had children by their wives before every they saw their faces by daylight. Their interviews, being thus difficult and rare, served not only for continual exercise of their self-control, but brought them together with their bodies healthy and vigorous, and their affections fresh and lively, unsated and undulled by easy access and long continuance with each other; while their partings were always early enough to leave behind unextinguished in each of them some remaineder fire of longing and mutual delight."

her family and provides her family and home not with its own offspring but with bastards."

3.2.2.4 Similarities and Differences with Eph 5

There are some similarities in Hellenistic codes and Paul's writings in Eph 5. For example, Balch (1981:1-10) argues that the Ephesian *Haufstafel* code parallels the Greek literary *peri oikonomias* (household management).

Some like to argue that Paul's *Haustafel* in Eph 5 takes what would be considered a moderate position by the audience of Paul's day. It is suggested Paul is not an extreme egalitarian like Plutarch on the one side or an extreme unqualified patriarch like Philo on the other side. However, Lincoln (1990:359) contends that the early Christian codes, despite their Christian motivations, turn out in practice to be very similar to the variety within the consistent patriarchal pattern throughout Greco-Roman society, where subordination of wives to husbands, children to parents, and slaves to masters was the overarching norm. This is certainly true for Greek and Jewish cultures, but not so with Roman society, as we saw above.

Ephesians 5 recognizes a hierarchical structure in marriage but is quick to acknowledge the equal value of husband and wife. Eph addresses the roles of both spouses (not just the wife) and even gives significantly more time to the duties of the husband than the wife. Moreover, one of the motives Peter gives husbands for treating their wives in an understanding way is that they are equal before the cross—a "fellow heir of the grace of Christ" (1Pt 3:7 NASB).

Sex in marriage as a mutual obligation is another way Eph 5 was countercultural to Hellenistic culture. The common pattern in that culture was for the husband to "take" sex from his wife. The sexual obligation in biblical marriage, however, was for Paul a reciprocal one—both had an obligation to each other. According to Greenfield (1983:37), this teaching was a revolutionary idea in Paul's day.

Hoehner (2002:724-26) suggests at least four key differences between the Hellenistic literature of Paul's day and the teaching of Eph 5. First, Greek literature primarily addresses those who are in authority (e.g. fathers, husbands, and masters) but not those who are in subjection (e.g. mothers, wives, and slaves) whereas Eph 5 addresses both husbands and wives, fathers and mothers and masters and slaves.

Second, Eph does not depreciate or ridicule those in subjections, such as wives. This is often done in Hellenistic literature by men like Demosthenes, quoted by Barth (1974:655), who said: “We have courtesans (*hetairai*) for our pleasure, prostitutes (i.e. young female slaves) for our daily physical use, wives to bring up legitimate children and to be faithful stewards in household matters.” Paul urges the husband (singular) to love and cherish his wife (singular). Third, Greek literature gave very little motivation to husbands as to *why* they were to perform such duties with their wives. Paul, however, accompanies his command to wives to submit to their husbands with a motivation: the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Moreover, husbands are to love their wives because Christ gave himself for the church).

Fourth, when Greek literature did give motivation, it was often political. The model in Eph 5 always points the audience to Christ. He is the basis for loving the wife and submitting to the husband. In this sense, the *Haustafel* in Eph 5 is a distinctively Christian household ethic.

3.2.3 Jewish culture

Regarding Eph 5, Weber-Han (1977:168) says: “The people who received the [Ephesian] letters understood what Paul was saying because the letters made sense in their situation.” But the details below will show how Paul’s teaching in Eph 5 was both supportive and opposing to Jewish culture.

3.2.3.1 On marriage

Per Scott (1995:249-250), the betrothal and wedding involved an extensive process of stages and customs. The prospective spouse needed both family lineage and ceremonial position agreeable to the family of the potential mate. Extensive negotiations often surrounded the financial and legal details around betrothal. The betrothal had at least six aspects. (1) It took place in the father’s home. (2) The groom gave the bride money or valuables to show the seriousness of his intentions. (3) A marriage contract was presented, including the amount of money she’d receive upon divorce or the husband’s death. (4) There were formal witnesses. (5) There was a ceremony with celebration and the giving of gifts. (6) The bride remained in her father’s house until marriage.

According to Safrai (1976:757), there were also stages to the wedding ceremony: (1) preparation of the bride, (2) transfer of the bride from the father's home to the groom's home, (3) the bride's introduction to the groom's home, and (4) blessings and festivities within the husband's home.

Like in Greek society, the Jewish man became the authority of the woman at marriage. He was the head of the home, the breadwinner and often the educator of the children.

3.2.3.2 On divorce, polygamy and childbearing

Unlike Roman and Hellenistic culture, Jewish culture was more lax in their allowance of polygamy (especially among the aristocracy), though monogamy was still by far the most common form of marriage. Like the Greeks and less like the Romans, Jews would often have two or three generations living in one household.

As Scott (1995:248) observes, unlike Roman marriage, the Jews *required* a husband to divorce his wife if she could not have children after ten years. In light of Ge 1:28 ("be fruitful and multiply")[65] Jews believed having children was a duty and obligation. Childbirth was considered the greatest blessing a Jewish woman could have. Though Jewish women that lived in the city and under Roman law found divorce much easier to obtain, only the husband in Jewish tradition could initiate divorce. Clear Old Testament teachings on marriage (e.g. Pr 5:5-19; Ecc 9:9; Mal 2:14-16) should have discouraged arbitrary divorce, but by the first century the Hillel interpretation of divorce dominated. This essentially allowed for easy divorce. However, there was one significant deterrent to divorce: the *ketubah.* The is different from the bride price, which had its roots in Old Testament marriages,[66] but had become by Paul's day so minimal

[65] For an overview argument that says this verse is in fact not a cultural *mandate* but really a blessing, see Bauder (2019), who concludes: "Genesis 1:28 does not contain a mandate, cultural or otherwise. It expresses a blessing. It does not give humans a series of orders to obey; rather, it describes certain capacities with which God has bountifully endowed the human race. Human beings have been fruitful and multiplied. They have filled the earth. They have subdued it. They have exercised dominion over the created order. Because they are now sinful, they have done these things imperfectly, but even their sin has not been able to drive out these innate capacities with which their Creator has blessed them."

[66] Some examples include Ge 34:12 ("Ask me for as great a bride-price and gift as you will, and I will give whatever you say to me. Only give me the young woman to be my wife."), Ex 22:17 ("If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins."), and 1Sm 18:25 (Then Saul said, "Thus shall you say to David, 'The king desires no bride-price except a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, that he may be avenged of the king's enemies.' " Now Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.)

it was merely symbolic (Gibson, 2011:171). The *ketubah* was a lien taken out on the husband's property. Should death or divorce ensue, the woman would be protected financially.

Early marriages were the norm (around twenty for men and much younger for women), as were arranged marriages. The father and mother took great consideration to compatibility, character and social and economic standing.

3.2.3.3 On gender roles

In *Against Apion,* Josephus (1987:2:201) said: "For, saith 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 hath given the authority to the husband."[67] Barth (1974:656) quotes rabbinic tradition enjoining every Jewish man to say the following three blessings every morning: "[I thank the Lord] that he did not make me a Gentile,… a woman,… a boor."

Philo of Alexandria, the Jewish intellectual, wrote about the proper Jewish family and the distinctions between male and female. He observed (1995:1.201):

> *And since the elements of which our soul consists are two in number, the rational and the irrational part, the rational part belongs to the male sex, being the inheritance of intellect and reason; but the irrational part belongs to the sex of woman, which is the lot also of the outward senses. And the mind is in every respect superior to the outward sense, as the man is to the woman.*

3.2.3.4 Similarities and differences with Eph 5

As with Roman and Hellenistic societies, the Jewish man was the head of the wife and the home, just as Paul stipulates in v. 23 of Eph 5. But as seen above, Paul also presented a new household for Christians that was much different from what they had previously known.

Since the man was dominant in Jewish marriages, was the head, the breadwinner, and the only one that could initiate divorce, Paul would have to address primarily the

[67] Incidently, there is a note in this passage of Josephus (1987:2:201) on the referenced "Scripture" which says: "This text is nowhwere in our present copies of the Old Testament."

man in this household address in order to counter any unbiblical ideas. The apostle did exactly this, devoting three times more material to the husband than to the wife.

Paul's teaching on the "headship" of the man was countercultural, but not as feminists want to believe. Yes, the wife was to "submit" to the husband because he is her "head". But in an unexpected twist, this "headship" is full of sacrifice. The husband is to "love" (v. 25) her by seeking the wife's greatest good. He is to give "himself up for her" (v. 25) by laying down his life if necessary. The husband is to "sanctify" her (v. 26), and "nourish" and "cherish" her (v. 29). This kind of authority was shocking and had, according to Gibson (2011:176), "never been seen before or since" apart from Christ."

3.3 Conclusion

Contrary to the conclusions of many in the world of egalitarianism and multiculturalism, Christians must not reorientate the Scriptures to one's particular setting but rather the opposite. Christians must not wonder, as does Barth (1974:652), "whether the change of time and culture permits or requires present-day Christians to reject the injunctions of 1Co 7 and Eph 5." South African Reformed feminist scholar Mouton (1997:121-43) cannot be correct when she argues that the patriarchal structure of Ephesians must be adjusted to fit modern cultural ideals.[68]

The theme of Eph is the unity of the church (Eph 2:11-3:13; 4:1-16). The household code beginning in Eph 5:21 only strengthens this unity by distinguishing the proper roles within marriage. How can two walk together in unison unless they know the rules of marriage? And would this not be particularly difficult to know when so many first-generation Christians are coming from so many different pagan cultural backgrounds?

While there are some similarities in Paul's household code with Roman, Greek and Jewish culture, much of what the apostle says is radically countercultural—from the *nature* of submission to the husband to the kind of love for the wife to the role of parents post-marriage. Dudrey (1999:727) is right that "the primary purpose of the household

[68] Mouton (1997:126) writes: "Consequently, the virtues and values characteristic of their new paradoxical status in Christ were also meant to redefine the traditionally patriarchal relations described in the domestic code of 5:21–6:9. The husband, for instance, hears that he is the head of the wife 'as Christ is the head of the church' (5:23). Christ's headship is characterized by the power of his love—a power which is paradoxically revealed in the 'weakness' of his suffering. The husband also has to submit to his wife (5:21), and to love her "just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (5:25)."

passages of the NT is *not* to repress the socially downtrodden, but to transform spiritually all who are in Christ—husbands, fathers, and masters included. This in turn transforms all their relationships."

Chapter 4
Theology: Marriage in Covenant Terms

Thus far, Chapter 2 has analysed marriage exegetically from Ephesians 5:21-33 and Chapter 3 has studied marriage culturally from the tri-cultural perspective of Paul's Ephesian audience. Before reaching the application stage to Tsonga culture in Chapter 5, an important link is needed.

While much of Chapter 2 addressed various hierarchical roles between spouses and a brief analysis of the definition of marriage in Eph 5:21-33, Chapter 4 will zoom in on one primary verse—the apex of all biblical definitions of marriage in Scripture—v. 31. This quotation from Ge 2:24 is the greatest, most detailed, and most pervasive definition of marriage anywhere in Scripture.[69] But it also brings to mind many questions, such as: Is marriage a covenant and if so, what ratifies or officially makes a marriage covenant valid? Burrows (1938:21) argues that what confirms a marriage is the bridal gift. Palmer (1972:655) says the moment that officially sanctions marriage is the sexual act. Atkinson (1979:75) believes it is consent between the bride and groom.

From this verse, the chapter will then seek to bolster each point below by putting Scriptural meat on the bones. A kind of biblical theology of marriage will flow from the central points made in Ephesians 5:31. Just as mortar consists of water, cement, and sand, Chapters 2, 3 and 4—when mixed together—will seek to provide the proper blend in building a healthy biblical worldview of marriage as applied to Tsonga culture found in Chapter 5.

4.1 Organizing Covenant Marriage

Before addressing the individual components of marriage, it may be helpful to know the best way of organizing the information. Imagine standing nose-length away from the tail of an elephant. From this perspective, it would be difficult to discern what you are looking at. Is it a rope? Is it a branch? If it is a tail, is it that of a rhino, an elephant

[69] Mathews (1996:222), for example, calls this verse a "model for marriage."

or monkey? If you stood back, however, and looked at the animal from a distance and from multiple angles, you would see the elephant clearly.

This is an analogy of how difficult it is for Christians to make correct conclusions regarding ethical dilemmas. If they only look at a situation from one vantage point, they will often make mistakes. The Bible is clear that murder is wrong, but what about hijacking airplanes? There are no explicit verses about that, nor detailed passages about nuclear war, abortion, and condoms?

This is why Frame advocates a tool for ethical interpretation he calls "triperspectivalism".[70] Van Til, the greatest human influence on Frame's apologetics, argued in *Christian Theistic Ethics* (1980) that every ethical decision may be evaluated according to its goal, motive, and standard. Since finite, sinful beings cannot see things as clearly as the sinless, infinite God, humans must look at everything from multiple angles or "perspectives" (Frame, 2009). Triperspectivalism is like a pair of 3D glasses. God can see the elephant from far away, up close and from every other conceivable approach all at the same time. He created it. But humans are fallen and prone to mistakes. Viewing each ethical decision from various perspectives protects the interpreter from mistakes, or at least makes mistakes harder to make.

4.1.1 John Frame's Three perspectives

According to Frame, Christian ethics is triperspectival. What are the three perspectives? Frame (2013:1109) writes: "Ethical judgment always involves the application of a *norm* to a *situation* by a *person.*" Each will be addressed individually. First, the normative perspective (or, deontological perspective) relates to God's Word, the Bible. This answers the question: "What does God's Word tell me to do?" (Frame, 2008:131-237). From this perspective, for example, stealing is wrong because God's Word says so (Ex. 20:15).

Second, the situational perspective (or, teleological perspective) addresses problems as presented by God's providence. Whereas a counsellor looking at stealing from a

[70] Frame teaches Systematic Theology and Ethics at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida, United States. His books that advocate triperspectivalism include *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (2008), *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (2010), *Apologetics to the Glory of God* (1994), *The Doctrine of God* (2002) and *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (1987).

normative perspective would ask what God's Word says on the matter, a counsellor addressing stealing from the situational perspective would ask details about the problem, determining that the kind of stealing under discussion was actually *embezzling.*[71] The situational perspective helps the reader apply the norm (Scripture) to a situation.[72] For example, consider this moral syllogism:

> Premise 1: Stealing is morally wrong (Ex. 20:15; normative perspective).
>
> Premise 2: Hijacking an airplane is stealing (situational perspective).
>
> Conclusion: Therefore, hijacking an airplane is morally wrong (existential perspective).

Even though Scripture says nothing specifically about hijacking airplanes, it does give general truths and biblical principles that, when applied to a specific situation, will help Christians make the right ethical decision. The situational perspective helps the Christian *apply* Scripture. If fact, if someone doesn't know how to apply a passage, then he really doesn't understand the verse. This is why Jesus so often rebuked the Pharisees. They "knew" what the Bible said (normative perspective) but didn't know how to apply it (situational perspective). On one occasion he said to them:

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[71] Here is where Frame argues convincingly that extrabiblical information is crucial for ethical interpretation. This does not contradict *Sola Scriptura,* which teaches that the Bible is all the *divine* information needed to make a decision, not all of the information needed total. When God told Adam not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, it means Adam had to know what a tree was. Honoring your father and mother assumes you know what a father and mother is.

[72] Casuistry is the term often used to refer to the application of Scripture to a situation. Fahlbusch (1997:358) defines it as "the methodical process of bringing individual, real-life cases under the established norms of a discipline or worldview or ethics. It has its roots in law. As in Roman and English law, general rules are developed on the basis of individual cases; these general rules in turn are applied to individual cases." Livingstone (2005:299) calls casuistry "the art or science of bringing general moral principles to bear upon particular cases. Its exercise is always called for in moral issues, whether the particular decision is made by individual judgement or in accordance with an established code, though the word 'casuistry' is generally restricted to the latter." The danger comes, as we shall see later in relation to *lobola* and marriage, when a culture uses their own traditions or cultural practices in exchange for moral laws (Mt. 15:3). People almost always incorporate rules from culture that make things either too rigid or too lax. The "rigid" party, for example, says that in order not to break Exodus 23:19 ("You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk"), we must avoid meat and dairy all together. Examples of too lax would be the school of Hillel among the Jews regarding divorce or the Jesuits among the Roman Catholics. Too rigid would be the school of Shammai among the Jews regarding divorce and remarriage and the Jansonists among the Catholics.

> *When it is evening, you say, "It will be fair weather, for the sky is red." And in the morning, "It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening." You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. (Mt 16:2-3).*

They knew how to take the facts and apply them to *nature,* but not to morality. The Pharisees knew what Scripture *said* in Exodus 3:6 ("I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"). They had the verse memorized since childhood but never knew it spoke of the resurrection. As Frame (2008:122) says, they could "see" but couldn't "see as". Jesus rebuked the Sadducees in a similar way, saying: "And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God: 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt. 22:31-32).

Third, the existential perspective focuses on the subjective motive of the individual. It answers: "How does this apply to me?" It represents the conclusion in the above syllogism: "Therefore hijacking an airplane is morally wrong *for me*." It makes the situation personal rather than theoretical for someone "out there".

This interpretive method for making ethical decisions is not only helpful for matters like stealing (as mentioned above) but for all moral issues, including the topic of this study—marriage, and specifically, how it is formed.

4.1.2 Marriage stated triperspectivally

An example can be seen below as to how marriage is viewed in a triperspectival manner.

	Marriage Covenant	**Stage One**	**Stage Two**	**Stage Three**
1.	Marriage Covenant (Ephesians 5:31)	1. Leave	2. Cleave	3. One-flesh
2.	Marriage Covenant (restated)	1. Allegiance	2. Action	3. Affection
3.	Marriage Covenant (restated)	1. Consent	2. Commit	3. Consummation

4.	Marriage Covenant (restated)	1. Initiation	2. Invocation	3. Intimacy
5.	Marriage Covenant (restated)	1. Start	2. Swear	3. Sex
6.	Marriage Covenant (Matthew 22:37)	1. Heart	2. Mind	3. Soul
7.	Marriage Covenant (Frame's triperspectivalism)	1. Situation	2. Normative	4. Existential
8.	Marriage Covenant (Jewish)	1. Betrothal	2. Wedding	3. Intimacy
9.	Marriage Covenant (Western)	1. Engagement	2. Wedding	3. Sex; license; surname
10.	Marriage Covenant (Tsonga customary	1. Lobola	2. Celebration	3. Sex; license; surname

4.1.3 Necessary and Sufficient Conditions

When talking about marriage, it is often wise to make a distinction between what marriage *is* and what it *ought to be.* In an effort to understand what forms a valid marriage, it is imperative to understand the difference between what philosophers call necessary and sufficient conditions. A necessary condition is what is needed or required for something to exist but not enough in itself to make it happen. A necessary condition for mortar is water, sand and cement. Each item is needed. Water or cement on its own is not sufficient to make mortar.[73] A sufficient condition is something that assures a matter's existence. Faith in Christ is a sufficient condition for heaven. Nothing else is needed.

[73] More necessary conditions (but not sufficient conditions) include: (1) Studying the text books to pass an exam, (2) Exercising to live a long, healthy life, (3) Eating good food to live a long, healthy life, (4) Filling up the car with fuel so it will run, (5) Having the proper credit hours in order to pass, (6) Having a masters degree to get the job. All of these are necessities to bring about the goal, the conclusion, but they are not sufficient in and of themselves. For example, regarding #4 above, fuel for a car is necessary for the vehicle to move, but simply having fuel isn't sufficient. The car may not run because the battery is dead.

For example, a broken home with a feminist mother may *contribute* to her son's homosexuality, but these details are neither a necessary or sufficient condition. Homosexuality can exist without either one (Feinberg and Feinberg, 1993:189). One of the goals of this chapter is to show that leaving, cleaving, and the "one-flesh" union are necessary conditions for marriage. Each must be present for the formation of the marriage covenant, but each one on its own is not sufficient.

Moreover, it is also the goal to show that, for example, a male and a female are necessary conditions for marriage. But a male and a female are not *sufficient* on their own to form a marriage, for consent and commitment are required as well.

4.1.4 The "causes" of marriage

What *is* marriage? This question is more difficult than it seems because the word "is" can mean several different things. For example, we may say: "What *is* a bicycle?" This could be answered in four ways. (1) A bicycle is made of two wheels and a fiberglass frame. This states the *material cause* of a bicycle—that from which it is made. (2) A bicycle is made by attaching pedals to a chain and gears and handlebars to the front wheel for steering. This states the *formal cause*—that which comes together to make it what it is. (3) A bicycle is made by a Schwinn manufacturer. This states the *efficient cause*—that which led it to become what it is. (4) A bicycle is made for riding. This states the *final cause*—that for which it was designed to do. Insert "kraal", "athlete", "government", "violin" or "pizza" in place of the bicycle and you will find the same thing.

So when someone asks, "What is marriage?", we can see that there are at least four ways of answering that question. (1) Marriage is made of a covenant. This states the material cause—that of which marriage is made. (2) Marriage is made by consent, commitment and consummation. This states the formal cause—the arrangement and form by which marriage is created. (3) Marriage is made by God and by a man and a woman. This states the efficient cause—the actors which brought about the marriage. (4) Marriage is made for companionship, purity and procreation. This is the final cause—that which the goal of marriage is.[74]

[74] This vocabulary was originally used in relation to the *causes* of the Reformation by Twesten (1826) in *Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche* and made popular in Rischl's

4.2 Material Cause: Defining covenant marriage

The definitions for “marriage” are legion. Here is a brief list:

- Attah (2012) defines marriage as an institution where a man and woman are publicly and legally united in a lasting bond as husband and wife either through traditional, civil or religious wedding ceremony.
- Merriam-Webster (2003) defines (1) marriage as the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law, (2) civil marriage as a marriage performed by a magistrate, and (3) common-law marriage as a marriage recognized in some jurisdictions and based on the parties’ agreement to consider themselves married.
- Achtemeier (1985:608) defines marriage as “the physical and spiritual union of a man and a woman.”
- Brand (2003:1082) defines marriage as “the sacred, covenantal union of one man and one woman formed when the two swear before God an oath of lifelong loyalty and love to one another, the sign and seal of which is sexual intercourse.”
- Karleen (1987:344) defines marriage as “the institution involving one man and one woman, as established by God in the Garden.”
- Hodge (1997c:380) defines marriage as “a compact between one man and one woman to live together, as man and wife, until separated by death.”
- Manser (1999) defines marriage as “the union of a man and a woman in a permanent relationship.”
- McKim (1996:168) defines marriage as “the joining of a man and a woman in a relationship of mutual love, fidelity, and commitment that may be sanctioned by the church (and state) and that in Christian contexts is a spiritual as well as physical union to be blessed by God.”

Let us further divide this heading on the “material cause of marriage” into two subheadings: (1) a definition of covenant marriage, and (2) the covenant partners in marriage.

(1870) lexicon *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*. For a layman’s overview of these four causes see Taylor (2020).

4.2.1 Definition of Covenant

A covenant is a solemn bond that comes with sanctions and is publicly enforceable. It must happen in the open, not in the shadows, an empty room, or the back seat of a car. Hugenberger (1994:11) defines covenant as "an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation under oath." Wilson (2016:37) defines marriage as "the publicly recognized covenant and sexual union between a man and a woman."

Kline (1968:16) considers covenant "a sanctioned-sealed commitment to maintain a particular relationship or follow a stipulated course of action. In general, then, a covenant may be defined as a relationship under sanctions."

Some covenants in Scripture cannot be broken, like the Abraham and Davidic covenants. Other covenants can be dissolved, like the Mosaic covenant (Jer 31:32). Many scholars of Scripture believe the marriage covenant can be dissolved as well.[75]

The marriage covenant is crucial because it lays the foundation of obligations and promises upon which sexual consummation is set. "A covenant is a relationship governed by oath, so it is right that marriage be solemnized in a ceremony" (Frame, 2008: 749). Marriage as covenant is seen explicitly in at least two places in the Old Testament:

> *When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made my vow to you and entered into a* ***covenant*** *[שָׁבַע, ntwanano] with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine" (Eze 16:18)*
>
> *But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by* ***covenant*** *[בְּרִיתֶךָ, ntwanano]. (Mal 2:14)*

The Malachi passage above teaches sinful husbands about the covenant nature of marriage. The adulterous wife in Proverbs is told not to forsake the "companion of her youth and forget the covenant of her God" (2:17). So marriage is a covenant, but what exactly does that mean?

[75] For an excellent overview of this issue, see Feinberg (2010:303-305).

4.2.2 Who are the covenant partners in marriage?

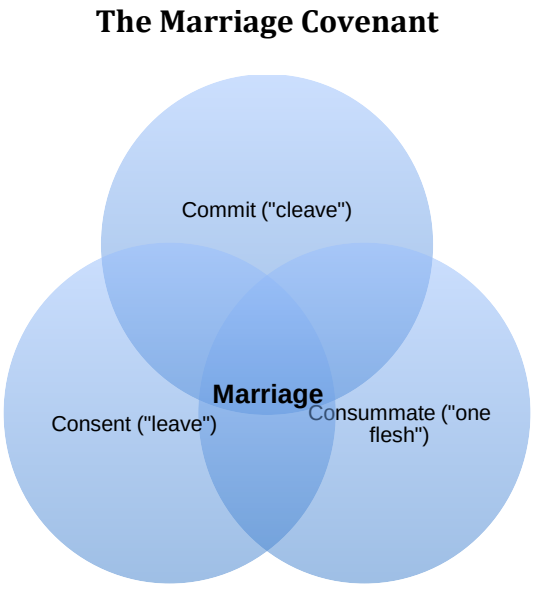
There are three opinions to this question. The first view is that the marriage covenant is between the families of the couple. This is a common perspective especially among African theologians.

Baab (1962:284) argues this way. Baloyi agrees (2014:18), saying: “African marriage is characterised among other things by extended family interventions. Marriage life for Africans is communal.” Mbiti concurs (1991:108), arguing that marriage in the traditional African view is an affair involving more than two people. Kaganas and Murray (1991:130) also argue for this position that marriage is an alliance between two families. Warunta and Kinoti (2000:101) aver that the only reason African marriages today are becoming more individualistic and moving away from the old “family” view of marriage is because of the evil, individualistic influence of Western countries.

Baloyi (2014:23) shows the ramifications of this view: “This means that since Africans believe that marriage is an issue not only for the two people, then the other family members must be given an opportunity to decide for one’s family.”

The second view is that marriage is a covenant between the groom and father-in-law. A third view, such as that of Atkinson (1979), is that marriage is primarily a covenant between the husband and wife, which will be argued for below.

4.3 Formal Cause: Forming covenant marriage



There is a difference between what marriage *is* and how it is formed. The "material cause" answers the former ("what marriage *is*") while the "formal cause" answers the latter ("how marriage is *formed*"). This study has already argued that marriage is a covenant. Ephesians 5:31, as quoted from Genesis 2:24, gives three ways in which marriage is *formed.* These verses do not give everything we need to know about marriage, just the outline. The rest of Scripture gives the colors by which the reader can fill in the lines.

It is significant that these three verbs are listed chronologically. That is, the placement of "leave" is not random. In the four places this verse is found in Scripture (Ge 2:24; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7-8; Eph 5:31), the order is always the same. The "one-flesh" union never comes first, for example, nor does the "cleaving" fall to the end of the verse.

> *Therefore a man shall **(1) leave** his father and his mother and **(2) hold fast** to his wife, and they shall **(3) become one flesh**. (Ge 2:24)*
>
> *And said, 'Therefore a man shall **(1) leave** his father and his mother and **(2) hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall **(3) become one flesh'**? (Mt 19:5)*
>
> *'Therefore a man shall **(1) leave** his father and mother and **(2) hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall **(3) become one flesh**.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. (Mk 10:7-8)*
>
> *"Therefore a man shall **(1) leave** his father and mother and **(2) hold fast** to his wife, and the two shall **(3) become one flesh**." (Eph 5:31)*

4.3.1 Marriage is commenced by consent

Consent is a key component of marriage and is the first step. Aquinas (1981:2713) says consent makes a marriage, then quotes Chrysostom, who agrees: "It is not coition but consent that makes a marriage." But we are not to take from this that Aquinas thinks *only* consent makes marriage, for he clarifies: "Matrimony is not the consent itself, but the union of persons directed to one purpose…and this union is the effect of the consent." The first triperspectival aspect of marriage as seen in Ge 2:24 and Eph 5:31 is "leaving" or the idea of "consent."

4.3.1.1 The meaning of "leave"

We are told first in Eph 5:31 that "a man shall leave his father and mother." This gets the ball rolling and is the first step in the process. The lexical and contextual aspects of the verb "leave" (καταλείψει, *sukela*) we studied at length in Chapter 2. We learned that it signifies that the man's relationship with his parents as he once knew it is about to cease, not necessarily spacially but in dedication and in loyalty. Larkin (2009:140) observes that "leave" is a gnomic future, referring to expected action under normal circumstances. He is to cut loose all the relationships that will prohibit the unique union he is about to establish with his wife.

This is an outward move to be sure, usually spacially, but most importantly, this is an inward shift of mind. Old alliances with his parents now are secondary. "Leaving" is a kind of passive commitment which is comprised by the word "consent", not only by the bride-to-be but also by the parents that must give permission for the man to "leave" in the first place. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "consent" (n.) as "permission for something to happen or be done" and the verb as giving permission or agreeing to do something. By making the decision to withdraw from his parents, he has not yet formally committed by oath to his wife, but is seeking the consent for marriage from his future bride and her parents. This leaving was a kind of pre-marriage sign of commitment to marriage.

Aquinas (1948:1296) in his *Summa Theologica* addresses the matter of a husband "leaving" his home when he asks whether a man ought to love his wife more than his father or mother:

> *It would seem that a man ought to love his wife more than his father and mother. For no man leaves a thing for another unless he loves that latter more. Now it is written (Ge 2:24) that a man shall leave father and mother on account of his wife. Therefore a man ought to love his wife more than his father and mother.*
>
> *Further, the Apostle says (Eph 5:33) that a husband should love his wife as himself. Now a man ought to love himself more than his parents. Therefore he ought to love his wife also more than his parents. Further, love should be greater where there are more reasons for loving.*

Longman (2016:54) believes that "leaving" is not primarily outward: "It would be wrong to think of this leaving as a physical act. In ancient Israel, newly married couples did

not leave town when they got married, but typically moved into the family compound. This leaving is of a more fundamental sort that can best be described as forming a new primary loyalty."

Allender and Longman (1995:218-219) reflect upon the Christian view of "leaving" in Ephesians 5:31 when they say:

> *[Leaving] does mean starting a whole new relationship in which the core loyalty is not to parents' priorities, traditions, or influence but to an entirely new family that must set its own course, form, and purpose…. To leave means to take a step from our parents and the past in order to move closer to our spouse. Our greatest ally cannot be in the opinions or desires of apparent but only with the one with whom we have joined to form a new family…. Leaving is the ground for establishing the kind of intimacy that we use two separate persons into a tapestry of beauty.*

4.3.1.2 Jewish examples of "leaving" in Scripture

In Scripture, especially within Jewish culture, this "leaving" was expressed in a plethora of pre-marriage pictures and symbols that point to the marriage union, though several of the items listed below could easily fit within the "commitment" perspective as well. The reader is reminded the figure on p. 94 where each of the three aspects overlap significantly.

The betrothal/bride price was most likely the key pre-marriage custom among the Jews and should be distinguished from the dowry. The bride price is what Jacob paid in seven years (actually fourteen!) to Laban (Ge 29) for his daughters and what Isaac's father paid for Rebekah (Ge 24). In reference to this custom, Coppan (2011:117) writes in *Is God a Moral Monster?*:

> *The bride-price was more like a deposit from the groom's father to the bride's father. The Hebrew word for this deposit (mohar) is better translated "marriage gift." It not only helped create closer family ties between the two families but also provided economic stability for a marriage. This gift given to the bride's father (often several years' worth of wages) compensated him for the work his daughter would otherwise have contributed to the family.*

Manser (1999) calls betrothal "the period of engagement preceding marriage." Betrothal was a binding contract established between two families and sealed by the

exchange of gifts. During this period the couple did not live together; sexual relations with each other at this stage was regarded as equivalent to adultery.

The word "betrothal" means to *plight one's troth,* to make a troth or make a promise. Aquinas in (1981:2706-2707) says there are four absolute ways betrothal makes a promise for marriage. First, by the mere promise, saying, "I will take thee for my wife." Second, through betrothal pledges, such as money. Third, giving an engagement ring. Fourth is the addition of an oath.

Sometimes circumcision was a form of bride price (Ge 34:22ff). Only if the sons of Shechem were willing to pay this lofty "bride-price" (v. 12) were they allowed to marry the daughters of Jacob. They finally agreed to the terms of Jacob's sons: circumcision. This would show their commitment and sincerity.

4.3.1.3 "Leaving" precludes homosexuality, incest and child brides

As explained briefly above, marriage is intrinsically heterosexual. A union between a man and a woman is a necessary cause, though not sufficient. A woman/woman union, for example, may be a *mirage,* but certainly not a marriage.

The *ESV Study Bible* (2008:2548) references Genesis 2:22-24 to make this point about homosexuality:

> *The word "therefore" connects the making of Eve from a part of Adam's body with the "one flesh" sexual union between a man and a woman in marriage: it is the reunion of the two constituent parts of a sexual whole. It is not another man who is the missing part or sexual complement of a man, but rather a woman. (Jesus emphasizes this connection between the two different sexes "male and female," in Matt. 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-8.)*

As explained in Chapter 2 from Ephesians 5:31, the masculine noun "man" (ἄνθρωπος, *wanuna*) is to be joined to the feminine noun "wife" (γυναῖκα, *nsati*). The "one-flesh" marriage is closely connected to children. Gn 5:31 is immediately followed with a lengthy section on children (Eph 6:1-4). The "one-flesh" marriage in Ge 2:24 was to be "fruitful" and "fill the earth", something a homosexual union cannot do.

Never in Scripture do we find "marriage" between the same sex. Homosexual marriage is impossible. As MacArthur (2008:168) says, "No one is born a homosexual, any more than anyone might be born a thief or murderer." No one is born gay because Romans

1:27 says one must leave his “natural function” to reach homosexuality. God has created Bob to be attracted to Susan.[76]

Homosexuality is soundly rebuked and condemned in Scripture (1Co 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Rm 1:26-27) and presented as an abominable, detestable act (Lev 18:22; Gn 18:20). It is caused by aggressive, uncontrolled lust (Gn 19:4-9; Jdg 19:20-25) and is often a characteristic within wicked cultures (Jdg 19:22).

Unrepentant homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God (1Co 6:9-10). Homosexuality is self-destructive by nature (Ro 1:27). St. Paul even mentions women first (usually the last to be affected morally) as succumbing to homosexuality to show the complete moral collapse of the society (Ro 1:24-25). Thankfully, victory over this sin is possible, as some of the Corinthians were homosexuals before their conversion (1Co 6:11). Those who cannot control burning for the same sex (1Co 7:9) should marry someone of the opposite sex (1Co 7:2).[77]

Marriage may not be between relatives, as is prohibited in Lev 18 and described between Amnon and Tamar in 2Sa 13. The husband is to “leave” his family members in order to take a wife. Incestuous relationships do not have to “leave”. This word “leaving” also implies the age of consent by the bride and the consent of the parents. Child brides should be forbidden, though the age of consent differs across various cultures and governments.[78]

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[76] For further resources arguing that homosexual tendencies are acquired and not innate, see *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (Cantarella, 2002), *Man and Woman in Christ* (Clark, 1980), *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Gagnon, 2001), and *Born This Way* (Morrison, 2015).

[77] Bayly (2017:loc.1711) argues successfully that the shame homosexuals ought to feel for their sin is actually a grace and a gift, saying: “If man wants to remove sodomy’s shame, one effective strategy is to level all sins, claiming that every sin is the moral equivalent of every other sin.”

[78] According to the United Nations “World Fertility Report of 2013”, the average age for marriage in South Africa as of 2008 is 32 for men and 29 for women, among the highest in Africa. But there are many advantages of more youthful marriage, even in one’s teenage years. The main reason is youthful marriage lessons the potential for immorality and illegitimate children. Because the male sex drive reaches its peak around 18 years of age, it is often foolish to prolong marriage to later in life.

4.3.2 Marriage is continued by commitment

4.3.2.1 The meaning of "cleave"

Ephesians 5:31 next tells the husband to "hold fast" (προσκολληθήσεται, *namarhela*) to his wife.[79] The Hebrew word is *dābaq,* signifying a strong emotional attachment and even a permanent, covenantal union Israel had with Yahweh.[80]

Davidson (2007:45) also believes the "clinging" and "holding fast" aspect of marriage has significant covenantal ties.[81] He says: "The divine intent for every husband and wife is that their marriage be formalized with a clinging—mutual commitment expressed in a formal covenant ceremony." This "commitment" spoken and shown at a formal marriage ceremony is what we shall focus on in this section.

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[79] "*Ku namarhela"* means to cling to something physically, though it could be used metaphorically, as it is in both translations of the Tsonga Bible. Van Rooy (2021) makes this helpful distinction regarding the word: "U nambatela, the Venḓa equivalent of 'ku namarhela' seems to refer exclusively to physical clinging, therefore the Venḓa translators opted for 'u vhofhekana'."

[80] The word often signifies a strong commitment to God, often in covenant form. For example: (1) "You shall fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and **hold fast** to him, and by his name you shall swear" (Dt 10:20); (2) Deuteronomy 11:22 For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and **holding fast** to him (Dt 11:22); (3) "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and **to cling** to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Jos 22:5); (4) But you shall **cling** to the LORD your God just as you have done to this day" (Jos 23:8); (5) "And David came to his house at Jerusalem. And the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to care for the house and put them in a house under guard and provided for them, but **did not go** in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood" (2Sm 20:3); (5) "For he **held fast** to the LORD. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the LORD commanded Moses" (2Ki 18:6).
Gordon Wenham (2006:20) agrees, saying: "The Hebrew term here translated 'be united,' which may also be rendered 'stick,' suggests a bond that cannot easily be broken. Indeed, the statement that they become 'one flesh' is a description of the relationship between close relatives (cf. Ge 29:14), which endures whatever changes occur to the related individuals."

[81] This is contra Heth (2006:61), who sees becoming "one flesh" as an abbreviated reference to the pledge of loyalty that Adam gave to Eve with God as witness in Gen 2:23 ("This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"). We are arguing here that the second verb "cleave" is closer to the pledge of loyalty in Gn 2:23 than is the third verb of becoming "one flesh."

4.3.2.2 Commitment biblically

Some argue marriage is not a covenant but really a contract because the *sine qua non* of a covenant is some kind of verbal or symbolic oath. Since Scripture gives no examples of this kind of marriage oath, as the argument goes, marriage cannot be a covenant. For example, they say, there is no reference to a covenant in Ge 2 or Eph 5. While Eze 16:8 ("I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord God, and you became mine") references "covenant" in relation to marriage, the context is a metaphoric marriage and thus does not apply. Pr 2:17 ("Who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God") also references "covenant" in relation to marriage but it is unclear if the covenant is between the woman and the husband or the woman and God. Malachi's reference to covenant and marriage in 2:14 ("She is your companion and your wife by covenant") may also be symbolic as well.

Each of these arguments can be answered. Regarding no use of "covenant" in Ge 2 and Eph 5, just because a *word* is absent doesn't mean the *idea* is absent. The purpose of Isa 1:10-15, for example, is hypocrisy, even though the word hypocrisy is not there. The theme of 2Sa 7 is the Davidic covenant, though the word "covenant" is absent. While Eze 16:8 does refer to a metaphoric marriage, Pro 2:17 is clearly speaking of a literal marriage bond slandered by the adulterous woman.[82] Waltke (2004:231) writes: "Her *covenant* means 'imposition,' or 'obligation' imposed upon her, more especially her marriage obligations, and the addition *with God* suggests that the Creator is the witness to and guarantor, and possibly author, of her marriage obligations." Regarding Mal 2, "covenant" is certainly a theme in chapter 2 (2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14; 3:1). While the word may refer to the bond between Israel and God in 2:10, the same is not true for 2:4, 5, 8 and 14 where God is witness to the covenant between the husband and wife.

[82] The adulterous woman's actions of violation against her husband are much different than the virtuous actions of Ruth. She was still loyal to her dead husband by not running "after young men" (Ru 3:10). This may refer to marriage (e.g. "For you have not sought to marry one of the young men," NET) and not simply fornication but the application is the same and in contrast to the lustful woman in Pr 2:17. The latter quickly left her commitment to her absent husband while Ruth was patient to marry the proper redeemer and not just anyone whereby she could satisfy her sexual desires.

4.3.2.3 Commitment by vows

A covenant needs an oath/vow for various reasons. An oath could be a solemn declaration. It could be a vow of self-malediction. It could be a formal pronouncement invoking deity to bring judgment upon a broken covenant. These vows may take different forms, but first it must be established that vows/oaths are necessary for a covenant to be formed.

In Bible times, an oath or a vow was the main component in establishing a covenant between two people or groups. God is actually called on to act as the enforcer of the agreement, as Adam did in Ge 2:23a. He is essentially asking God to hold him accountable to handle his wife correctly (Heth, 2006:61). Oaths are vital for the marriage covenant. An oath and a covenant are sometimes equated, as in Ps 89:3. "You have said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I have sworn to David my servant.'" Frame (2008:498) says: "When the oath is despised, the result is government corruption, civil injustice, and cultural chaos"

4.3.2.4 Vows in Eph 5:31ff

There are four indications that "hold fast" (προσκολληθήσεται, *namarela*) in Eph 5:31 includes the idea of a solemn vow in the marriage covenant. First, the word itself, as was explained at length in chapter 2.

Second, as referenced in Chapter 2, the excluded phrase in most modern translations "of his body and of his bones" at the end of v. 30 is quite significant because it may be a reference to an important item in the marriage covenant. For Adam, this was covenant terminology.[83] Bone and body language was showing the utmost devotion and loyalty to his wife, akin to the modern day "in sickness and in health" vow.

[83] In the OT, "holding fast" (*dābaq*) is often used as covenant language to show God's enduring bond with Israel. (1) Dt 10:20: "You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and **hold fast** to him, and by his name you shall swear." (2) Dt. 11:22: "For if you will be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways, and **holding fast** to him." (3) Dt. 13:4: "You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and **hold fast** to him." (4) Jos 22:5: "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to **cling to him** and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul." (5) Jos 23:8: "But you shall cling to the Lord your

In the same way, Eph 5:30 may have been using crucial covenant wording. How are believers "members of his body" (and thus wives members of their husband's body)? They are by covenant, that is, "of his flesh, and of his bones" (KJV). Could this be a tacit reference to the marriage covenant before introducing v. 31?

Third, Eph 5:26 may be a reference to a solemn vow in marriage. Christ cleanses the church by the "washing of water and the word." In marriage, we saw this cleansing may have been a reference to the wife's prenuptial bath. After this comes "the word", the vows.

Fourth, there are numerous solemn vows throughout Scripture. Adam spoke a vow to God in Ge 2:23, using common oath terminology by calling Eve "bone of my bone".

4.3.2.5 Commitment, vows, and marriage according to Hugenberger

In *Marriage as a Covenant,* Hugenberger (1994:126) uses Malachi 2[84] to argue that marriage is primarily a covenant. A thorough understanding of marriage as a covenant helps answer a host of questions about matrimony in the OT. (1) What was the precise role of the bride price? (2) Can marriage be dissolved? (3) Is there any legal status that goes with a premarital sexual union? (4) Who are covenant partners? Is it the parents or the bride and groom? (5) What ratifies the covenant of marriage? Is it the gift, the vow, or the sexual act? (6) What constitutes covenant breaking? Is it divorce? Is it fornication? Or, is marriage unbreakable?[85]

Hugenberger believes the *sine qua non* of "covenant" is the verbal, symbolic, ratifying oath and that covenants may take place even though the word "covenant" is not mentioned (2Sm. 7; cf. 2Sm. 23:5; Gn. 2 with Adam and Eve).

Eze 16:8, Pr 2:17, and Mal 2:14 explicitly refer to marriage as a covenant. As stated before, he defines covenant as "an elected, as opposed to natural, relationship of obligation under oath" (1994:11). Contracts don't have oaths; covenants do. Oath makes it binding. A covenant is a union based on an oath. Hugenberger wants to find

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God just as you have done to this day." (6) 2Ki 18:6: "For he **held fast** to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses."

[84] Hugernberger (1994:126) says "Mal 2:15 is one of the most difficult passages of the whole Old Testament."

[85] Scripture often speaks of covenants being broken (Gn. 17:14; Dt. 31:20; 1Kngs. 15:19; Isa. 24:5; Jer. 11:10, 14:21; 31:32; 33:20; Zech. 11:10ff).

the marriage ideal. An overview of Hugenberger's groundbreaking work on marriage as a covenant is in order.

In chapter one, Hugenberger (1994:13-26) addresses the interpretive context of Malachi 2:10-16. The theme in Malachi is covenant (2:4, 5, 8, 10, 14; 3:1). Though Yahweh is witness between a man and his wife by covenant (2:10-16), Judah is unfaithful to God by intermarriage to pagan wives and unlawful divorce.

In chapter two, Hugenberger (1994:27-47) argues for the traditional interpretation that the covenant in Malachi 2:14 ("she is your companion and wife by covenant") refers to marriage because God is witness between the husband and wife's marriage in 2:14a.

In chapter three, Hugenberger (1994:48-83) argues that 2:16 is condemning unlawful divorce and not divorce in general. He believes it can be reconciled with Ezra 9-10 and that the passage agrees with Dt 24 perfectly.

In chapter four, Hugenberger (1994:84-123) addresses Mal 2:10-16 and how it relates with the apparent toleration of polygyny elsewhere in Scripture. Some believe that Mal and Ezra are at odds because Mal forbids divorce but Ezra 10 seems to receive a divine mandate for divorce. In fact, these two books do not disagree at all because they are addressing different issues. Malachi is rebuking unjustified divorce based on aversion (i.e. strong dislike). Ezra, however, addresses a different issue. Some, like Heth and Wenham, believe that what happened in Ezra 10 was not divorce at all but dissolution of invalid unions (1985:162-164), similar to Michal's marriage to Paltiel at the instigation of Ishbosheth in 2Sa 3:15.[86] Why was this not a divorce but instead a kind of annulment of an invalid marriage? First, unusual vocabulary is used by Ezra to describe both the original unions (10:2,10) and the following dissolution (10:3, 11). Malachi does not use these atypical terms in 2:16. Second, Ezra was in very unusual

[86] The verse says, "And Ish-bosheth sent and took her from her husband Paltiel the son of Laish." Omanson and Ellington (2001:684) agree that Paltiel was technically not really the husband of Michal. Instead it was some kind of invalid union. "Husband" is used for ease of language, though they believe it would be better for clarity sake to use a different word. "Instead of saying 'her husband' it may be necessary in some cases to say something like 'the man she was living with at the time' or 'her current husband.'" Bergen (1996:309) also agrees that Ish-bosheth was right to follow David's demand "perhaps in part because he recognized the sinfulness of his father's actions in separating Michal from David." Thus, this passage does not address the matter of divorce but what makes a valid marriage.

circumstances. The spouses[87] did not initiate these actions but instead were corporate actions passed to guilty husbands. Thus, the main issue in Ezra was religious syncretism and idolatry. These marriages were not against general racial miscegenation (for it would have perhaps been legitimate for a Jew to marry a converted Gentile) but idolatry was issue.

In chapter five, Hugenberger (1994:124-167) argues for marriage as covenant (e.g. creating a unity between unrelated persons) in Mal 2:14-15 and says this is nothing new from the rest of Scripture. This point is important because some say that marriage as covenant did not exist in the Old Testament. This cannot be true because the first marriage between the first two humans was a covenant and parallels the covenant of marriage in Malachi 2. This is seen in three ways. First, just as the paradigm marriage of Adam and Eve was made "one flesh" in matrimony (Ge 2:24), so it was in Malachi's day. "Did he not make them one" (Mal 2:15a)? Second, just as Ge 2:23 shows the husband's obligation to be faithful to his wife, so does Mal. 2:14-16. Third, there is a ratifying declaration formula[88] in both passages.

> *Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." (Ge 2:23)*
>
> *Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth… (Mal 2:14)*

In chapter six, Hugenberger (1994:168-215) defines the covenant and the oath. A covenant must have some kind of ratifying oath. A covenant is an elected relationship established under divine sanction. A covenant has four ingredients: (1) A relationship, (2) with a non-relative, (3) with obligations[89], (4) that are established through an oath.

This oath is a solemn, positive declaration with words or it may be depicted in action like sharing a meal or giving a hand. The reader should notice three things about the covenant/oath chart below. (1) How often "covenant", "swearing" and "oath" are

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[87] The word "spouse" comes from the Latin *spondere,* which is the past particle of "be troth", to make a promise.

[88] A similar formula can be found 2 Sa 5:1 ("Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'Behold, we are your bone and flesh.'").

[89] It should be noted that the obligations are focused primarily from the husband to the wife (and not vice versa). In Mal 2:14-16, the husband shows faithfulness to the wife. In Ge 2:24 it is the man that leaves father and mother.

virtually synonymous, these words weaving themselves between each other. (2) The symbols that are often attached to the covenant oaths. (3) The times there are covenant symbols without the word “covenant” or “oath” being found.

	Passage	Verbal	Symbol/English	Symbol/Tsonga
1.	Ge 15	“Covenant” (v. 18)	Animals “cut in half” (v. 10)	*[Swiharhi] a swi avanyisa hi le xikarhi*
2.	Ge 21:22ff	“Swear” (vv. 23-24); “covenant” (vv. 27, 32); “witness” (v. 30)	Seven ewe lambs (v. 28)	*Tinyimpfu letitsongo ta nkombo*
3.	Ge 26:26ff	“Sworn pact”, “covenant” (v. 28)	Feast (v. 30)	*Fihluta*
4.	Ge 29:22-27	--	Feast (v. 22)	*Nkhuvo*
5.	Jos 9:15-20	“Covenant” (vv. 15-16); “swore” (vv. 15, 18-20).	--	--
6.	Ru 3:9	--	Clothing	*Swiambalo*
7.	1Ki 9:16	--	Dowry	*Ku averiwa ka yena*
8.	2Ki 10:15	--	“Give me your hand”	*Va khomana hi mavoko*
9.	2Ki 11:4	“Covenant”; “oath”	--	--
10.	Eze16:8-12	“Vow”; “covenant”	“I bathed you”; “I clothed you”	*Ndzi ku hlantswa ematini, Ndzi ku ambexa nguvu*
11.	Eze 17:13ff	“Covenant” (vv. 13-16); “oath” (vv. 13, 16, 18, 19;	--	--
12.	Ps 78:63	--	Marriage song	*Tinsimu ta minkhuvo ya vukati*
13.	Ps 106:26	“Swore”	Raised his hand	*Xi tlakusile voko ra xona*
14.	Isa 61:10	--	Groom…beautiful headdress; bride…jewels	*Muvuti…musingasoro; Mutekiwa…ku saseka ka nsuku*
15.	La 5:6	--	“Given the hand”	*Hi tshambulute mavoko*

In chapters seven and eight, Hugenberger (216-338) also argues that oaths are often not found in marriage covenants in Scripture because the examples we find are really contracts. What we really see are arrangements far after the marriage has taken place and thus we should not expect to see an oath. Perhaps many oaths are not found in Scripture because most “covenants” are really *contracts.* An oath is a solemn

declaration invoking God to act against you if you are false to the commitment (2Sm 3:35).

4.3.2.6 Ten more observations about oaths

First, oaths adjure God to witness a promise. An oath is a promise to God whereby a person calls upon His judgment should the vow not be kept. It is swearing "by something greater than" himself (Heb 6:16). There are times in Scripture when a vow is made but God's name is not specifically invoked. Joseph told his brothers, "By this you shall be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here" (Gen 42:15).

Second, oaths are sometimes commanded. Scripture sometimes instructs people to make a vow. The Psalmist said, "Perform your vows to the Most High" (Ps. 50:14). If someone leaves a farm animal with his neighbor and that animal somehow dies without anyone's knowledge, an oath must be made "by the Lord" between both to see who is right (Ex. 22:10-11). David made vows before the congregation of God's people (Ps. 22:25).

Third, oaths are marks of allegiance to God when done in his name. " It is the Lord your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear" (Dt 6:13). Jeremiah speaks of a people who swear by God's name, "As the Lord lives" (Jer 12:16).

Fourth, oaths are made by God. The angel of the Lord said to Abraham, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son" (Gen 22:16). Yahweh "swore an oath" to the fathers of Israel (Jer 11:5), "swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back" (Ps 132:11), and made a holy covenant—an "oath that he swore to our father Abraham" (Lk. 1:73). Some people argue that God may make oaths because he is God but humans should not make vows because they are sinners. But Frame makes an excellent point that *because* God is so just and true, there would be even less reason for him to make a vow. He cannot lie. Frame (2008: 499) writes: "If he, who is perfectly trustworthy and even self-attesting, sometimes confirms his word with an oath, surely there are times when we ought to do the same".

Fifth, oaths are made by other prominent Bible characters. Abram made an oath with the king of Salem (Ge 14:22-23). We have Jacob's vow in Ge 28:20–22, Israel's vow in Nu 21:2, Hannah's vow in 1 Sa 1:11, and Absalom's vow in 2 Sa 15:7–8. To emphasize his yearning for the Philippians, Paul said, "God is my witness" (Php 1:8) as he also said to the Thessalonians (1Th 2:5).

Sixth, oaths are serious and solemn. Some people point to passages in Scripture that seem to forbid oaths. For example, Jesus said:

> *Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' **34** But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, **35** or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil (Mt 5:33-37).*

James 5:12 says a similar thing. These passages, however, do not strictly prohibit vows for two reasons. First, because there are so many other passages of Scripture encouraging oaths, it would not make sense for Jesus to ban them. Second, Jesus in Matthew 5 is countering the hypocritical way in which the Jewish leaders are carrying out God's laws. They were not taking oaths to *encourage* personal responsibility but taking oaths rather to *avoid* personal responsibility. They were using vows as word games to do what they wanted. Jesus is telling the people that oaths are very serious and they should not enter them lightly. Peter did this when trying to convince the crowd he did not now Jesus (Mk 14:71).

Seventh, oaths must be lawful. Vows are forbidden if made to idols (Ex. 23:13). Today, this would include oaths within the Masonic Lodge, a marriage oath between close family members or a believer making wedding vows to an unbeliever (2 Co 6:14). The latter example is unlawful but still valid and cannot be annulled after marriage simply because it is an interfaith marriage, as Paul states in 1Co 7. This leads to the next point.

Eighth, oaths may be retractable when done with the wrong intent. There are at least five examples in Scripture of vows that, because they encouraged sin, could have or should have been withdrawn. First, Number 30:3-16 says a woman's foolish vow in some circumstances can be withdrawn by her higher authority (e.g. her father or

husband). Second, Matthew 14:1-12 tells of a foolish vow Herod gave to the daughter of Herodias to take the head of John the Baptist. He should have reversed his promise. Third, 1 Sm 25 points to a hasty oath David made to kill all the males in Nabal's household. After Abigail's thoughtful counsel, he wisely changed course. Fourth, 1 Sm 14 references Saul's oath to kill anyone that ate food prematurely. After his son Jonathan ate honey, Saul wisely changed his mind. Fifth, Jdg 11 speaks of a vow Jephthah made regarding his daughter. Though there is much dispute as to the meaning of his oath, most would agree it was rash.[90]

Ninth, oaths should be kept. Lev 19:12 says, "You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord." If a man makes a vow to the Lord, "he shall not break his word" (Nu 30:2), even if it is to his enemies (2Sa 21:1-14) or bring hurt upon himself (Ps. 15:4).

Tenth, oaths are verbal. Aquinas (1981:2714) says: "In every contract there must be expression of the words by which men bind themselves mutually to one another….The consent which makes a marriage must also be expressed in words." He goes on to make two clarifications. One is that sometimes the parents may make these words. "[In some cases] the words of the parents are taken as being the maid's, for the fact that she does not contradict them is a sign that they are her words." Second, if consent is only a *future* promise, it is not binding as if it were a present promise. Aquinas (1981:2714) writes:

> *A man who consents in words of the future tense to take a particular woman as his wife, and after, by words of the present tense, consents to take another, according to law must take the second for his wife…. But this would not be the case if consent given in words of the future tense made a marriage, since from the very fact that his marriage with the one is valid, he cannot, as long as she lives, marry another. Therefore consent given in words of the future tense does not make a marriage.*

[90] The two primary views of Jephthah's vow are either (1) the father literally vowed to sacrifice his daughter and carried through his rash promise by killing her, thus pointing to the spiritual decadence in Judges, or, (2) the sacrifice was not literal but a promise to keep his daughter a propetual virgin. Block (1999:367) says Jephtheh's vow was even worse than just "rash". "Although some may interpret the vow as rash and hastily worded…it is preferable to see here another demonstration of his shrewd and calculating nature, another attempt to manipulate circumstances to his own advantage…. In this instance Jephthah was neither rash nor pious (in the orthodox Yahwistic sense)—he was outrightly pagan."

4.3.2.7 Commitment by vows must be public

Public vows before witnesses help ensure the promise will be kept. Sinners try to escape duty when times get tough. In the NT, “two or three witnesses” appears four times, all in the realm of church discipline. Two or three should rebuke an unresponsive sinner, “that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses” (Mt 18:16; c.f. 2Co 13:1). The church should not hear an accusation against an elder unless confirmed by two or three witnesses (1Ti 5:19). The death penalty in the OT came on the evidence of two or three witnesses (Heb 10:28).

Witnesses were needed to make the accusation stick. These testifiers had to be somewhat authoritative as well. It can be assumed that children or criminals were not allowed. For a wedding, it seems therefore the church should be present to keep the spouses honest. Government could serve as an “observer” as well in the form of a marriage certificate.

Adam’s vow to his wife in Ge 2:23 was public and before all the world. Moreover, he spoke of “this” (third person) woman, showing that Adam was speaking to God as his witness.

4.3.2.8 Breaking the commitment can break the marriage covenant

What breaks the marriage covenant?[91] Some argue that the marriage covenant cannot be broken (Palmer, 1972:639) and is indissoluble. According to Palmer, this is the difference between contracts and covenants. The former can be broken but the latter cannot. Others argue sexual immorality breaks the marriage covenant. Others say divorce is what breaks the marriage union. “If marriage is understood in covenant

[91] Though the parameters of this paper do not allow for a discussion on the various views on divorce and remarriage, it would be wise to adhere to Gordon Wenham (2006:20) that there is a point in which all positions can agree: “[A] point of agreement is the understanding that divorce is a failure due to sin. As Jesus put it, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was nto this way from the beginning’ (Mt 19:8). Though *all* of us are sinners, and this fact will have an obvious impact on the marriage relationship, to agree that divorce is caused by sin is not to say that, when it occurs, both parties are equally to blame. Some divorced people are more innocent than others. But when divorce occurs, it demonstrates a breakdown in relationships, which is at odds with the gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation. God loves us even though we are sinners (Ro 5:8), so his peole should love each other despite the experience and reality of sin.”

terms, then the possibility of divorce must be discussed as the possibility of breaking the covenant" (Atkinson, 1979, 91).

4.3.2.9 Jewish examples of "cleaving" in Scripture

Earlier at least one aspect of the first stage in Jewish marriage was discussed under the "consent" aspect of marriage. When it comes to the second aspect of marriage, the Jews would practice several more actions as the wedding day drew near.

First is the bridal bath and anointing (Eze 16:9). The Lord says to his bride: "Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil." Chapter 2 above showed how Eph 5:26 references this ceremony.

Second is the wedding clothing (Eze 16:10-12; Ru 3:9). The Lord spoke of arraying his bride in beautiful clothing of linen and silk and ornaments and bracelets. She does not approach her groom in drab, every-day garb but in garments pointing toward marriage. She is fitted with gold and silver and has a ring in her nose and earrings in her ears and a crown upon her head and a chain around her neck (vv. 11-13). Certain clothing and jewelry were symbols pointing to marriage. Ruth asked Boaz to marry her by saying: "Spread the corner of your garment over me" (Ru 3:9).[92] Grooms dressed in a special way on their wedding day, as did brides (Isa 61:10). The Psalmist describes the bride wearing robes "many-colored" and "interwoven with gold" (Ps 45:13-14). The virgin Rebekah wore a veil as her husband-to-be approached her (Ge 24:65).

[92] The NET note says: "In the metaphorical account in Ezek 16:8, God spreads his skirt over naked Jerusalem as an act of protection and as a precursor to marriage. Thus Ruth's words can be taken, in effect, as a marriage proposal (and are so translated here; cf. TEV 'So please marry me')." Block (1999:691) writes: "Ruth is hereby requesting (even demanding) that Boaz take her under his wing and assume responsibility for her security. But there is more to the demand than this. The word *kānāp* is gloriously ambiguous, referring not only to the wings of a bird but also to a skirt, the corners of one's flowing garments (hence NIV). Literally then this statement could be interpreted as a request by Ruth to Boaz to cover her and protect her from the chill of the night. He is not the only one shivering. But there is still more to the demand, for in common Hebrew usage 'to spread one's wings over someone' was a euphemistic idiom for marriage. The gesture of a man covering a woman with his garment was a symbolic act, which according to Near Eastern custom signified [a new relationship]."

Third is the giving of the dowry to the bride.[93] A dowry refers to a wedding present of property or gifts that the bride's family gives to her. When the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh married Solomon, her father gave her the captured city of Gezer to her as a dowry (Ge 29:27). Micah 1:14 refers to a dowry or "parting gifts". In the context, the royal Canaanite city of Lachish is compared to a father who gives wedding gifts to his daughter as she departs her father's home to take up dwelling with her husband. After Othniel had won the hand of Caleb's daughter, it seems natural when Caleb asks his daughter: "What do you want" (Jdg 1:14)? She asked him for another gift beyond what he had already given her. He agreed.

Fourth is singing and celebration. Ps 78:63 speaks of a marriage song. Jeremiah references singing and laughter in the streets of Jerusalem on typical occasions would surround the joyful voices of the bride and groom (7:34). Israel's sin will put an end to joyful wedding songs (16:9).

Fifth is a lengthy wedding meal. Jacob had to "complete the week" (Ge 29:27) with Leah before his marriage to Rachel. This week "refers to the festal events of the week-long celebration" (Mathews, 2005:471).[94] Samson hosted a week-long celebration for his wedding (Jdg 14:12), which seemed customary for the bridegrooms to do (v. 10).[95]

Sixth, the father presents the bride to the groom. Laban brought his daughter Leah to Jacob (Ge 29:23). God himself "brought [Eve] to the man" (Ge 2:22). The terminology 'brought' is reminiscent of God's presentation of the animals to the man (2:19). This echo supports what the man realizes: the woman is Adam's human partner (Mathews, 1996:218).

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[93] Coppan (2011:117) says of the dowry: "The marriage gift—preserved by the husband throughout the marriage—also served as security for the wife in case of divorce or her husband's death. In fact, the bride's father would often give an even larger tift of property [in various other circumstances]."

[94] The NET note on this verse says: "Complete my older daughter's bridal week." The NET note says this bridal week refers to an ancient Hebrew marriage ceremony that included an entire week of festivities.

[95] Block (1999:430) considers the Hebrew word *mišteh* and concludes this was not an innocent party but a "seven-day drinking bout at the home of the bride's parents…. The narrator notes that this stag party was a Philistine custom involving the select young men of the town."

Seventh is the blessing upon the couple and the guests. Before Rebekah left her home to be married, her parents pronounced a blessing upon her. "Our sister[96], may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him" (Ge 24:60)! A large crowd was present at Ruth's wedding to Boaz when the elders pronounced a blessing upon them:

> *"We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you act worthily in Ephrathah and be renowned in Bethlehem, and may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah, because of the offspring that the Lord will give you by this young woman" (Ru 4:11-12).*

4.3.3 Marriage is concluded by consummation

Here we find the third stepping-stone in the formation of marriage: marriage is concluded by consummation. This is the existential perspective.

Just as a covenant on its own does not make a marriage, neither does sex on its own make a marriage. Sex without a covenant is fornication or adultery (1Cor. 6:16-18). For example, a man may have sexual relations with a prostitute and become "one flesh" (1Cor. 6:15-16). But this does not make her his wife. Scripture never calls her this. Instead, the man is told to "flee sexual immorality" (v. 18).

Sexual intimacy is not enough to make a marriage, though conjugal rights are crucial and necessary elements of the marriage covenant (1Cor 7:1-5). A covenant without the sexual act (that is, a "one flesh" union that could result in pregnancy) is not a covenant at all, for this contract only makes a business partner or teammate or fellow soldier, but not a spouse.

4.3.3.1 The meaning of "one-flesh"

"To consummate" means to complete, conclude, finish, accomplish, achieve, and carry out. It comes from the Latin noun *consummat,* meaning "brought to completion", and

[96] "Our sister" may refer to the change of relationship they have with their family member, which meshes nicely with the command in Ge 2:24 for each spouse to "leave" their parents both physically and psychologically.

the verb *consummare,* from *con* (“altogether”) and *summa* (“sum total”) or *summus* (“highest, supreme”).

Davidson (2007:47-48) says that the one-flesh union speaks specifically of sexual intercourse but is not limited to this experience, arguing that this union speaks of “the deepest kind of intimacy, a total transparency between marriage partners” and that “it indicates a oneness and intimacy in the total relationship of the whole person of the husband to the whole person of the wife, a harmony and union with each other in all things”.

Sexual intercourse without some kind of covenant vow or public symbol of commitment is not marriage. Sex with a prostitute does in some sense create a one-flesh union. Paul asks the Corinthians, “Do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh’” (1Co 6:16). But Paul clearly does not view this as marriage because he urges this fornicator to “flee” this sexual immorality (v. 18). Remaining in the brothel would not mean remaining with one’s wife but remaining in sin.

That the “one-flesh” union comes as the final of the three marks of marriage formation in Eph 5:31 is significant. Sexual union is the capstone, the final consummation mark of marriage. Contrary to many societies throughout history, Scripture says the sexual union must only come within the marriage covenant and *after* the vows.

Lawrence (2005:137-38) writes: “Now if marriage is a covenant, then that covenant must have a sign, something that makes visible the invisible reality of this one-flesh union….The sign of that unique covenant relationship is the physical act of becoming one flesh in sexual intercourse.”

4.3.3.2 Consummation and commitment

Sexual consummation is a crucial aspect of a legitimate marriage union. As has been noted, commitment without heterosexual sex does not form a marriage covenant. For example, David and Jonathan made a commitment (1Sa. 18:3) but they were not married. Homosexuals may exchange vows but it is impossible to have same-sex marriage.

4.3.3.3 Consummation and the magistrate

With sexual intercourse come economic and social transfers. Sexual intimacy brings to the fore a host of issues like property, children, and inheritance, which is why the magistrate should be involved in the marriage process.[97]

We have already seen that covenants have signs. Since the first step of marriage has an outward sign ("leave"; permission, engagement, bride price etc.) and the second step of marriage has an outward sign ("cleave"; public vows), it follows that the third step ("one flesh") has a sign as well, not only the private sexual "one flesh" union" but an outward sign as well to protect the fruits of this one-flesh union. It will be argued here that this outward sign in most cultures will take the form of some kind of marriage license or certificate.

There are two reasons why the magistrate should be involved in the marriage process. First, marriage as a divine institution and marriage as a civil institution are not mutually exclusive. It does not follow that just because God created marriage that somehow the magistrate should not be involved, any more than a man that should be obedient to God should somehow no longer be obliged to be obedient to the State.

Second, there are obligations that the State *can* enforce that the Church cannot. Indeed, there are some commands given to the State that have not been given to the Church. For example, suppose a man weds his wife before the church only. Suppose that after a few years he empties the family's bank account, takes the car and leaves his wife and two children behind. At this point, the most the church can do is excommunicate the man. Only government can rectify the losses. The church does not have the power of the sword. The church cannot fix the issues of child support and property rights. Only the magistrate can police these issues. Thus, marriage is not only a "church" issue.

Below are three ways the civil magistrate should be involved in marriage: it should recognize, restrain and reward marriage.

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[97] Hodge (2007:3:378) argues for this in his *Systematic Theology*: "Marriage also involves, on both sides, rights to property; and the claims of children born in wedlock to the property of their parents. All these questions concerning property fall legitimately under the control of the civil law. In many countries not only property, but rank, title, and political prerogatives are implicated with the question of marriage."

4.3.3.3.1 Government should restrain marriage

According to Romans 13, the State has an important role in guarding a biblical definition of marriage.[98] One of the central roles of government is to restrain evil. The longest passage in the New Testament that speaks on this idea is Romans 13:1-7:

> *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* ***2*** *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.* ***3*** *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,* ***4*** *for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer [ἔκδικος εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι, yi rhumiwile hi Xikwembu ku va murihiseti la baka mudyohi].* ***5*** *Therefore one must be in subjection,*

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[98] Chapter one in Grudem's (2010:23-54) *Politics* is entitled "Five Wrong Views About Christians and Government." His second wrong view is "government should excluse religion" and is pertinent here. This view says that religion should never be mentioned in government. He gives the example of the ACLU, who effectively believes that religion is a private affair. This particular position is opposed to public displays of the Ten Commandments, prayers at public school social events, "in God we trust" on national money, and crosses on state seals. Grudem believes the primary spiritual basis for the "exclude religion" view is the desire to remove all moral standards and to make society completely secular. He gives six reasons why the "exclude religion" viewpoint is wrong. Here are four. First, it fails to distinguish between the reasons for a law from the content of the law. Most of our laws (like stealing, murder and slavery) have religious reasons behind them, though they do not "establish" a religion. This could in turn lead to invalidating any decision a Christian makes. Second, it changes freedom *of* religion into freedom *from* religion. Third, it wrongly restricts freedom of religion and freedom of speech. Speaking a religious opinion in public is not compelling people to accept that viewpoint. People should be free to base their decisions on Scripture, Confucius, Buddha, Dr. Phil or whoever. It's not the job of the Supreme Court to decide whose votes are legit and whose are not. Fourth, it removes from government God's teaching about good and evil (Rom. 13:4, 1 Pt. 2:14). Biblical examples of God's people giving counsel to rulers are Daniel to King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:27), John the Baptist to Herod the Tetrarch (Luke 3:19), and Paul to Felix (Acts 24:25).

Elsewhere Grudem (2010:97) talks about how governments significantly influence people's moral convictions and behavior and the moral fabric of a nation. They can passage laws of iniquity (Isa. 10:1) or ones that lead to a quiet and peaceable life (1Tm. 2:2). This points to marriage specifically because rules teach the nation by personal example. If the President has four wives or numerous extramarital affairs, he is at least implicitely teaching the nations a particular moral (or, immoral) standard. Moreover, a nation's laws serve as a teaching function. If these laws allow polygamy or child brides or homosexual unions or no-fault divorce, they are in affect catechizing the people. Grudem (2010:98) writes: "The [government's] laws have a teaching function, and they influence people's ideas of right and wrong."

> *not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. **6** For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. **7** Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

The Apostle Paul says that government is to be a "terror" [φοβοῦ; *va chaviwa*] to bad conduct (v. 3) and an "avenger" on behalf of God to punish the "wrongdoer" (v. 4). Practically, good governments that wanted to obey this command in the realm of marriage would seek to protect child custody, help define marriage, oversee alimony, and encourage couples to have children.

This reflects the Old Testament ideal as well (Gen 9:5-6). First Peter 2:13-14 also speaks of the government's role in checking wickedness in a society.

> *Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, **14** or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil [εἰς ἐκδίκησιν κακοποιῶν, ku avanyisa lava endlaka leswo biha] and to praise those who do good.*

Both passages use the same Greek noun ἐκδίκησις, which means, "to punish on the basis of what is rightly deserved" (Louw-Nida, 1996:489). Tsonga uses *ku ba* (to beat, to hit) and *ku avanyisa* (to punish) respectively. According to Scripture government has the God given authority to control and, if possible, prevent evil in the world. It would be inconsistent and without biblical precedent to say government should restrain evil in realms such as economics (e.g. money laundering, Ponzi schemes), politics (e.g. corruption, voting fraud), and safety (e.g. abortion, speed limits) but should have nothing to do with curbing the evils within marriage. When government properly defines marriage, it is at the same time following its role of subduing wickedness in the culture. Grudem (2010:221) explains how:

> *Marriage restrains evil by promoting sexual faithfulness between a man and a woman, by establishing a legally binding commitment for parents to care for their children, by establishing a legally binding commitment for spouses to be financially responsible for and to care for one another, and by providing a legal protection to keep women from being exploited by men who might otherwise enjoy a sexual relationship for a time and then abandon a woman and nay children she may have borne from that union.*

Notice the evils restrained by analyzing the flipside of the virtues Grudem lists: (1) adultery, (2) child abandonment, (3) theft, and (4) exploitation. Thus, Hodge

(2007:378) says that marriage is a civil institution because it imposes civil obligations that the state has the right to enforce.

4.3.3.3.2 Government should reward marriage

As the passage states above, the magistrate also has the responsibility to reward righteousness. He is not a terror to “good conduct” (Rm. 13:3) but does “good” and gives “approval” for “your good” (vv. 3-4). Peter says the government is to “praise those who do good” (1Pt. 2:4). When the government promotes a biblical view of marriage, in encourages a strong society in the realms of child-raising, the economy and morals.

For example, Parke (2003:8) uses research to show that, on average, children who grow up in homes with both their biological parents in a low-conflict marriage are better off in a number of ways than children who grow up in single-, step- or cohabiting-parent households. Moreover, compared to kids brought up by their married parents, children in other family types are more likely to achieve lower levels of education, to become teen parents, and to experience health, behavior, and mental health problems. And children in single- and cohabiting-parent families are more likely to be poor. If this is true, then government should carry out its role to “do good” by rewarding marriages done the proper way.

Government should do what it can to encourage marriage because of all the societal benefits it brings to the nation. Grudem (2010:223-225) lists nine advantages. (1) Marriage provides a better environment for having babies than any other relationship or institution. (2) Married couples raise and nurture children far better than any other human relationship or institution. (3) Marriage provides a guarantee of lifelong companionship and care far better than any other human relationship or institution. (4) Marriage leads to a higher economic standard and diminished likelihood of ending up in poverty for men and women. (5) Marriage provides women with protection against domestic violence and abandonment far better than any other human relationship or institution. (6) Marriage encourages men towards socially beneficial pursuits far better than any other human relationship or institution. (7) Men and women in general have an innate instinct that values sexual faithfulness in intimate relationships, and marriage provides a societal encouragement of such faithfulness far better than any other relationship or institution. (8) Marriage provides greater protection against sexually

transmitted diseases than any other relationship or institution.[99] (9) The biological design of men's and women's bodies argues that sexual intimacy is designed to be loved and enjoyed between only one man and one woman.

So while it is God through his holy Word that defines marriage and his church that blesses it, it is also the civil magistrate that should seek to reward properly defined marriages.

4.3.3.3.3 Government should recognize marriage

The civil magistrate is not the sole definer of marriage. There would be biblical marriage whether the State existed or not. Hodge (2007:378) is certainly on point:

> *The legitimate power of the state in all these matters [of marriage] is limited by the revealed will of God. It can make nothing an impediment to marriage that the Scriptures do not declare to be a bar to that union. It can make nothing a ground of dissolving the marriage contract which the Bible does not make a valid ground of divorce. And the state can attach none other than civil pains and penalty to the violation of its laws concerning marriage.*

But acknowledging this has led some Christians to believe that government should have no part at all in the confirmation or approval of marriage. They say marriage is a matter of the Church only. But we have already seen that because government should do "good" for a society and because an ordered society is considered good, then government should properly recognize and define marriage because it brings order to society. If there is no public record for married couples, how can the public know for sure who is married and who is not? If a child is left in the streets, how is one to know the father or mother without some kind of certification?

The reason this is the role of government and not the church is that the church only has authority over its own members. If the State does not define marriage for the society, it will lead to chaos and confusion. Though specific application toward African

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[99] The article "Marriage: The Safest Place for Women and Children" by Fagan and Johnson (2002) uses social science data to show that because mothers and children are safest and thrive best in a married family, government should adopt policies that reflect this knowledge and rebuild, rather than undermine, the institution of marriage. The many statistics include: (1) Never married mothers experience nearly three times as much domestic abuse as married or separated mothers. (2) The children of divorces or never-married mothers are six to thirty times more likely to suffer serious child abuse.

examples will be developed at length in the next chapter, one illustration here will serve its purpose. Consider the case of Hlengani Moyana and his first and second wives Modjadji Mayelani and Mphephu Ngwenyama. According to Parker (2013), the issue centers on the effect the lack of consent of a spouse has on a customary marriage and the validity of a further or subsequent customary marriage to the husband. That is, how important is "consent" in marriage when it comes to customary law in Xitsonga culture? The magistrate was called on to decide.

According to the case records, Mr. Moyana's polygynous marriage[100] to both women was unbeknownst to the other. When Mr. Moyana died in 2009, both of his wives tried to have their marriages legally recognized by the Department of Home Affairs. They had been married according to African custom and tradition but had not been registered in accordance with the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act. The first wife, Modjadji Mayelani, also attempted to have the second marriage declared void because her husband had not followed custom and informed her about his desire to take a second wife. Beyond this, Mr. Moyana had not even followed the legal procedures for a customary marriage, which demands a written contract to define where property goes among the wives. According to section 7(6) of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 120 of 1998, a husband in a customary marriage that wants to enter another marriage must have the court approve a written contract that will standardize the future matrimonial property.

Since Mr. Moyana never made such a contract, higher courts declared his marriage with his second wife Mrs. Ngwenyama null and void. Vatsonga men must get permission for additional marriages (Parker: 2013). The Supreme Court, however, later reversed this decision.

Per Maithufi (2013:1078), this case held that the "consent of an existing first wife of a customary marriage was a requirement for the validity of the second or further customary marriage, that is, in the absence of such consent, the subsequent customary marriage would be invalid."

[100] Though the terms "polygamy" and "polygyny" are often used interchangeably, there is a small distinction. Technically, polygamy refers to a relationship with two or more spouses. Polygyny is more specific. It is a relationship of a man with two or more wives. Since it is almost unheard of for a wife to have two or more simultaneous husbands, the terms are essentially synonymous.

The purpose of this illustration above is not to argue for or against the morality of polygyny. Nor is it the goal in this section to unravel the modern merits of Tsonga customary marriage. This will be addressed in the next chapter. Rather, the goal of highlighting this case is to show the chaos that ensues when there is no logistical and legal documentation around the institution of marriage.[101] Some say the marriage vows at the church are sufficient. Others who pay the lobola see no benefit of registering the marriage with the magistrate. Among the problems this rationale presents is the inability to safely administer the spouse's estate upon death.[102]

Hodge (2007c:378) is on point, then, when he says: "It belongs to the state, therefore, as the guardian of these rights, to determine what marriages are lawful and what unlawful; how the contract is to be solemnized and authenticated; and what shall be its legal consequences."

4.4 Efficient Cause: Making covenant marriage

Another crucial question arises on the various "causes" of marriage. Who is the creator of the marriage union? There are at least two ways to answer this particular question.

4.4.1 God as the efficient cause of marriage

God Almighty is the efficient cause of marriage in that he created the first marriage and thereby defined it. For example, just as God is the efficient cause of Themba's wedding in 2020 based on Adam's wedding thousands of years prior, so was James Naismeth (the inventor of the game of basketball) the efficient cause of a 2020 basketball team in China based on his creation of the game a hundred years prior. The team in China never met nor does it know anything about Naismeth, though there

[101] Wilson (2016:67) prefers "that all legitimate marriages be *registered* with the state, and not *licensed* by the state" because he sees "licensing" as having too much power. If the State commands the Church to change the biblical definition of marriage or to comply in marriage celebrations which Scripture denounces, she is bound to disobey the powers that be and obey God rather than man (Ac. 4:18-22).

[102] Per the Mail and Guardian staff reporter (2012), though thousands of customary marriages are registered each year, only a handful of section 7(6) contracts are entered into. If registering a marriage is so important and wise, why do so many customary marriage neglect to do so? There are at least two reasons. First, most husbands know their first wife will not consent to a second marriage. Thus, he does so secretly and without proper protocal. Second, the rules for such procedures can be complicated. The wife sometimes must be accompanied by the husband, who often doesn't want to come. Combine this with issues of finances, transport and language barriers and the process rarely happenes.

is a real sense in which he created their team. In a similar way, even if Themba does not worship God or make any acknowledgment of him, his marriage is still in a very real way "caused" by the Almighty that created it.

Is God the creator of a marriage between two atheists that do nothing to acknowledge His existence? If the marriage is a covenant union of consent, commitment and consummation between a man and a woman, then yes, God created that marriage, just as he established the first marriage in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve.

At the very beginning of the human race God defined marriage as the joining of one man and one woman. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female [ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ, *wanuna ni wansati*] he created them. **28** And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it…" (Gn. 1:27-28). This male and female God put together were actually "man" and "wife" (Gn. 2:25).

The marriage of Adam and Eve was a model for the rest of humanity to follow. There was a covenant with a public oath. The vows said to each other and before God was public and before the entire population (though only two people existed at that time). Adam said: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). A one-flesh union whereby a new household was established followed this. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (v. 24).

Jesus gave his understanding of Gen 1-2 in Matthew 19:3-6:

> *And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" **4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*

Jesus affirms what the Old Testament taught about Scripture: (1) it was designed "from the beginning" (v. 4), (2) it is between one male and one female (v. 4), (3) it creates a one-flesh union (v. 5), and (4) it should be permanent (v. 6).

The Westminster divines believed there was such a thing as faux marriage. The Westminster Confession of Faith asks in Question 139: “What are the sins forbidden in the seventh commandment?” Among the answers are “unlawful marriages”, “undue delay of marriage” and “having more wives or husbands than one at the same time.”

Another way of saying that God is the efficient cause of marriage is to say that marriage is a divine institution. Hodge (2007:376-377) gives five arguments for marriage as a divine institution. First, God created and ordained marriage. Second, God instituted marriage *before* civil government and therefore is not *essentially* a civil institution but a divine one. “Any man and woman cast together on a desert island could lawfully take each other as husband and wife.” Third, God commanded man and woman to marry and multiply. Fourth, God has given duties to humans that marriage requires to fulfill. Fifth, vows in marriage are given primarily to God.

4.4.2 Husband and wife as the efficient cause of marriage

There is also a sense in which the husband and wife are the efficient cause of marriage. We already argued above that a “covenant” is the material from which a marriage is created. But this covenant is made by people and upon their oath to one another they are in a sense causing the marriage to come into existence.

4.4.3 Does the Church or State cause marriage?

How does one distinguish the ecclesiastical and government roles within marriage? That is, in what matters should the church speak and in what matters should government speak?

Grudem (2010:99-102) gives four principles for answering this question. First, the church should not govern “the things that are Caesar’s” (Mt. 22:21). The church should not control government actions. Government officials and church elders are always distinct in Scripture. Jesus refused to arbitrate an inheritance issue: “Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you” (Lk. 12:14)? It can be concluded, then, that there are certain thorny issues stemming from marriage (e.g. child custody, power of attorney, inheritance) that only the magistrate—not the church—should address.

Second, civil government should not govern “the things that are God’s” (Mt. 22:21). Government should not control the church. In Scripture, the church and not

government chose ecclesiastical officers (Mt. 10:1-4; Ac. 6:3). Third, civil government should generally support and encourage churches. For example, they may give tax-breaks to married couples, which is keeping with the government's role of "doing good" (Rm. 12). Fourth, difficulty arises when trying to determine if something belongs in the realm of state or church.

Hodge (1997:337) believes that while the magistrate has a role to play in the marriage process, it is the church that ought to lead the process in uniting the bride and groom in matrimony:

> *Marriage is not a sacrament in the sense in which baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments, nor in the sense of the Romish Church; but it is nonetheless a sacred institution. Its solemnization is an office of religion. It should, therefore, be entered upon with due solemnity and in the fear of God; and should be celebrated, i.e., the ceremony should be performed by a minister of Christ. He alone is authorized to see to it that the law of God is adhered to; and he alone can receive and register the marriage vows as made to God. The civil magistrate can only witness it as a civil contract, and it is consequently to ignore its religious character and sanction to have it celebrated by a civil officer. As the essence of the marriage contract is the mutual compact of the parties in the sight of God and in the presence of witnesses, it is not absolutely necessary that it should be celebrated by a minister of religion or even by a civil magistrate. It may be lawfully solemnized…. Nevertheless as it is of the greatest importance that the religious nature of the institution should be kept in view, it is incumbent on Christians, so far as they themselves are concerned, to insist that it should be solemnized as a religious service.*

4.5 Final Cause: Planning covenant marriage

This study now moves from what marriage is in the material, formal, and efficient sense to what marriage is in its purpose and goals. For example, heterosexuality is a necessary condition for marriage as a material, formal, and efficient cause. So are covenant vows. Without them, marriage does not exist. But there are other righteous aspects of marriage that Scripture commands. Without them, there is sin, but without them there is *still* marriage, though it does not fulfill God's ultimate goals. Below are models of what a holy marriage ought to be

4.5.1 Goal 1: God's glory

As with all things (Ps 73:28; 1Co 10:31), marriage should be for God's glory. The relationship between husband and wife should display the love that Christ has for his bride (Eph 5:22-33).

4.5.1.1 Marriage glorifies God because it is intrinsically good

Church history is littered with examples of forced celibacy upon the clergy because singleness was viewed as morally superior. The Roman Catholic Church requires its priests, monks, and nuns to abstain from marriage. Their vow of celibacy is sinfully broken should they marry.[103] According to Heth (2006:45), this kind of asceticism toward marriage was already visible in embryonic form in New Testament days (cf. 1Co 7:1, 28, 36; 1Ti 4:3; Col 2:21). He writes:

> *This eventually led to the requirement that ministers in the Roman Catholic Church be celibate. The extent to which this asceticism manifested itself is evident in those writers who disallowed second marriages even after the death of a spouse (Athenagoras, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria), contrary to the clear teaching of the apostle Paul (1Co 7:39). Athenagoras (ca. AD 177) went so far as to refer to marriage after a spouse's death as a veiled form of adultery! Most of these writers also took a very dim view of sexual relations within marriage, much like the ascetics Paul confronted in Corinth (1Co 7:1b). In effect, most church fathers said, 'Marital relations are only for begetting children, and even then you'd better not enjoy it!' This was hardly the teaching of Paul (1Co 7:2-6; 1Ti 4:4).*

As noted above, St. Paul rebuked those false teachers that were "forbidding to marry" (1Ti 4:3). Paul said he had the right to take a wife (1Co 9:5). Peter had a wife (Mt 8:14-15).

[103] The vows of celibacy and the vows of chastity are different. Per Boettner (1962:298): "According to Canon Law the vow of celibacy is broken if the priest marries, but not if he engages in sexual relations. Pardon for sexual relations can be had easily at any time by confession to any fellow-priest. But absolution for any priest who marries can be obtained only from the pope, with accompanying severe penalties. And to obtain such pardon it is required that he forsake his wife."

4.5.1.2 Marriage glorifies God when it follows Scripture

A marriage that glorifies God follows the commands of Scripture. First, Christian marriage is between two believers. Inter-faith marriage is forbidden.

Believers may not marry unbelievers (Dt 7:3; Ezr 10:10; 1Co 7:39; 2Co 6:14-7:1). In the OT it was assumed that relationships with pagans would lead Israel into sin (Ex. 23:33). Malachi shared Ezra's hatred for inter-faith marriage (Mal. 2:10-12) and condemned it as infidelity and abomination.[104] "For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the Lord, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god" (Mal 2:11). Christians are not to be "unequally yoked" with unbelievers (2Co 6:14) but only marry "in the Lord" (1Co 7:39). Should one of the unbelieving spouses come to Christ after marriage, the NT points to the power of the gospel and the testimony of the believing spouse to influence the other unbelieving partner toward salvation (1Co 7:12-16; 1Pe 3:1-6).

Inter-racial marriage, however, is allowed in Scripture. All races are created in the image of God (Ge 1:27) and ultimately stem from the same father (Ac 17:26). Boaz, a Jew, married Ruth, a Moabite (Ru 4:21-22). Moses, a Jew, married an African (Nu 12:1). God rebuked and punished Miriam for criticizing them (Nu 12:7-10). Different cultures and races should not be final barriers for marriage (Col 3:11).[105]

Second, Christian marriage should be pure. Paul tells the Corinthian believers: "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1Co 7:2). Proverbs is filled with passages warning young men to avoid the strange woman (e.g. Pr 2:16). First Thessalonians 4:3 says, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality."

Third, Christian marriage should be trustworthy. Proverbs tells us that a godly husband trusts his godly wife. "The heart of her husband trusts in her" (Pr. 31:11). This husband trusts her—not because she is his wife—but because she is virtuous. No money, no

[104] Most think the divorces Malachi condemns in 2:16 are divorces of Jewish rather than pagan wives (2:14-15) and thus condemnation unrelated to enforced divorces of Ezra's day.

[105] Piper (2011:2013) argues that interracial marriage is not only *allowed* in Scripture but is a positive good that should be celebrated. "Opposition to interracial marriage is one of the deepest roots of racial distance, disrespect, and hostility in the world."

gifts, and no words can buy the faith of this spouse. Only a pure life can earn this confidence. Blessed is the husband who can trust his wife in all situations. Blessed is the wife who never doubts the faithfulness of her husband. This is remarkable because Scripture almost always condemns those who trust anyone but God. “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man” (Ps. 118:8). “Put not trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend” (Mic. 7:5). That this verse makes an exception shows the great value of a virtuous wife. Because there are no secrets underground or skeletons in the closet, but only trust and confidence, this couple enjoys a vibrant relationship.

4.5.2 Goal 2: Companionship

In Genesis 2:18 God said: “It is not good that the man should be alone.” Adam said in Ge 3:12, “The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” The adulteress leaves the companion of her youth (Pr 2:17). Ecc 4:10 says: “But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”

Kelly and Clendenen (2003:1083) write:

> *Adam needed “a helper who is like him,” that is, someone to complement or complete him, whose nature corresponded to his own (Gen. 2:21–23). He needed more than a vessel for the production of children; he needed a “help,” not a demeaning term since it is also used of God (Gen. 49:25; Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26; 1 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 41:10; Pss. 10:14; 33:20). Together, under God’s direction and the husband’s leadership, they could find satisfaction in fulfilling the purpose for which God had created them. The companionship that is shared between husband and wife in marriage enables physical, psychological, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.*

This companionship also expresses its friendship through sexual intimacy. It brings joy to the couple and deepens their relationship together (1Co 7:2-5; SS 6-7; Pr 5:15-19).

4.5.3 Goal 3: Children

Ephesians 5:31 puts just the right amount of emphasis on procreation. Nothing in Chapter 5 implies sex is simply a means to an end (e.g. procreation). Yet kids are

addressed in the very next chapter to show they are one of the primary purposes of the one-flesh union. Ge 2:24 doesn't mention kids either, but a passage just prior does. "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Ge 1:28).

Only *young* women can have children. Since Scripture emphasizes the "wife of your youth" (Pr 5:18; Mal 2:15), it follows one of the purposes of marriage is to have children. Women should not view bearing children as a chore but as a joy. Sarah refers to the hope of bearing children as a delight.

As Day (2009) illustrates, there are many ways Scripture presents children as a blessing. The man of peace will have posterity (Ps 37:37). Children are like a warrior's arrows (Ps 127:4), like olive shoots around the table (Ps 128:3). Sons should be like plants and daughters like pillars (Ps. 144:12). Grandchildren are the crown of the old (Pr 17:6). His descendants will be mighty (Ps. 112:2). Patriarchs pray for children's children (Ps 128:6). Children are a gift from the Lord (Ps. 127:3) and gives children (Ge 33:5; 48:9), sons (Ge 29:33; 30:6; Ro 9:9) and families (Ex 1:21). He will build an enduring house (1 Sa 2:35). In Scripture, the more children, the better. Happy is the man who has his quiver full (Ps 127:5). A man that begets a hundred children is blessed (Ecc 6:3).

4.5.4 Goal 4: Permanence

In Ezra 10, Ezra "made the leading priests and Levites and all of Israel take an oath" (v. 5) that they would "make a covenant with [their] God to put away all [their] wives and their children" (v. 3). This was according to the Law and for those who trembled at God's commandments (v. 3). This mandatory divorce seems to contradict Malachi, the contemporary of Ezra. Malachi 2 is rebuking Jewish husbands that are dealing treacherously with their wives by divorcing them, sometimes for foreign women. God "hateth putting away" (v. 16, KJV). The NET is more direct: "'I hate divorce,' says the LORD God of Israel."

It is most likely that Malachi and Ezra agree perfectly on the matter of divorce, rather than conflict, because they are dealing with two separate issues. Both despise divorce based on aversion, the issue in Malachi. The prophet is rebuking Jewish men for

divorcing their wives simply on the basis of lost affection. Malachi is not rebuking divorce in general but unjustified divorce. This kind would "cover" (v. 16) the husband's "garment with violence" (i.e. defile his character). Ezra, however, urges divorce of pagan wives. In fact, Heth and Wenham (1985:162-164) argue what took place in Ezra 10 was not divorce but annulment. Because Ezra uses rare vocabulary for marriage and divorce, he most likely was encouraging the dissolution of an invalid marriage.[106] This would be similar to the story of Michal when she was taken from her "husband" Paltiel and returned to her rightful husband David (2Sa 3:15).

4.5.5 Goal 5: Monogamy

The great Ante-Nicene father Tertullian (1885:59) said in "Monogamy": "Heretics do away with marriages; Psychics accumulate them. The former marry not *even* once; the latter not *only* once…. The former is blasphemous, the latter wanton; the former destroys the God of marriages, the latter puts Him to the blush." Here are three arguments from Scripture that show God's plan for marriage is monogamy.

4.5.5.1 Monogamous marriage from Eph 5

Verse 31 says "a man" (singular) "shall…hold fast to his *wife*" (singular). God could have given Adam two wives. Most of the modern arguments for polygamy today (e.g. it bears more children, it provides more labour etc.) could easily have been applied to Adam. Surely the dawn of humankind would have been helped by two immediate

[106] The majority of conservative scholars argue that divorce legitimately dissolves the marriage covenant. Atkinson (1979:126) writes: "Divorce dissolves the marriage 'bond' and covenant." Köstenberger (2004:239) avers: "There is reason to believe that [marriage] covenants can be broken." Edgar (1990:137) opines: "[Marriage] covenants are not necessarily permanent." Feinberg and Feinberg (1993:305) write: "We disagree that permanence is intrinsic to the very notion of covenant. We agree that covenants such as the Abrahamic and Davidic are unbreakable and indissoluble. Nonetheless, that does not mean all biblical covenants are. For example, the Mosaic Covenant clearly was breakable, and Jeremiah says Israel broke it (Jer 31:32). In fact, they did so repeatedly. Moreover, as argued in the first chapter, the Mosaic Covenant and the Mosaic Code have been dissolved in the NT era in favor of the New Covenant and the Code of Christ. The example of the Mosaic Covenant alone shows that nothing intrinsic to the biblical notion of covenant demands that it be unbreakable or indissoluble. Each covenant must be judged on its own terms."
There are others, however, that argue covenants (when God is one of the participants) are indissoluble by nature. Jones and Tarwater (2004:1-11) give four reasons: (1) covenantal language, (2) the manner by which they are established, (3) the response for violations, and (4) the record of covenants.

wives bearing children. With no one else on earth, having another pair of female hands would have lightened the work load. But God saw fit to give Adam one mate.

Earlier in the passage, Jesus Christ modelled monogamy as the model groom taking a single bride. He gave himself for "her" (v. 25), not "them". It is impossible to love two wives simultaneously in a Christ-like way.

4.5.5.2 Monogamous marriage from other NT passages

Mark 10:8 says, "the *two* shall become one flesh." Pastors who are called upon to be the greatest model for the congregation are told to be the "husband of one wife" (1Ti 3:2). Paul tells Titus the elder is to be "above reproach, the husband of one wife" (1:6). Revelation 21:2 speaks of a "bride being adorned for her husband." Paul tells the Corinthians "each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1Co 7:2). When a woman wants her conjugal rights (v. 3), the husband must give it to her—an impossible task should both wives desire this at once. Who has authority over the husband's body? It is "the wife" not "the wives" (v. 4).[107]

4.5.5.3 Monogamous marriage from the OT

The first marriages were polygamous, including Adam (Ge 2:24), Cain (Ge 4:17), Noah (Ge 7:7), Noah's sons (Ge 7:13), Isaac (Ge 24), Joseph (Ge 41), Aaron (Ex 6:23), Eleazar (Ex 6:25), and Moses (Ex 2:21).

[107] For a fuller discussion on polygamy, see the thesis by the author (Schlehlein, 2013) entitled "Pastoring Polygamists: Biblical Counsel for the African Church." This paper explores polygamy within African culture by addressing the hermeneutical, biblical, and pastoral implications on a matter heavily debated throughout the centuries. Since the majority of passages describing polygamy occur in the Old Testament (OT), proper rules and guidelines are necessary for a suitable handling of the OT in the New Testament (NT) era. Several OT passages appear to condone polygamy, leading some to tolerate its practice. After all, Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon were godly men greatly blessed of God—all of whom had multiple wives. Many believe this is clear support for polygamous marriages. This thesis seeks to debunk those arguments by taking a closer look at the context, grammar, purpose, and application of all the relevant passages. The crux of this thesis aims to give pastoral counsel to those ministers who are shepherding polygamists *after* they are converted. Though the counsel handed down by church history gives no consensus on this point, Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage does give light. Further there are a host of other NT passages that solidify the point of this thesis: Scripture never condones or legislates polygamy, nor does it mandate the formal divorce of converted polygamists, thus freeing African pastors to be shrewd and gracious in their counsel of them.

The handful of polygamous marriages in Scripture only proves that monogamy is God's will. The ungodly Lamech took multiple wives in Genesis 4. Abraham took another wife because of unbelief (Ge 16-22), Esau in rebellion against his parents (Ge 26:35), Jacob by deception (Ge 29:35), Solomon (1Ki 11) and Joash (2Ch 34) in direct disobedience to God's commands.

Solomon tells his son to "rejoice with the wife of [his] youth" (Pro 5:18) and that she is "a crown to her husband" (Pro 12:4). A husband finds a good thing that finds "a wife" (Pro 18:22). It is the Lord that gives "a prudent wife" (Pro 19:14). The worth of a "virtuous wife" is "far above rubies" (Pr 31:10). "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life. . . ." (Eccles. 9:9).

Though polygamy was always immoral, and perhaps specifically forbidden (Lev 18:18), it also appears to have been legally valid (Dt 21:15-17).[108] Hugenberger (1994:118) therefore believes Lev 18:18 can be categorized as a *lex imperfecta,* a law which forbids something without thereby rendering it invalid (reflecting a society which would have lacked the requisite means of enforcement in any case).

As illustrated earlier, polygamy is not ethically approved in Scripture, though there are at least eight biblical texts that some scholars use to prove its ethical validity.[109] (1) Ex. 21:10 ("If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights"), (2) Lv 18:17 (v. 18 directly forbids it), (3) Dt. 21:15-17, (4) Dt 25:5-10, (5) 2Sm. 12:7, (6) Jr. 3:6-13, (7) Eze 23, (8) Mal. 2:10-16.

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[108] As to the common African question of what to do with a polygamist upon his conversion, Wilson (1999:loc.1048) writes: "The polygamist and all his wives, if they profess faith, should be received into the membership of the church. He should continue to live with them as wives, including an ongoing sexual relationship with all of them. But this is only safe to do if the church is clear on the *absolute necessity* of setting a monogamous example in the leadership of the church."

[109] There are also many examples of polygamy in Scripture, such as: (1) Lamech with Adah and Zillah (Ge 4:19), (2) Abraham with Hagar (Ge 16:3), (3) Abraham with Keturah (Ge 25:1), (4) Esau with Judith and Basemath (Ge 26:34), (5) Esau with Adah and Oholibamah (Ge 36:2), (6) Esau with Mahalath (Ge 28:9), (7) Jacob with Leah (Ge 29:21–5), (8) Rachel (Ge 29:28–30), (9) Bilhah (Ge 30:4) and (10) Zilpah (Ge 30:9), (11) Gideon with many wives (Jdg 8:30), (12) Elkanah with two wives (1 Sa 1:2), (13) Asshur with Helah and Naarah (1 Chr. 4:5), (14) Solomon with 700 wives (1Kgs 11:3), (15) Rehoboam with Mahalath (2 Chr. 11:18), (16) Rehoboam with Maacah (2Ch 11:20), (17) Rehoboam with 18 wives and 60 concubines (2Ch 11:21), (18) Rehoboam with wives for his sons (2Ch 11:23), (18) Abijah with 14 wives (2Ch 13:21), (19) Jehoiada with two wives for Joash (2Ch 24:3).

4.5.5.4 Monogamous marriage from history

Hodge (1997c:380) says that the church is united historically on their reprobation of polygamy.

> *[Monogamy] has been the doctrine of the Christian Church in all ages and in every part of the world. There has never been a church calling itself Christian which tolerated a plurality of wives among its members. There could hardly be a stronger proof than this fact that such is the law of Christ. It is morally certain that the whole Church cannot have mistaken, on such a subject as this, the mind and will of its divine Head and Master.*

4.5.6 Wrong but real

A category is needed to describe those legitimate marriages that are formed sinfully and yet still valid in God's eyes. "Wrong but real" will suffice for this discussion. It is possible to covenant sinfully but still have a legitimate marriage.

One example of "wrong but real" is an unrighteous divorce and remarriage, such as a man that divorces his wife unlawfully and then takes another wife (Dt. 24:1-4). God's plan is one man and one woman to be wed for one life. Should a man divorce his wife unjustly and take another wife, according to Jesus, this is adultery, wrong, and sinful (Mt 19:9). And yet, this sinful union is still considered marriage. Jesus told the adulterous woman at the well that she had "five husbands" (Jn 4:18), not one husband and four boyfriends. The boyfriend she was living with is not called a husband either.

An example of "wrong but real" would be polygamy discussed above. There is no doubt that polygamy is sinfully contrary to God's will and yet, Scripture still seems to recognize this union as marriage. Solomon had seven hundred "wives" (1Ki 11:3), Leah is recognized as Jacob's wife (Ge 29:23) and so forth.

Homosexual unions, however, do not fit in this category because it (1) it is never considered such in Scripture and (2) does not meet marriage's necessary condition of a "one-flesh" union. Homosexual unions are unnatural (Rm. 1:24-28) and in blatant opposition to God's law and therefore cannot be considered in any way a "marriage".

A homosexual union is illegitimate because it is not between a man and a woman (Gn. 2:22-24; Mt. 19:5) and does not make a one flesh union (Gn. 1:27-28).[110]

4.6 Conclusion

The definition of marriage can be seen from three perspectives—consent ("leaving"), commitment ("cleaving"), and consummation ("one flesh")—though each of these are necessary conditions and not sufficient for marriage individually.

Philosophers help answer the question "What is marriage?" by highlighting the *causes* of an action: the material, formal, efficient and final cause. The material cause of marriage—the ingredients—is a covenant, which is a chosen relationship of obligation under oath. The formal cause of marriage—the form by which this covenant takes place—is consent, commitment and consummation. This formation is in chronological order. Consent is a kind of passive, pre-commitment by the man toward his future bride and her family. Commitment should be expressed in a formal covenant ceremony by oaths, which is a solemn declaration for God (and by extension, the Church and State) to act against you if you are false to the commitment. The more witnesses the better, as they will help sinners keep their commitment.

Sexual intimacy that could result in pregnancy is the final necessary element of the formal cause of marriage. An outward sign of this is often registration of the marriage with the magistrate. The efficient cause of marriage—the performers in creating this covenant—is primarily God (regardless of the prospective spouses are worshippers of Him) but also the prospective husband and wife. The final cause of marriage—which is the goal of the covenant—is God's glory, companionship, sanctification, and procreation.

This study also observed that it is wise to use a category such as "wrong but real". Polygamy is sinful but a real marriage and should be recognized in this way.

[110] De Tocqueville (2002: 211) once said: "Attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women".

Chapter 5
Application: Marriage in Tsonga Culture

The institution of marriage is timeless. Matrimony is unlike other Old Testament institutions that God designed *only* for the nation of Israel. For example, laws about altars (Ex. 20:22-26), slaves (21:1-32), festivals (Ex. 23:10-19), the furniture in the tabernacle (Ex. 25), the priest's garments (Ex. 28), and the census tax (Ex. 30:11-16) were only for a particular time in Israel's history. Instead, God designed marriage from the beginning in a sinless, pre-fallen world when he created Adam and Eve (Matt 19:4).

The institution of marriage is foundational.[111] God established the laws of marriage before he established laws of government or the church because it serves as the cornerstone for all other institutions. Grudem (2010:216) observes: "Human societies have long recognized the need for some kind of normalization of a dependable, ongoing, faithful marriage relationship between men and women. So far as I know, every human nation on earth, every society of any size or permanence at all, has recognized and protected the institution of heterosexual marriage."

The institution of marriage is also cross-cultural. The biblical rules for marriage are the same not only in every era but also every culture. God's moral standard for the Jews is also his moral standard for the entire world. When the Egyptian Pharaoh came close to adultery with another man's wife, God judged him (Ge 12:17-20). When Gentile towns like Sodom and Gomorrah disobeyed the demand for the male/female union, God judged them (Gen 19:1-28). Leviticus tells us the Canaanites were morally culpable for their sexual sin. "For the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean" (18:27).

[111] The Church's failure to speak about the foundational nature of marriage and instead present the union between a man and a woman as a lifestyle choice can, in part, be seen in stats showing the worldwide age at marriage is going up and the percentage of those getting married is going down. Consider this alarming stat by Wiley (2019:loc.162): "In 1980 91% of Czech women were married by the time they were 30 years old. Today it is 26%. And it is the same everywhere. In 1980 81% of Australian women were married by 30 years of age, in Finland, 66% of women, in Italy, 76% of women, and in the Netherlands, 81% of women. Today the numbers are between 20% and 30% in each of those countries."

The wisdom of Proverbs that urges fidelity within the marriage covenant is for every tongue, people and nation (2:16-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:4-27). When John the Baptist learned of the adultery (and incest) of Herod Antipas—a non-Jew—he chastised him (Mk 6:17-18). Every time Gentiles do not follow God's standards for marriage, it is considered sin (Rom 1:26-27; 1Cor. 5:9-10; 6:9).

Because marriage is both timeless and cross-cultural, ancient and foundational, the goal in this final chapter is to take the principles of Chapters 2 through 4 and apply them to Tsonga culture.

Below is a list of Biblical customs, passages, explanations and their Tsonga equivalents found within the three marks of covenant marriage:

	Bible Custom	Biblical Passage	Tsonga Equivalent
PHASE 1: LEAVING/CONSENT (Betrothal)			
1.	Parents choose bride[112]	Ge 21:21; 24:3-4; 38:6; Ru 3:1-4;	Sometimes[113]
2.	Oldest daughter married first	Ge 29:26	No
3.	Virgins prized and set apart in marriage.[114]	Dt 22:13-21; 2Sa 13:18; Lv 21:13;	Sometimes
4.	Daughters could only marry within their tribe.[115]	Nu 36	Sometimes[116]
5.	Father/brother of bride give consent[117]	Ge 24:51; 29:19; 34:11; Ex 2:21; 22:16-17; Dt 22:16	Sometimes

[112] The general rule was that the father took the initiative, though in the case of Ruth, Naomi took that role. Hagar also played the role of father finding a wife for her son because of the absence of her husband Abraham.

[113] Though he does not give any citations or specifics to timing, Khosa (2009:65) writes: "Marriages were arranged by adults who will choose a wife for their son who they think will be suitable to meet the needs of that of her husband and the family at large."

[114] Examples are often listed is praiseworthy before marriage: (1) Lot's daughters (Ge 19:8), (2) Rebekah (Ge 24:16), (3) Jephthah's daughter (Jdg 11:37–9), (4) Tamar was a virgin (2Sm 13:2), (5) Mary (Lu 1:27) (6) Philip's four virgin daughters (Ac 21:9), (7) Paul wanted to present them to Christ as a pure virgin (2 Cor. 11:2), (8) the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1–12).

[115] This was in order to protect the inheritance of each tribe.

[116] Khosa (2009:65) writes: "In Vatsonga tribe [sic] it is not encouraged to marry from other tribes."

[117] When the brother was involved, as was the case with Laban and his sister Rebekah, it was because the father was most likely deceased. There is no mention of the father in Ge 24. Wedding gifts were given to the mother and brother. "Consent" was so important in Ancient Near Eastern culture that even if a man had premarital sex with a girl, if her father did not agree, they could not be married, though he still had to pay the bride price (Ex 22:16-17).

6.	Groom gives financial bride price to father[118]	Ge 31:15; Ex 22:16, 17; Ru 4:10; Hos 3:2	Yes, lobola
7.	Groom gives "service" as bride price to father[119]	Ge 29:15-30	No
8.	Father sets the bride price for the groom.[120]	Ge 29:15-30; 34:12; Jos 15:16-17; 1Sa 17:25; 18:23, 25	Yes, with other family members involved
9.	Groom chooses wife w/out parental consent[121]	Ge 26:34–35; Jdg 14:1–3	Sometimes
10.	Groom's family gives gifts to bride	Ge 24:47, 53	Sometimes
11.	Groom's family gives gifts to bride's family[122]	Ge 24:53	Yes[123]
12.	Bride given choice to consent.[124]	Ge 24:8, 57-58	Yes

[118] Freeman and Chadwick (1998:40-41) aver: "The wedding gifts to the bride were also a token of her future husband's ability to provide for her, and his respect and desire for her. To not give gifts would be the highest of insults, just as would be the refusal to accept the gifts."

[119] If the husband-to-be did not have the financial means to pay the bride, he could perform some kind of service instead.

[120] Almost always it is the father that sets the bride price, as is seen with Caleb and Saul. In the story of Jacob, Laban actually asks the groom what he wants to pay and then Laban agrees. In the story of Isaac and Rebekah, her brother Laban asks for nothing, perhaps because he already knew generous gifts were in store. What also makes the marriage of the daughters of Caleb and Saul unusual is that the bride's family initiated the proposal of marriage (contra, Hos 1:2), as also happened with the father of Zipporah with Moses (Ex 2:21). We see this also see this in Ge 34:8 with the father Hamor on behalf of his son Shechem to take Dinah.

[121] This is always discouraged and frowned upon in Scripture.

[122] Freeman and Chadwick (1998:41) seem to conflate the idea of dowry and pride price. Regarding Genesis 24:53 and the gifts for Rebekah and her family from Isaac and his family, they write: "The gifts given to Rebekah were wedding gifts, but the dowry paid to her brother and mother was to secure her financial future in case Isaac should forsake her or he should die. The dowry was actually hers, and was to kept for her by her brother and mother. If the dowry was used for other purposes, the bride had full right to protest, as Rachel and Leah did about their father: 'Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us' (Genesis 31:15)." Manswer (1999), however, makes a helpful distinction between a dowry and betrothal this way: "This [bride-price] gift, which was given by the groom to the bride's family as compensation, sealed the marriage contract…. The dowry was a gift from the bride's father to the bride and/or groom. Servants were given to the bride as a dowry."

[123] Khosa (2009:68) writes that at the giving of the lobola, "A blanket for the mother and a jacket for the father is requested. When all the requested money has been paid, Mrs. Nwa-Risimati Shivambu indicated that, the 'lobola' ceremony is over."

[124] Mathews (2005:344) calls attention to Rebekah's answer "I will go" in v. 58: "The [*Qal* imperfect form of the] Hebrew verb may be a desiderative imperfect, 'I want to go,' expressing her strong wish."

13.	Woman is betrothed/espoused to her husband.[125]	Mt 1:18	Perhaps between lobola and wedding
14.	The betrothal treated as *pre*-marriage[126]	Ge 29:21; Dt 20:7; 1Co 7:36-38	Sometimes lobola treated this way
15.	The betrothal treated as marriage[127]	Ge 19:14; Dt 22:23-24; Mt 1:18-20	Yes, lobola often treated this way
16.	Friend of the groom is middleman during betrothal.[128]	Jn 3:29	No, though there are messengers at first
17.	Bride departs from her family	Ge 24:61-67	Yes
PHASE 2: CLEAVING/COMMITMENT (Wedding)			
18.	Marriage feast with a full week of meals, dancing and religious rituals[129]	Ge 29:20-27; Jdg 14:12; Jn 2:1; Rev 19:7-9	Yes, often a day of lobola feasting[130]
19.	Many guests were invited to the wedding feast	Lk 14:8	Yes, guests invited to lobola/wedding

[125] This was similar to modern day engagement but much more binding, as there would often be a formal promise or written agreement between the man and woman (Freeman and Chadwick, 1998:397). Betrothal was legally binding and could only be broken through divorce, which is what Joseph planned to do with Mary. In Brand (2003:199) it says: "The penalty under the law of Moses for disrupting this principle by adultery, rape, fornication, or incest was death by stoning (Deut. 22:23–30).

[126] Thus, Dt 20:7 can speak of betrothing a wife but still having not yet taken her. Paul allowed for breaking off a relationship with one's betrothed and does not see it as divorce (1Co. 7:36-38).

[127] In Ge 19:14 calls the men "sons-in-law" that *were* to marry Lot's daughters but had not yet. In Dt 22:23-24, the sexual relations happen between a betrothed woman and a man to whom she is not betrothed. Their punishment is stoning, the same as adultery—sexual immorality with a married person.

[128] This was a kind of "best man" that would carry messages between the bride and groom during their betrothal period. John the Baptist sees himself in this role. He is not the groom (Christ) but he prepares the way for Christ, whereby he will come and take his bride.

[129] Meals were common with other kinds of covenants as well, not just the marriage union, because covenants always had some kind of symbol to seal the joint promise. For example, stones served as a witness to the covenant between Laban and Jacob (Ge 41:44-53). At the end, there was a meal (v. 54). When Jesus spoke of the new covenant with his disciples, they had a meal (the Lord's Supper) to show its binding nature (Lk 22:19-20).

Achtemeier (1985:608) says: "The central ritual of the marriage ceremony itself was the symbolic bringing of the bride into the groom's house, followed by great rejoicing. Song of Sol. 3:11 describes the bridegroom as wearing a special crown given to him by his mother, and in Isa. 61:10 he wears a garland. A later description relates that the bride was escorted to meet the groom, and the groom came out with his friends accompanied by musicians and the sound of tambourines (1 Macc. 9:37-39). The bride wore her finest clothes, many jewels (Isa 61:10), and a veil (Ge 29:23-25; Song of Sol. 4:1). There followed a lengthy celebration with merrymaking, singing (Jer. 16:9), and feasting often lasting a week or two (Jdg. 14:12)."

[130] Khosa (2009:68) writes: "When [the giving of the gifts] is over, then, according to Mrs. Maxawu Mhlongo, it will be time to eat slaughter goats and drink to celebrate."

20.	Groom with friends takes bride from her house to his.	Ge 24:67; Mt 25:1	Sometimes[131]
21.	Master of the wedding banquet put in charge of the feast.[132]	Jn 2:8	Yes, best man
PHASE 3: ONE FLESH/CONSUMMATION (Marriage Bed)			
22.	Groom covered his bride's head with his robe[133]	Ru 3:9	No

5.1 Consent in Tsonga Culture

5.1.1 A word about Junod

As this study approaches the Tsonga people in particular, there are two reasons why it is important to survey Tsonga marriage within Henri Junod's two-volume *The Life of a South African Tribe.* First, this 1,200+ page monumental work is by far the most thorough treatment of Tsonga culture ever published. In fact, it may be one of the most thorough investigations of *any* African people. Anthropologist E.W. Smith called Junod's work "the finest monograph written on any African tribe" (Junod, 1962: vii). In comparison, Mandla Mathebula's book *800 Years of Tsonga History (1200-2000)* was only 139 pages of large font and wide margins. The back cover was even so bold to call this work "comprehensive" (Mathebula, 2002). He cites Junod often.

The second benefit of surveying Junod's research on Tsonga marriage is that it will lend a comparison to how marriage is viewed and performed today. Many things have changed in the sixty plus years since Junod's work was first published.

[131] Khosa (2009:69) writes: "After the payment of lobola, according to Mrs. N'wa-phelani Shivambu, the bride's family has to brew some beer to accompany their child to her husband. People will be called to take the bride to-be to her husband's place. This is called 'ku rhwala mthimbhu'."

[132] Freeman and Chadwick (1998:513) explain: "Among the Greeks, at all formal feasts, there was a *symposiarch* who was one of the guests, and was selected to take charge of the feast. It was his duty to preserve order, to maintain liveliness among the guests, to assign each one his proper place, to decide which proportion of water should be mixed with the wine, and how much each of the company was to drink."

[133] Freeman and Chadwick (1998:202) write: "The expression 'spread the corner of your garment' implies protection, and here signifies protection of a conjugal nature. When marriages were solemnized among the Israelites, the man threw the skirt of his *talith* or robe over his wife and covered her head with it."

Below we will list two preliminary aspects of Tsonga marriage (*ku gangisa* and *ku tlhoma*) as observed and described by Henri Junod. This fits within the first "leave" stage of marriage, though, we shall see, there is much overlap and ambiguity such that *lobola* could be set within the second "cleave" stage if done accordingly.

Remarkably, Junod argues that the pre-evangelized Tsongas had three aspects of the marriage union just like Scripture. Though there are some differences between various Tsonga clans (e.g. the Mpfumo clan, Ronga clans, northern clans etc.), Junod (1962:101-107) maintains there are essentially three "moments" within the marriage process. We will conflate *gangisa* and *buta* within the first moment of marriage, though the former is almost like the dating stage.

5.1.2 Gangisa

First, according to Junod (1962:97), when a man is initially looking for a girl to marry, he begins to *gangisa.* The Tsonga word *ganga* means to choose a lover. Therefore *gangisa* means to make or cause one to choose a lover. It is here where the boy or young man proposes his love to a young lady and asks her to choose him. If a young man fails to *gangisa,* his friends ridicule him.

If she answers affirmatively, they begin to play together "like husband and wife". They usually meet only at night. To Tsongas, a married woman is sacred but an unmarried girl is not. "Nothing is prohibited" sexually, just as long as she does not get pregnant. If she does become pregnant, the parents will be angry and will insist the man buys her in marriage. If he refuses, the child will belong to the girl's family.

Junod (1962:98) states that immorality is so common in Tsonga culture that "this has been rightly called the African sin"! According to Junod's perspective, the *gangisa* custom is immoral because it encourages sex outside of marriage by permitting and encouraging private, physical contact. However, he goes on to say that he has seen "thousands" of Tsongas that have abstained from immorality after having been taught the truths of Christianity.

5.1.3 Buta

The first *real* "moment" of marriage with Tsongas, according to Junod (1962:99-100), is the betrothal period or *buta* whereby the man pursues the girl and woos her. There

are many interesting and elaborate customs within this first step, most of them not practiced today. The main idea, however, is that the fiancé partakes in a series of official visits to the home of his fiancée. First a messenger is sent to the girl's home on behalf of the fiancé to gauge her interest. If she and her father consent to this marriage, then the messenger gives a gift (*xihlengwe*)[134] as a down payment to the parents and they prepare a meal for him. According to Junod (1962:102), "a father very seldom obliges his daughter to accept a husband whom she dislikes".

According to Magubane in "Marriage in Tsonga Society", there were several customs that took place pre-marriage within old Tsonga culture. He writes:

> *Jaha ri ta rhumela Ntombi leyi rhingi ya mabyasi kumbe mutwa ku kombisa leswaku a tsakela kun'wi teka. Loko Ntombi na yona yi yima na ku tekiwa hi jaha leri, na yona yi ta rhumela rhingi ya byasi kumbe mutwa kukombeta leswaku ya pfumela. Endzhaku ka loko tata wa nhwana a pfumerile leswaku va nga tekana, tata wa jaha a ta rhumela ndyangu lowu homu, leyi a yi tiyisisa ntwanano. [Translated: A suitor commonly sent the woman a grass ring or thorn to indicate that he wanted to marry her. If the feeling was reciprocated, she would send him a grass ring or a thorn, confirming their relationship. After the girl's father had formally expressed his approval of the match, the boy's father sent her family a cow, which sealed the agreement].*

More betrothal visits ensue from the *shangwane* (the best man) or *ntsumi* (messenger) and plans begin for the lobola feast. It should be stated here that while marriage customs may differ among clans, during the betrothal time fornication is very common. This is one way to *komba rirhandzu* (show love). If there are no sexual relations during this time, often time there will be no marriage. It is also common during this time that the man goes to the city or the mines to work in order to pay the upcoming lobola.

5.1.4 Who consents in Tsonga culture?

This study argued in chapter four that the first stage in marriage is consent from the family and future spouses. This consent is often expressed through various agreements, payments, and gifts before the final step of this first stage is commenced whereby the bride and groom to be (more specifically the groom) "leaves" his mother and father.

[134] From the verb "ku hlenga", meaning to gather or collect.

If the argument above is true, according to Baloyi (2014:22), this is easy for Africans to accept. He writes:

> *African people cannot live in isolation, hence the saying "I am because we are" has not only been popularised but has become a reality of everyday life. The same idiom receives an echo from "Motho ke motho ka batho ba ban'we" in which it is unthinkable for an individual not to have social relations in an African context. In this way, a woman and a man may not marry without the consent of their parents.*

In African culture, however, the idea of "consent" is not as simple as mere approval from the parents. Mathipa (1993:23-26) puts a heavy emphasis on "consent" and who it is that is consenting, saying that one of the essentials of a customary marriage is the consent of the in-laws to hand over the girl for the others to receive her. In African custom, immediate parents are not allowed to hand their child over in marriage themselves, but someone from the family would hand over the girl which is a good sign that not only the parents agree with the marriage but that it also has the consent of the whole family (cf. Mathipa (1993:23-26).

This is why Msomi (2008:242) argues that when a problem arrives in the marriage, the counselor should not speak only to the couple or even the parents but to the extended family as well.

5.1.5 What about arranged marriages?

Arranged marriage is not the same as *forced* marriage. The former is initiated by the family but implies that the bride consents, while the latter disregards any consent from the bride and perhaps the groom as well. Magubane writes in "Marriage in Tsonga Society" that in traditional Tsonga culture, "ku tshembisana ku tekana a swi nga endliwi" [child betrothal was not practiced], but a father might recommend girls to his son.

The line between these two is often blurred, as Nkhwashu's (2012:1-2) story from a woman shows: "First my husband's family insisted I have sex with his younger brother. I gave in and had sex with him day and night for seven days. That was bad enough. But then they said I must marry him. I will only marry someone I love. I realised that I had to escape." This would be an example of *forced* marriage.

An example of a very popular arranged marriage in the African political world is that of former Ghanaian President Nkrumah. Nasser helped him obtain a bride from Egypt. He never met her until the day of the wedding on 30 December 1957. Nkrumah's wife, Fathia Rizk, spoke only Arabic and a little French. Nkrumah spoke neither. Eight years later he confessed in a letter to Erica Powell that he was a "very lonely man", "friendless and companionless", and suffering from "intense loneliness" that marriage did not "solve." (Meredith, 2011:181).

Jean-Bedel Bokassa, the former dictator of the Central African Republic, was known not only for his extreme greed and violence but his excesses of women. He had seventeen wives, scores of mistresses and over fifty children. His wives were installed in separated residences and were generally known by their nationality: the German, the Swede, the Chinese, the Gabonese, the Ivorienne and so forth.[135]

Though arranged marriages may seem strange to the modern world that has fixated upon recreational dating, it has great support in Scripture. The general Old Testament practice was for parents to arrange marriages for their children (McWhirter, 2016). The parents of Ishmael (Ge 21:21), Isaac (Ge 24:1-9), and Er (Ge 38:6) arranged the marriages. Even when Jacob (Ge 28:1-5), Shechem (Ge 34:4), and Samson (Judg 14:1-3) chose their own brides, the parents wanted to be a part of the approval. Abraham's servant didn't speak only to Rebekah when finding a wife for Isaac, but spoke to her family for permission (Ge 24:15ff). Jacob spoke to Rachel's father Laban (Ge 29:15ff).

5.2 Commitment in Tsonga Culture

5.2.1 Historic Tsonga Lobola

According to Junod (1962:121), the next "moment" of the Tsonga process is *lobola*, specifically the *lobola* feast in the bride's village. As seen in the previous chapter, it is the view of this author that *lobola* better belongs in the first "leave" aspect of marriage,

[135] Bokassa was proud of his conquests. According to Meredith (2011:226), Bokassa said in an interview in 1984, "I did it like everyone. In Formosa, for example, I hustled the most beautiful women in the country whom I later married. In Bucharest, the most beautiful woman in Romania; in Libreville, the most beautiful woman in Gabon…and so on. My criterion was beauty."

though there is so much overlap, it cannot be argued that there are *lobola* aspects within “commitment/cleave” as well.

Ku lobola means to buy in marriage. *Ku lobota* means to accept lobola. It is essentially a bride price. In the past this was paid with hoes and oxen. Most pay cash for lobola today. Lobola refers to the money given for a bride that the parents agree upon.

This is not an individual affair but one of communities. It is a contract between two groups—two families. One family loses, the other gains. Lobola is paid by the latter to the former to balance things out. Magubane in “Marriage in Tsonga Society” writes that “vukati bya Xitsonga byi tlula vuxaka exikarhi ka vanhu vambirhi. Byi tiyisisa vuxaka exikarhi ka mindyangu yimbirhi, ku rhwariwe minkateko na timfanelo leti hundzaka ku lova ka un’wana wa vatekani” [Translated: “Tsonga marriage is more than a relationship between individuals. It cements relationships between families, carrying privileges and obligations that transcend the death of either spouse”].

Parrinder (1980:138) concurs with Junod’s perspective, saying: “As in other continents, African marriage was regarded as a contract between two families rather than a romance between individuals, though in modern times personal choice has increased.”

Families on both sides are notified about the lobola feast. The bride’s family is responsible to provide much beer. When the groom goes to the bride’s house on that day, she is usually hidden. Then the counting of lobola begins. In Junod’s day, it was usually hoes, so the hoes were counted meticulously. Witnesses are important. After counting there is a feast of beer and meat.

Then someone fetches the girl. She at first refuses to come, then comes and is covered. The bride and groom sit on a mat, the father often does some kind of religious act or vow and prays to the ancestors. According to Junod (1962:112), it appears that in Tsonga culture, once the lobola is paid, the woman becomes “the legal wife” of the husband.

5.2.2 Contemporary Lobola

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 1998 defines *lobola* as “the property in cash or in kind, whether known as *lobolo, bogadi, bohali, xuma, lumalo, thaka, ikhazi,*

magadi, emabheka or by any other name, which a prospective husband or the head of his family undertakes to give to the head of the prospective wife's family in consideration of a customary marriage." Heeren et al (2011:1) say about lobola:

> *There is an understanding that the custom surrounding the practice of paying lobola is to seal the relationship between the two people who plan to get married and their families or clans. The lobola demonstrates that the man getting married is capable of taking care of a family and also serves as a token of gratitude to the bride's family for raising a wonderful woman.*

Lobola is the payment of money or cows by a prospective son-in-law to the family of his future bride. Most often the groom pays, though sometimes the payment comes from the father and even perhaps in the future if the man has no money. The two families come together to negotiate a payment, after which is a celebration of food and music.

Lobola has perhaps as many opponents as it does supporters.[136] Some believe it is unacceptable because it markets women and takes money from the young couple. Others discourage the practice as impractical but stop short of condemning it. Others believe it is a positive good provided the proper components are in place.

Though the marital custom of lobola is as old as Africa itself, it must be noted here that there is a great deal of variance from clan to clan, country to country and tribe to tribe. Because lobola is not a monolithic idea, here we will discuss the subject's core components only.

5.2.2.1 Strengths of lobola

Muyambo (2019) gives three benefits to lobola: (1) It builds the relationship between the two families. (2) It shows gratitude to the parents of the bride. (3) It shows love and commitment by the groom to the bride, with the bride often feeling unloved or unappreciated if there is no lobola. It is a source of respect and an important cultural tie (Shope, 2006).

[136] For example, Manomano (2019) compares it to slavery and considers it another form of injustice. He believes it to be nothing more than "a legal way of trading human beings for cows." He also recognizes, however, that many women actually favor lobola because it gives them dignity and worth. "A woman cannot say she is married when no form of payment was made to her parents. She feels that having lobola paid retains her dignity."

In speaking of the benefits the OT bride price brought to society, Copan (2011:117) also strengthens three points above made by Muyambo within African society:

> *The bride-price was the way a man showed his serious intentions toward his bride-to-be and it was a way of bringing two families together to discuss a serous, holy, and lifelong matter. Having sex with a young woman without the necessary preparations and formal ceremony cheapened the woman and sexuality. The process surrounding the bride-price reflected the honorable state of marriage.*

Parker (2015:175) points to a (4) fourth benefit: the practice of lobola has deep cultural, African ties.

> *Lobola is an age-old, African custom and some people feel that abandoning this custom will be another step towards the loss of everything African. Lobola is seen by many people as socially beneficial because it is the bringing together of families as well as an acknowledgement by the bridegroom and his family of this precious gift, the bride.*

Other advantages include the following: (5) It requires the man to show responsibility, (6) it demonstrates the value he has for his bride, (7) it pictures the way Christ loved the church by purchasing his bride.

Muthwadini (1990:4-5), picking up the first strength of lobola listed above, agrees that it is the means that families establish a kind of kinship together. Since the bridegroom's family gets the benefit of the bride, they should then return something of value to the bride's family. This is the cattle or cash within the lobola. While Muthwadini does not believe lobola should be viewed as a commercial transaction, he argues that "no lobola" essentially means "no marriage" in the African mind. He writes (1990:4-5):

> *It is also common that in a case where this bride-price has not been paid, although the bride is staying with her husband, she does not really regard herself as legally his wife. As soon as quarrels start she will remind him that he has not paid the bride-price for her yet, and therefore does not really have any authority over her.*

Heeren et al (2011:4) confirm the benefits of lobola listed above, saying that without this bride price, the parents will not recognize the marriage and the bride will not respect her husband. Their focus group findings revealed the following:

> *The women voiced their concern that if lobola has not been paid the marriage will not last. "A wife is always proud if lobola has been paid for*

her". "The wife will be treated with respect as well as the husband"…. Everyone agreed that: "The wife does not respect the husband" and "the husband does not respect the wife", if lobola has not been paid and "The families do not recognise the marriage". In case of problems within the marriage, the couple will not find any support. Failure to pay lobola assumes that "the woman remains single", "thus is not married" as a result the children of the young couple will belong to the father of the wife, and not to the husband and as a result the husband will have no influence in the upbringing of the children".

5.2.2.2 Weaknesses of lobola

Parker (2015:175) lists three problems that surround the practice of lobola. (1) Because money has largely replaced cattle in modern society, women often feel as though they are being purchased.

Parrinder (1980:138) rejects this argument, however, writing:

> *The term 'bride-price'…might give the misleading impression that the woman was bought and sold, and this would be repudiated since there are other words for transactions [in the Ba-ila language] and buying a person refers to slavery. A wife was not bought, and her husband did not have proprietary rights over her as he would over a slave. So the term 'bride-wealth' was invented, though 'dowry' could be used with the understanding that it was the husband who dowered.*

(2) The spread of HIV and AIDS. Customary Law (which includes *lobola*) in South Africa allows for a man to take up to four wives. Multiple partners increase the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.[137] (3) Marriage is delayed because the man is often unable to raise the proper funds.

Muyambo (2019) references the three items by Parker above, then adds more weaknesses herself. (4) Greed. Daughters are viewed as a means to financial gain. Lest one think that Africans are unanimous in their approval of lobola, one should look no further than the International Conference on Bride Price, a gathering in Uganda devoted entirely to this particular issue, many in attendance of whom were in strict

[137] The surveys of Heeren et al (2011:4) discovered that lobola will not change a husband's illicit sexual behavior: "Everyone agreed that: the husband"s behavior 'will not be different if he paid or not. All men go outside {the marriage} whether or not they have paid lobola." (Meaning having a sexual relationship, an affair). 'If the man does not respect his wife, he will do what he wants to do'. If lobola has not been paid, the husband in times of crisis will say to his wife 'you are not my real wife, I did not pay lobola.'"

opposition. On the matter of greed, Wendo (2004) writes: “In some cases, impoverished parents marry off under age daughters, sometimes as young as 14, in order to get bride wealth. This leads to various problems associated with teenage pregnancies.”

(5) Debt. Young couples just starting out in marriage now face an uphill climb to get out of financial difficulty brought about by high lobola prices. (6) Bitterness. The groom often feels bitterness toward his bride or her parents because of the excessive pride price fees. Or there might be bitterness within the wife toward the *husband* and his parents because she cannot leave a bad marriage because she fears she must then return the bride price. Junod (1962:281-282) also argues that *lobola* fosters bitterness between the families of the bride and groom. He writes:

> *[Another] series of consequences arising from this custom are the strained relations between the two contracting groups. We have sufficiently insisted on this subject. What makes dealings with parents-in-law so difficult? It is the lobolo, the sum of money which has perhaps not been fully paid, and the debt remains as a permanent cause of irritation. If there is no reason for friction on that point, the threat of quarrels ending in divorce is always impending like the sword of Damocles. If this takes place, the sad event will be made ten times more painful by the terrible dispute which will arise by reason of the lobola being claimed back.*

(7) Fornication. According to Baloyi (2014:23), “For many Africans, the ‘*vat-en-sit*’ marriage in which couples simply live together, has long been problematic**.”** Lobola nullifies marriage for many couples but not pre-marital sex. For many parents, this is less concerning than a man not paying the proper bride price. Wendo (2004) references a church chaplain that said parents often block the weddings of cohabiting couples because the groom has not completed paying the bride price.

It is not surprising, then, that nearly two decades ago the median age for women in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa exceeded twenty-five years old (Garenne, 2004:60). The number is mostly likely significantly higher today. In Botswana and Namibia, more than 70 percent of first births occur before marriage (Singh, 1998:124). Clark, Koski, and Smith-Greenaway (2017:1) demonstrate that “the rising age of first

marriage across sub-Saharan Africa over the past 25 years has led many scholars to predict a concurrent increase in premarital childbearing."[138]

(8) Ease in severing the marriage. While Junod recognizes several advantages of *lobola,* he cautions not to exaggerate the benefits. He writes (1962:279-280):

> *Marriages concluded on the lobola basis, are frequently dissolved. The tie being purely material, it is easy to sever it. When the husband "bitana tihomu," claims his oxen, who could refuse to return them? It is certainly erroneous to say that the lobola is a contract made between two families in order to guarantee the good treatment of the wife by her husband and vice versa, to prevent the husband beating his wife or the wife deserting the conjugal home from mere caprice. It has even been asserted that this sum of money was a pledge, a security, claimed by the wife's parents for the protection of their daughter! There is nothing of the kind in this institution.*

Because of some of the weaknesses and misunderstandings listed above, Muyambo (2019) suggests it would be better to speak of lobola as a "bride gift" rather than a "bride price."

Among the greatest weaknesses of lobola—and to the surprise of many—is that the South African government does not recognize lobola itself as equivalent to marriage. According to Manyike (2018), lobola itself is not marriage, but instead a part of the process of getting married under customary law—the law stipulating a legal union under customary marriage must be between an 18+ year old man and woman being married under customary law. "It is very important to celebrate the customary marriage after lobola negotiations have been concluded. By merely paying or receiving lobola in full without the requisite celebration, the marriage is not concluded in accordance with customary law, and therefore considered invalid."

The nature of *lobola* celebrations differ significantly from culture to culture. Some cultures publicly transfer the bride to the new family amidst singing, feasting and

[138] These three women authors do not address the moral causes or consequences of premarital sexual activity, though they do hint at what makes these numbers rise and fall in a country, saying (2017:21): "Whether a country will experience an increase or decrease in future premarital fertility will depend more heavily on changes in sexual activity among unmarried women and access to contraception than the timing of first marriage."

transferring gifts. But if the marriage process stops here, there are potential problems according to Manyike (2018):

> *The problem is that the only proof you may have that some form of union existed is the lobola letter, and this alone may not be sufficient to prove that a customary marriage existed. When the legality of the marriage is disputed, the courts have to evaluate each case on its own merit, guided by the prevailing customs and practices of the particular jurisdiction.*

Has the marriage been legally formed at this point, or is there more to do? Is it wise to take significant time between lobola celebrations and a traditional ceremony in order to save money? This final step will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.3 Covenant Oaths in Tsonga Culture

Lipco Law for All imply in “Customary Marriages in South Africa” that while lobola is a stepping stone for marriage, there is much more that must follow to make it official:

> *Often, the wedding celebrations don’t take place for a while after the lobola negotiations and payment has been settled (in part or full). The reality is that families need time to save up enough money for the big day. While paying lobola is essential, it is also important that the necessary traditional rituals and celebrations take place as soon as possible. From a legal perspective this is critical because should the couple get divorced or a spouse pass away, it could be challenging to prove that the couple legally married.*

Magubane in “Marriage in Tsonga Society” agrees, nowhere indicating that lobola on its own is marriage. He writes:

> *The traditional ceremony is still practiced by many Tsongas. At the girl's departure from her home, a sacrifice is made, and she formally takes leave of her family and their ancestral spirits. This is followed by a 'handing over' of the bride to her new family. [Tsonga: Leswi swi landzeriwa hi ku nyikeriwa ka makoti eka ndyangu wakwe lowuntshwa] After a marriage feast at the bridegroom's muti 'homestead', the couple are considered formally married.*

It appears, then, that while lobola is an important aspect of Tsonga marriage, there are many other customs that must follow to make it official.

5.2.4 Marriage by abduction

While the above three moments were the most common marriage "moments" among the Tsongas in Junod's day, there were alternatives. Junod (1962:119-120) calls this "marriage by abduction". If the lovers were unusually poor, they would seize another route. They would have sex in the bush and then run to another person's home, often the girl's aunt and uncle. They would have no right to the lobola and thus would be more lenient. The parents look for her. They give up. She stays with her lover (Junod, 1962:119-120).

In time the man will try to piece together some kind of lobola. If he doesn't bring the regular payment, the "first girl born of that marriage will be the lobola" (Junod, 1962:120). In Tsonga it is called "*N'wana a ta lobola manana wa kwe."* The child pays for the mother. According to Tsonga law, all the children of this kind of union belong to the girl's family. A man that doesn't pay lobola has no right of property in his children.[139]

5.2.5 Adultery

Among the Tsongas true adultery is only between a married man and a married woman (not his wife), not a husband and an unmarried girl. There are no consequences if the husband has sexual relations with a girl. Should she become pregnant, however, then he'll be forced to marry her and make her his second wife. Junod (1962:196) says this will not be a problem for the first wife:

> *His first wife will not at all resent his bad conduct. Sometimes she will herself get him the girl he wants. There's nothing in her heart like the jealous dignity of a European spouse! She will keep all her capacity for jealousy for the time when the second wife comes to the village, and shares with her the affection of their common husband! Adultery with an unmarried woman is nothing more than gangisa.*

Adultery with a married woman, however, is very serious, in part because it constitutes theft. Another man owns her. Adultery is by far the most common cause of divorce, according to Junod (1962:197).

[139] This is in relation to the custom *lavelelani halenu* ("look for her here").

5.2.6 Divorce

Should the married woman decide to stay with her illicit lover, this leads to immediate divorce. The husband then goes to the parents of his unfaithful wife and tries to reclaim the lobola (Junod, 1962:198).

There are more trivial causes of divorce, such as money problems, incompatibility, and abuse. Junod believes both the husband and wife are equally the cause for divorces in Tsonga culture. Per Junod (1962:198-199): “When [the wife] thinks she is persecuted (*xanisa*), the wife runs home. This is her great weapon.”

Baloyi (2014:28) says: “African people would protect a marriage at all costs. The husband would not decide to separate from or divorce his wife without the consent of the elders of the village.”

According to the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 1998, section 8 (1-2), “A customary marriage may only be dissolved by a court by a decree of divorce on the ground of the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. A court may grant a decree of divorce…”

5.2.7 Polygamy

Junod (1962:186) says that the first wife is the most respected and referred to as *nsati lowukulu* (“the senior wife”). Those after her are referred to as smaller wives. She is considered the true wife.

According to Legal Wise on “Marriages” (2020), polygamy is allowed within South African customary law, however, it is not as easy to obtain as a monogamous marriage.

> *In a polygamous marriage, the husband must apply to the High Court for permission to enter into such a marriage and provide the court with a written contract stating how the property in the marriages will be regulated (to protect the property interests of both the existing and prospective spouses.*

5.3 Consummation in Tsonga Culture

5.3.1 Junod on consummation

According to Junod, the third "moment" of the marriage process is *ku tlhoma* (1962:112). This refers to the bride going to her husband's home. *Ku tlhoma* literally means to stick in, to pin or to plant. Now the girl has officially been planted into the home of her husband.

The wife does not possess her home for the first year of marriage. Instead, she must cook for the mother-in-law.[140] She is said to have no *ndyangu,* that is no fireplace or home of her own. Per Junod (1962:185): "During the three first weeks the husband eats with her and with the girl who accompanied her to her new home. Afterwards, he goes back to eat with the men."

Khosa (2009:70) says a similar thing:

> *In Xitsonga culture, according to Mrs. Nwa-Risimati Shivambu, it is not permitted for the husband to sleep with his newly wed wife. The bride was to sleep with her in-laws until such time that they see it fit which is usually not less than three months. The husband, according to Mrs. N'wa-Mafemani Matlhava, will have to give her wife some money for her to talk to him which is referred to as 'mali ya xikhiya'.*

5.3.2 Contemporary Tsonga consummation

As we learned in chapter four, consummation ("the one flesh" union) *itself* is not marriage any more than just "leaving" or just "cleaving" is marriage. Only having sex is not marriage; it is fornication. It is cohabitation, which is becoming more and more prevalent in sub-Sahara Africa.

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[140] Around this time the woman is told how hard married life is. She is the ownership of her husband. He has bought her. Very little is said of marital affection. For example, Junod (1962:118) writes: "'Hear!' the old woman say to the bride, 'you have been a good girl, so far, henceforth you will be treated as a slave! You will be accused of adultery and of witchcraft. You will have no more happiness. But accept all that! They will beat you, kill you and we shall not be able to deliver you, because we have eaten their oxen.' These exhortations are worth reproducing, as they show clearly the conditions under which the girl goes to her husband. She is not protected by the lobola. On the contrary, the lobola has mde her the possession of the husband's family, from whom she must now accept any treatment."

5.3.2.1 “Vat en sit” in African culture

Ogunsola (2011) defines cohabitation as shared accommodation, shared sex life, shared economic resources, shared matrimonial duties, and sometimes procreation as its common features. Popoola and Ayendele (2019:13030) define cohabitation as “a short-term, non-legal, private, co-residential union which brings some but not all of costs and benefits of marriage.”

Such consenting, cohabiting unions go by different names in Africa, such as “vat en sit” in South Africa (Afrikaans for “take and sit”), “viens on reste” in Cameroon (French for “come and stay”), “passing through the bush” in Kenya, and “campus marriage” in Nigeria.

In Tsonga culture, “ku tlhaka” is the equivalent to “vat en sit”. It is an offensive term, but one that communicates nonetheless that a girl has left her home prematurely in order to live with a man not her husband. The Tsongas might say about someone: “Tintswalo u tlhakile”, she has gone to live with her boyfriend.

As common as such behavior is today, some would suggest that this was unacceptable in the past in Africa. For example, there was a premium bride price on virgins before marriage. Per Mokomane (2006a), in Kenya, there was no bride price or negotiation for cohabiting couples and the weddings were different in Botswana.

5.3.2.2 Kinds of “vat en sit” in African culture

Popoola and Ayandele (2019:13031) reference Thatcher who describes three kinds of cohabitation or “vat en sit” in African culture:

- Trial marriage. Per Popoola and Ayandele (2019:13033), cohabitation is used to avoid marrying the wrong person. This kind of cohabitation is so prevalent that for one to avoid it almost seems negligent. This is not simple casual dating.
- Marriage alternative. This is the poor man’s marriage. He has no plans to formally marry but often for economic reasons he chooses to live with a woman, in part to avoid ridicule for being “single”.
- Casual cohabitation. This is very common among youth. Mokomane (2006a) calls these people “purposeful delayers”.

Statistics showing how many are now cohabiting in sub-Saharan Africa are difficult to come by in part because it is difficult to distinguish between cohabitation and marriage. Nonetheless, according to Popoola and Ayandele (2019:13032), the numbers for cohabiting couples are rising, from 1.2 million in '96 to 2.4 million in 2001. Many believe (Mashau, 2011:1-7) that cohabitation is now socially acceptable.

5.3.2.3 Reasons for "vat en sit" in African culture

Popoola and Ayendele (2019:13032-13033) give at least seven grounds for cohabitation in today's African culture:

- Sexual pleasure. This is the way a girl thinks she must keep her boyfriend.
- Breakdown of ethical standards. Now, it is "love" that makes sex moral, not marriage.
- Trial marriage. This is used to prevent marriage to the wrong person.
- Lobola/wedding costs. The pride price was supposed to show love and appreciation to the bride's family (Uka, 2015). Now it is encouraging fornication.
- Poverty. This connects closely with wedding costs above. Now people view cohabitation as simply reducing the costs of living.
- Religious. There has been a downgrade in morality in Africa.
- Media. Ungodly living is more easily seen and espoused.

Among the numerous evil consequences that flow from cohabitation, Popoola and Ayendele (2019) list five: (1) denigration of marriage, (2) marital instability, (3) infidelity, (4) domestic abuse, and (5) distractions.

5.3.2.4 Consummation in other African cultures

Parrinder (1980:138) says that among the Ba-ila people,

> *Marriage came at the conclusion of the initiation, when the girl was taken direct to the bridegroom's house. The man was seized, sometimes reluctantly, and taken home and when it was dark the couple slept together and the union was consummated. The bridegroom took strings of beads equal to his wife's height and hung them on the bedpost, and put a hoe in the fireplace. In the morning the old woman who had prepared the room took these objects as her reward and proof of consummation.*

Parrinder (1980:138) continues, saying this about the consummation stage among the Ndembu people:

> *At the end of the initiation the girl went to her betrothed's house, and he had been given aphrodisiac medicines to produce strong erections. The bride was carried over the threshold into the hut backwards to avoid evil influences and barrenness. Two arrows, which the parents had exchanged at betrothal, were placed in the ground at the end of the bridal bed. The couple was to have intercourse as many times as possible….*

Several observations are in order. First, it is interesting that among the Ndembu people, the bride and groom were still considered "betrothed" until sexual consummation was completed. Second, it was assumed that there had not been any sexual activity between the couple before the marriage. Third, the parents took an active role in this final role as well. The placed objects in the bridal room and they offered help through certain medicines and also by advice. In no way was the "one-flesh" concept a final, overlooked, throw-away step that no one considered important.

5.3.3 Marriage and the South African magistrate

No matter how one celebrates wedlock and commitment in all its diversity, getting married is always a legal affair. Because lobola and many of the other customs explained above fall within "customary marriage", this is what will be discussed below in detail.

5.3.3.1 Three marriage laws in South Africa

South African citizens may form an official marriage under one of three different laws. First is the Marriage Act, 1961, which allows for civil or religious marriage between a man and a woman. These marriages must be formalized by a marriage officer and before two witnesses. Prospective spouses must be eighteen or older under this act, though a girl over fifteen may marry with her parent's approval. This is by far the most popular act under which marriages are registered (167,264 according to the 2011 census [96.6%], compared to 5,084 under customary marriages and 867 under the Civil Union Act).

Second is the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (the Act), sometimes referred to as RCMA. In 1998 South African law recognized marriages conducted under African

customary law, including polygamous marriages made pre-1998.[141] Polygamy is allowed (under certain conditions) if the community's customary laws so permit.

Third is the Civil Union Act, 2006, which allows for civil and religious marriage (like the Marriage Act, 1961) *or* a civil partnership between two people regardless of gender. In 2006 South Africa became the fifth country in the world to allow same-sex marriage. The legal consequences under this Act are the same for the Marriage Act. These marriages must be formalized by a marriage officer and before two witnesses. Pastors may not formalize marriages under this act unless their denomination is registered to do so.

In South Africa there is no such thing as common-law marriage. Just because two people (e.g. a boyfriend and girlfriend) are living together, no matter how long, does not officially make them a married couple.[142]

Some people in South Africa that do not want to get married but still want to protect their person property and finances may sign a domestic partnership agreement, also known as a life partnership or cohabitation agreement. This agreement does not give the same rights as does marriage but it does protect the individuals in some ways. A widely used definition (Bregman, 2017) describes a domestic partnership as two adults who share an emotional, physical and financial relationship like that of a married couple but who either choose not to marry or cannot legally marry. They share a mutual obligation of support for the necessities of life.

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[141] Per South African History Online (2016): "Before the new 1996 Constitutional dispensation, legislation for customary marriages was already in place. A woman in a customary marriage was deemed to be a minor, and of a lower status than her husband and she was thus subject to his marital power. This was the position in terms of section 11(3) of the Repeal of the Black Administration Act (BAA), section, and the Natal Code of Zulu Law of 1985."

[142] Frame (2008: 749) is one example of a theologian that does not entirely reject the idea of common-law marriage, which he defines as a relationship of a man and a woman that show themselves publically over a period of living together to be fully committed to one another, "just as if they had taken formal vows. In this case, the vow exists, though implicitly and informally, and it is witnessed by the couple's acquaintances. (Without the public witness, there is no vow.) Nevertheless, such marriages begin in sin as nonmarriages. Only over a period of time can there be pulic witness to their commitment."

Regarding financial consequences, unless a prenuptial agreement is signed, the couple is married in community of property, meaning they have a joint estate of all their liabilities and assets.

5.3.3.2 Customary marriage explained

Customary marriage is a union that is negotiated, celebrated, and concluded by African uncodified customary laws. According to the Recognition of Customary Marriages Acts (Act No. 120 of 1998), "'customary law' means the customs and usages traditionally observed among the indigenous African peoples of South Africa and form part of the culture of those peoples."[143]

South African History Online (2016) writes: "A customary marriage is not only concluded between two individuals, but also extends to their respective families. Unlike civil marriages, customary unions occur gradually and are not concluded by a single event such as a ceremonial signing of an official document."

Customary law is essentially old, unwritten rules that have become a part of life for a particular people and passed down from generation to generation. Customary law is just one form of law that most African countries follow. Others include legislation, religious laws and civil laws.

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998 made provision for customary marriages in two ways. First, it states that all marriages—whether monogamous or polygamous—that were lawful under customary law before the above act came into force were recognized as legal marriages. Second, all marriages according to African customary laws that came into being *after* the Act must abide by the requirements of the Act in order for the marriage to be considered valid.

According to some (Malete 2020), Section 3(1) of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998 (the Act) is one of the most misinterpreted pieces of legislation in post democratic South Africa.

[143] But does South Africa actually recognize these customary laws? Yes, through the South African Constitution under section 211, though the African Customary Laws (ACL) come under the Constitution and not the other way around. That is, though ACL has a separate origin of law, it must be consistent with the South African Constitution.

5.3.3.3 Customary marriage requirements

There are three primary requirements for customary marriage according to the Act.[144] First, both prospective spouses must be "above the age of eighteen." Second, both prospective spouses must consent to be married to each other under customary law. Third, the marriage must be negotiated and entered into or celebrated in accordance to customary law.[145] The first requirement is straightforward. But what do the second and third requirements mean by "customary law"?

5.3.3.3.1 Marriage registration

Section 4 (1) of the Act says that it is the duty of the spouses within a customary marriage to register their marriage.[146] A customary marriage must be registered at the Department of Home Affairs within three months of all the proceedings.

Later in the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 1998 it says that *not* registering the marriage will not make it invalid: "Failure to register a customary marriage does not affect the validity of that marriage." Perhaps this is saying that *technically* a customary marriage without registration is still a marriage in the eyes of the law, though *logistically* this may be difficult to prove with the death of the spouse or a divorce, as will be shown below in the various court cases. At the very least, these sections seem ambiguous.

Manyike (2018) confirms this:

> *Many couples tend to take a break after the lobola process is concluded to save money for a celebration without realising how crucial it is that a traditional ceremony also takes place as soon as possible. If the ceremony is not conducted, and the marriage is not registered, the marriage may be hard to prove and may not be recognised under the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act. This means you may stand to lose your claim on any assets you may be entitled to if the marriage fails or if your spouse*

[144] Smaller details are states below the above three, mostly regarding the proper steps for those prospectives spouses that want to marry under the age of eighteen.

[145] Absent is the requirement that the marriage partners must be of the oppositive sex. Also absent is the prohibition of blood relatives. Instead, "blood relatives" as marriage is determined by customary law.

[146] The gov.za website on marriage specially says that "you must register your customary marriage within three months of the date of celebration or entering into the marriage **to make it legal."**

dies. If you don't register the customary marriage with Home Affairs, it does not necessarily mean it is invalid, but it makes it harder to prove.

As Lipco Law for All says: "Failing to register a customary marriage does not invalidate the nuptials, but it is highly advisable to get one in case any disputes end up in a court of law."

5.3.3.3.2 Marriage certificates

The Department of Home Affairs is in charge of the registration of all three forms of marriage: civil marriages, civil unions and customary marriages. All three are automatically considered in community of property unless an ante-nuptial contract has been signed.

The steps for Tsongas and all South Africans to obtain a marriage certificate, according to the Department of Home Affairs, are as follows:

- Verify your marital status, as many fraudulent marriages are registered with the DHA each year.[147]
- Civil marriages are to be conducted in the presence of at least two witnesses in a public office or church by an authorized marriage officer. Afterwards two witnesses and the marriage officer must sign the marriage register after the solemnisation of a marriage. Have proper documentation (IDs etc.)
- Customary marriages must be registered within three months of taking place, either through the DHA or a designated traditional leader. Have proper documentation (IDs etc.)
- Civil unions are very similar to civil marriage requirements.

5.3.3.4 Difficulties encountered in customary marriage

South African History Online (2016) claims The Act has received much criticism and has been highly problematic in its application.

But what does the third requirement mean by "customary law"? Interpreting the phrase "negotiated and entered into or celebrated in accordance with customary law" is very

[147] Supposedly there has been a facility set up to check marital status, as easy as sending an SMS with the person's ID. This process did not work for the author of this paper.

difficult. What makes the interpretation of customary law so challenging is that (1) these laws are rarely written down, making them very difficult to interpret and (2) each law is "fluid, and changes over time and among different groups of people" (Wells 2015), thus making it difficult to be consistent.

For example, in Alexkor Ltd and Another v Richtersveld Community and Others we find:

> *In applying indigenous law, it is important to bear in mind that, unlike common law, indigenous law is not written. It is a system of law that was known to the community, practised and passed on from generation to generation. It is a system of law that has its own values and norms. Throughout its history it has evolved and developed to meet the changing needs of the community. And it will continue to evolve within the context of its values and norms consistently with the Constitution.*

A second difficulty is that since the ACL is tied so closely to the traditional *ethnic* beliefs of a particular people, *mixed* ethnic groups pose a problem (Nwauche 2015). For example, if a Pedi and a Zulu want to marry, whose cultural customs should they follow?

A third difficulty is when woman's rights issues come into play with ACL primarily regarding succession rights (as stated above) and marriage (the purpose of this paper). In 1998, the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act was passed by Parliament to eliminate what they saw as discrimination of women. This Act allows for customary marriage if (1) the ACL marriage took place prior to the 1998 Act or (2) the ACL marriage followed the Act's rules. This kind of marriage can be registered with Home Affairs.

Because of some of these difficulties posed by customary marriage, Parrinder (1980:140) has highlighted the difficulty of the West to recognize such unions:

> *Christian missions in Africa, after initial hesitation, generally disliked Customary or Native Marriage, and preferred European-based Ordinance or Statutory Marriage, for which they often pressed. There were 'heathen' customs, not to mention strange sexual practices, involved in Customary Marriage and they seemed informal, arranged by families instead of individuals, and essentially polygamous.*

5.3.3.5 Customary marriage court cases

5.3.3.5.1 Shilubana v Nwamitwa

A good example of how South African courts have tried to keep ACL the same but at other times have tried to develop it is seen in the case of Shilubana and Others v Nwamitwa (2008). Ms Shilubana, a Tsonga living in a Tsonga community in the Limpopo Province, was appointed chief of her village, even though culturally the chief has always been the eldest son of the previous chief. But apparently some in the village wanted “gender equality” as the Constitution stipulates.

Enter Mr. Nwamitwa. He disputed her chieftaincy based on long held traditional beliefs. He won the decision in the High Court and the SCA but lost unanimously in the high Constitution Court because the ACL is fluid and not bound by historical precedent and thus prior decisions did not count in the decision. In other words, the ACL reflects *current* customary beliefs and priorities of a community (not those of old) and those that reflect the Constitution.

In sum, African customary law is fluid and favors contemporary customs over the past.

5.3.3.5.2 Tsambo v Sengadi

Another example regarding the difficulty in determining the exact nature of customary marriages can be seen in the recent decision by the SCA in *Tsambo v Sengadi*.

According to Malete (2020), this court case was an appeal against decision in a lower court, which ruled the respondent was the customary wife of the deceased. Both the respondent and the deceased had concluded a valid customary marriage on 28 February 2016.

In Tsambo v Sengadi, the appellant was the father of the deceased who was arguing that the respondent was not the customary wife of his deceased son because the couple did not follow the important ritual of handing over the bride. Per the father, since there was no handing over, there was no marriage because the third requirement of the Act of 1998 was not satisfied.

The SCA agreed that a formal handing over did not occur, but it still concluded that the respondent was the customary wife of the deceased. Five reasons were given:

- The deceased and the respondent were given matching attire by the aunts in the family.
- The clothing was called a “wedding dress”.
- The respondent was referred to as “wife”.
- The father congratulated the deceased wife on marriage.
- After the lobola celebration, the couple continued cohabiting.[148]

In sum, this case shows that while handing over the bride is an important ritual within customary law, it is not imperative should other customs be in place (like clothing and public congratulations) and especially if the couple cohabits after the marriage without the disapproval of the families.

5.3.3.5.3 Baadjies v Matubela

According to Bekker and Maithufi (2003), “this is one of the most interesting cases to be decided by our courts since the coming into operation of the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998.” The case concerns proof of the existence of a customary marriage that was contracted before 15 November 2000, that is, the date of the commencement of the Act. The court rejected the application for maintenance of this marriage due to the fact that the applicant was unable to provide a certificate proving the registration of their customary marriage.

In sum, marriage certificates are important even for customary marriages.

5.3.3.5.4 Mbungela v Mkabi

The case Mbungela v Mkabi (2020) asks if handing over the bride is necessary for the creation of a valid customary marriage. Per the facts (Malete 2020), the respondent (Mr Mkabi) sought an order confirming that he and the deceased had met the necessary requirements in s (1)(b) of the Act and therefore concluded a customary marriage. Mkabi offered four lines of proof:

[148] In this case the SCA relied on the writings of TW Bennett (1991) who holds the view that where parties are cohabiting without objection from their families, a marriage will be presumed.

- Mkabi sent a delegation to ask for her hand in marriage.
- Mkabi had lobola negotiations with the family and agreed upon R12,000.
- Mkabi paid R9,000 of the lobola, plus gifts.
- Mkabi did not register the marriage according to s 4 of the Act but did go to the Traditional Council to confirm the marriage.

The appellants, however, didn't think the couple was validly married because there was no giving away of the bride. The SCA held that cohabitation was key in their decision, because it often presumes marriage exists, especially when no objection has been raised by the parents. In some cases, cohabitation after lobola is a sure mark of marriage.

In sum, if a couple performs lobola negotiations but hasn't yet completed the rituals according to their customs, the courts may still consider them married, especially if there is cohabitation after the union.

5.3.3.5.5 Thembisile and Another v Thembisile and Another (2002)

In this case (Machedi, 2020), it was decided that an undisputed customary marriage did not need proper registration. The first respondent bore the onus of persuading the court that that union had been dissolved, especially in light of 4(9) of the Act.

In sum, the non-registration of a customary marriage does not affect the validity of such marriage, thus such marriage is not null and void.

5.3.3.5.6 Hypothetical case study

Suppose a Tsonga man wanted to marry a Sotho woman, gave her parents a down payment and then proceeded to have a child with her. In time, he leaves the woman and all responsibility for her and the child. Were they really married? Must he pay child support? Does she have claims to some of his property? All of these questions are important for the magistrate to answer.

Suppose he has another wife. Does this matter? Does the down payment count as lobola? Was a public covenant made with the second wife, the first wife, or neither? Will the answer change from one South African culture to another? Are South African cultures explicit and unified in their cultural laws for marriage or are they ambiguous?

Here is another example. Suppose during the Apartheid government a black and white couple wanted to get married. Because the law at that time forbid such a thing, they decided to exchange vows before a group of believers instead and the church blessed it. Let's also suppose that after some time the man abandons his wife and children. What should happen? The church only has the authority to excommunicate him. But the church is not authorized to use force. It is the government that bears the sword (Rm. 13:4). Suppose he's abusive. Suppose he won't leave the house. Suppose he won't pay child support. These are some examples of the offenses for which the man must answer that only the government can address.

This is where the magistrate has authority. In this scenario, however, there was no registration of the marriage with the government and thus, it will be difficult for the woman to find justice. This illustrates the importance of government properly wielding its power to bring justice in matters of marriage.

We can see, then, that marriage is far more than just a relationship of love. It involves custody rights, property rights, financial partitions and inheritance details.

5.3.3.5.7 Customary marriage and lobola

One might ask: "Why involve the magistrate if lobola alone worked just fine in the past? The world today in Africa is much different from bygone eras. Gone are the days when both parties may not be able to read and write and formal documents were non-existent. In fact, Baloyi (2012:1-6) argues that past lobola negotiations that had so many different family members involved was to overcome this very problem.

Since the ancient African peoples had no formally legal means of forming marriages, these unions were simply agreed upon between parents and families. This became one of the ways that introduced the opportunity for family intervention in one's marriage. Perhaps this is why Musharamina (1981:14) indicates that a young man, even though he may be independent, must still have his choice sanctioned by his parents.

5.4 Conclusion

Though the laws of marriage are timeless, cross-cultural and foundational for every society, the customs of marriage express themselves differently in each people group.

“Consent” in Tsonga culture is often between two families but Tsongas do not force the girl against her will. Within “commitment”, while there are many benefits to *lobola,* there are probably twice as many weaknesses to it, all of which Tsonga parents and prospective spouses would be wise to avoid. Tsongas have a number of “commitment” customs after lobola, like a banquet and the giving away of the bride, though it appears formal oaths have never been an emphasis.

Consummation comes through sexual intercourse most often in the home of the groom, where the bride sometimes must share a kitchen with her mother-in-law for over a year. This is especially common in rural areas. The South African government says it is the “duty” for those in customary marriages to register this union with the Department of Home Affairs. There have been many court cases that have turned into wars because the lack of proper paperwork has brought into question the legitimacy of a particular customary marriage.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

Christian marriage is glorious not only because the God that created it is glorious but also because the woman is the glory of man. “An excellent wife,” says Proverbs, “is the crown of her husband” (12:4). The literal English translation from *Mahungu Lamanene* says she is “the crown of *authority* on her husband’s head” (*hari ya vuhosi enhlokweni ya nuna wa yena).* But this misses the point completely. The husband is the authority of the wife, not the reverse. TS29 is closer to the truth: “A good woman is a crown of *beauty* to her husband” (*wansati lonene i harhi ya vubombi/vusaseki eka nuna wa yena*). One lesson to be learned from this translational difference is that the student of Scripture must always keep the *text* of Scripture and the *meaning* of Scripture as his supreme guide.

It therefore follows, then, that this study’s foundational chapter in this study (Chapter 2) was exegetical. It answers the question: “What saith the Lord about marriage and a husband and wife’s role within it?” This study’s first conclusion from Eph 5:21-33 was that v. 21 (“submitting to one another”) must be kept in its previous context and we gave nine reasons to support this. The reason this is important is because if we directly attached this fifth participle to the following section of marital roles (vv. 22-33), it would be easier to establish that to “submit” (ὑποτάσσω) is a duty that husbands and wives must pay to each other, rather than its true meaning, which is properly ordered submission. The second conclusion from this passage was that it is the duty of the wife to place herself under the authority of her husband, not because of *him* but because of the greatness of *Him* (v. 22). The reason she is to submit is because God has made the husband her head (v. 23). She must submit to him the same way the church submits to Christ and she cannot pick and choose to obey him according to her own fancy (v. 24). The final conclusion about Paul’s theology of matrimony from Eph 5:21-33 was that it is the duty of every husband to love his wife in five distinct ways. His love must be unconditional (ἀγαπάω; v. 25a), sacrificial (“gave himself up for her”; v. 25b), purposeful (“that he might sanctify her”; vv. 26-27), affectionate (“as their own bodies”; vv. 28-30) and complete (“leave…hold fast…one flesh”; vv. 31-32).

Chapter 3 anticipates an argument that may flow from Chapter 2: “Paul’s marital assertions were according to the culture of his day; our culture today is different and

therefore unfettered from Paul's commands." However, this chapter argues that while there is some correspondence in Paul's household code with the Roman, Greek and Jewish culture of his day, much of what the chief of sinners says is extensively countercultural—from the essence of the wife's obedience to the husband, to the kind of affection a husband is to have for the wife, to the duty of parents after the marital union.

Chapter 4 attempts to answer the question from the whole of Scripture but specifically Eph 5:31: "What is marriage?" This chapter highlighted the material, formal, efficient and final cause of marriage, asserting that marriage is a covenant formed by consent, commitment and consummation.

Chapter 5 applies the exegetical, cultural, and theological conclusions on marriage to the Tsonga context, analyzing what "consent", "commitment", and "consummation" look like among the Tsongas in the past and present.

In this finishing chapter, pastoral conclusions will be presented toward a number of thorny marital issues that are common not only in Tsonga culture but in African culture as a whole.

6.1 Conclusions on complex marriage questions

The questions and answers that follow are not new topics altogether. Rather, they are some conclusions based on the findings of the study in chapters 1-5. The reader that has perused the contents of this study will inevitably be faced with a number of real-life scenarios within marriage that they would like to have answers. This final section seeks to answer some of those anticipated questions.

6.1.1 "Is my relationship with my second 'wife' a real marriage?"

Polygamous marriages fall into the category of "wrong but real." Eph 5:31 tells a "man" (singular) to leave his parents and hold fast to his "wife" (singular). In the Old Testament, God told the kings of Israel not to take multiple wives, for they were to be the example of monogamy before their people. In the same way, God told pastors in the New Testament (1Tm 3:2) not to take multiple wives, for they were also to be righteous examples of marriage to their flock.

Nonetheless, I still believe that a polygamous marriage is a *real* marriage*,* though sinfully formed. Scripture calls both Sarah and Hagar the “wives” of Abraham, and Rachel and Leah are the “wives” of Jacob. The Old Testament makes a distinction between Solomon’s concubines and his 700 “wives”.

What should a man do that has taken multiple wives, but then later on comes to saving faith after this union? While there is no historical and ecclesiastical consensus on this question, I believe the Bible gives sufficient direction. First, the polygamous man needs to understand that he has a responsibility to provide for all his wives and all of his children financially and spiritually (1Ti 5:8). He cannot divorce all but one and then expect them to provide for themselves. Second, I believe it would be most honoring to Christ for the husband to live emotionally and sexually with only one wife. If he continues to have sexual intimacy with each wife, it would be impossible for him and the wives to obey 1 Corinthians 7:2-3:

> *But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should* ***have his own wife*** *and* ***each woman her own husband****. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.*

It is not clear *which* wife with whom he should remain in covenant—whether it is the first wife, or the Christian wife, or the wife for whom he has the strongest affection, though I would lean towards the first wife.

Third, the polygamous husband should give his wives the opportunity to divorce and remarry. While I do not believe that every intimate moment with his wives should be considered *porneia,* at the very least the marriage to subsequent wives was *established* immorally. Thus, I believe there are proper grounds for divorce and remarriage. While this may not always be possible because of the other wives’ age or lack of appeal (perhaps because of the number of children she has), there is also the real possibility that *she* was converted as well (actually, it is a *greater* possibility that she was converted and not her husband!). Should she desire to obey the Lord in all things, I can see the second or third wife having the biblical grounds to divorce and continue to live singly or to find another husband.

Either way, it should be remembered that a polygamous husband always has the responsibility to care for his other wives physically and spiritually. Regarding the latter,

this is another benefit of my particular view, for a Christian husband that continues to live equally with all of his wives will find it very difficult to lead them spiritually.

I can see the following statement by a polygamous Christian man as the ideal: “Ladies, after coming to Christ, I have seen that my polygamous marriages to you has been sinful. I believe before God that each of you are my wives, but I was wrong to form any unions beyond my first wife. To show fruit of repentance, I plan to do three things. First, I will only live, as a Christian husband should, with my first wife. She is now my ‘wife’ and there is no other. I will no longer refer to my subsequent wives as ‘wives’. Second, I will continue to provide for each one of you and our children financially. You will not go without food and clothing, nor will any of our children. Third, I give you permission, even encouragement, to marry again in the Lord to another man if you should so desire. Fourth, I will do all I can to lead you spiritually in the Word of God and his laws.”

6.1.2 “Should pastors allow lobola-only marriages?”

Here is a conversation I can imagine having with a young man in the church. We’ll call him John. He wants to marry by paying lobola only (with no public ceremony). He is not interested in following all the customs of banquets, wedding vows, and marriage certificates. He simply wants to know if paying lobola and having a few people present is marriage.

- Pastor: “John, let me begin with a different question before I answer the one you asked. How many wives did Solomon have?”
- John: “700.”
- Pastor: “Are you sure? Did he have 700 *wives* or 700 concubines/girlfriends?”
- John: “No, no. Those weren’t girlfriends. He had a thousand of those too. He actually had 700 *wives* besides the concubines.”
- Pastor: “So the marriage to those 700 women was actually marriage?”
- John: “Yes, sir.”
- Pastor: “Could we call it ‘wrong but real’?”
- John: “Correct. Polygamy is wrong but real.”
- Pastor: “Ok. So what would you say to church member Thomas who wanted to take a second wife and he asked you for advice?”
- John: “I’d say polygamy is sinful and he shouldn’t do it.”

- Pastor: “Ok, but what if he said he only wants to know one thing: Is it a real marriage or not?”
- John: “I’d say, there are more important questions than if it is real or not. A better question is if it is righteous.”
- Pastor: “John, you passed the test. And you answered your own question.”

Pastors in Africa will face many challenges when it comes to sorting out complicated unions that happened in the past, often between unbelievers. But he should never add to these difficulties by allowing *new* marriages to slip by under his watchful eye.

It is my view that pastors, instead of allowing lobola-only marriages, should train their people to understand that while lobola is a legitimate practice, it should never override the importance of public vows in the presence of God’s people and their families. He should shepherd his people to pursue a marriage covenant that honors Jesus Christ in each and every step. He should train the groom to honor the parents by seeking their approval, to honor the bride-to-be by keeping her pure, to honor other Christians by seeking their counsel, to honor the local church by inviting as many of them as possible to the wedding, to honor the Lord by making covenant vows *to Him,* and to honor the State by formally registering their union.

The words “can I just pay lobola” mark a man that is either wholly ignorant of the beautiful, yet intricate steps of covenant marriage (in which case the pastor may be at fault) or a man so lazy and flippant toward marriage that he has little interest in making it special.

Should the man reply to this argument above that he would be more than willing to follow the special marks of marriage but cannot because he simply can’t afford it, this question will be address later below.

6.1.3 “I paid lobola in 2006. The wedding was 2014. When did I marry?”

This is a very complex issue and one that will take many questions to discern exactly what has happened in the past. However, my short answer is that you were married in 2014, if you mean by *lobola* simply the bride price and you mean by “wedding” public vows to your wife. Some elaboration is necessary.

First, pastors should be careful not to be bullied into impossible, hypothetical positions they didn't put themselves in. This question is like asking the president of Country A that has the death penalty what he would do about the murderer that escaped from prison in country B that doesn't have the death penalty. First, he's not the president of that country and has no authority. Second, he never would have put himself in that situation if that man had lived in his country.

In the same way, pastors that practice church disciple and teach a biblical view of marriage will avoid many difficult and complex situations. His primary responsibility is to *his* people, to *his* flock and not other parishioners in other churches that find themselves in a rut. There is a place for sorting out what should be done in the above situation (and we will attempt to do this below), but it must first be said that if this man had been in a solid local church, he would never have been allowed to put himself in this situation. The pastor ought not to feel panicked or uneasy about the complexity and insufficiency of his answer. Beautiful walls built on bad foundations cannot be fixed unless they are torn down. If they can't be torn down, you simply do the best you can, though the severity of the problem will never completely go away.

Regarding the present scenario, the most important thing to know is if he is married *right now.* What happened in the past is done and is less important, though there are some ramifications that will need to be sorted out. We have argued that marriage is a covenant that is commenced with consent, continued with commitment, and concluded with consummation. It seems as though the first item and part of the third were accomplished in 2006 and the second aspect in 2014. One could even make the case that by living together faithfully for 8 years that this was a non-verbal commitment.

What is important now is that the man recognizes that a biblical marriage needs a public covenant and there ought to be witnesses by family, the church, and the magistrate to keep him accountable to his pledge. He ought to inform his family that he did not form this union in the proper way and that when his own children marry, should lobola be practiced, a time of vows before God's people will soon follow before there is sexual intimacy and registration of the marriage with the local government.

6.1.4 “Is it important to get married in a church?”

Yes, from a Christian, biblical perspective, it is important for two Christians to be married among God’s people, “the church”. The purpose of witnesses to a vow is not so they can be entertained for a short time. Witnesses are meant to keep people accountable. More witnesses are better and high quality witnesses are the best.

For Christians, witnesses ought to take on three forms. First, the couple’s local church should witness the marriage. This is even more important than family. When Jesus was told that his family was looking for him, he said: “’Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?’ And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers” (Mt 12:48-49)! Other believers that will see the couple every week will be able to keep them accountable far better than blood relatives. Remember, the purpose of witnesses was to make an accusation (or vow) stick. They had real authority.

Second, family and blood relatives should be witnesses to the marriage. They have a unique relationship with the bride and groom. In the Old Testament, as we saw in Chapter 4, it was the father that gave away his daughter and it was the parents that were a part of the marriage plans from beginning to end.

Third, the government should “witness” the marriage in that they should be notified that a new union has been formed. Registering the marriage with the government and receiving a marriage certificate is how this is often done. This serves as another protector from the temptation to get easily into “marriage” and then easily out of marriage.

The most important reason that marriage should be done in a church (or at least among God’s people) is because marriage is a divine institution. God joins couples together (Mk 10:9) in that he is the one that created marriage and the vows are often given not just between the bride and groom but also often to God. Henry (1994:1799) once said: “Marriage is not an invention of men, but a divine institution, and therefore is to be religiously observed, and the more, because it is a figure of the mystical inseparable union between Christ and his church.”

6.1.5 “Is lobola itself marriage?”

No. Lobola may be a beautiful stepping-stone for marriage, but it is not marriage on its own. The basis for this is three: a biblical reason, a cultural reason, and a statutory reason.

Before laying out these three reasons, let us define our terms. By lobola I mean the bride price, and no more. When the term is used, often it refers simply to the bride price that the groom-to-be or his parents give to the family of the bride-to-be. Sometimes the term swallows up more ideas, like the banquet, celebration, vows and giving away of the bride, but—as we established in Chapter 5—that would be an improper use of the terms and not how we are using it here.

First, the Bible never teaches that the giving of money forms a marriage covenant. Lobola simply puts the canoe in the water, but there are others things that must get it to the other side of the river for it to be marriage. In fact, biblically, there is technically no “bride-price” but only a “betrothal price.” The bride price Abraham’s servant paid for Rebekah was before she even met Isaac and certainly was not marriage (Ge 24). Yes, Jacob paid a bride price for Rachel, but even after those seven years he still had to say, “give me my wife” (Ge 29:21). Moreover, there was a weeklong banquet attached to the marriage, not just an exchange of money or service (Ge 29:27). Deuteronomy 20:7 also illustrates that betrothal does not equal marriage: “And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her?”

Second, it is disingenuous to African culture to assert that customary marriage allows for marriage merely by paying the bride price. Junod acknowledges no such thing. Nor does South African law. Popoola and Ayandele (2019:13029), two reputable African authors, say this:

> *According to African customary law, marriage involves a process of obtaining the consents of the couples and their parents or guardians, the payment of bride price/wealth, which establishes betrothal status and special relationship between the families, the wedding ceremony, and the formal handing over of the bride to the bridegroom and his family.*

Third, if someone is using the term “lobola” to encapsulate the paying of the bride price, the celebration of the union, the giving away of the bride, and the formal vows

by the couple before family and friends, then yes, lobola could be considered marriage, though rarely is the term used this way.

6.1.6 "Shouldn't I just follow my culture regarding marriage?"

A Christian's chief responsibility is to follow Scripture, not culture. Though some of what Paul taught in the household code of Ephesians 5 and 6 agreed with the tri-cultural milieu of his day, much of what he said was radically countercultural. For example, Paul's teaching on male headship was countercultural to the beliefs of his day, not because men were subservient to their wives, but because as the heads of their homes, Paul taught them to serve and love their wives.

Another example of Paul's countercultural teaching is the way he presents sex as a mutual obligation rather than something a husband takes from his wife. This kind of teaching would have confounded many of Paul's readers.

These examples show that Paul was not afraid to teach against the common marital philosophy of his day. He no doubt shared the same position of Peter before the chief priests: "We must obey God rather than men" (Ac 5:29).

Because some Africans believe they were oppressed by Western powers in the past, they have been too quick to "return to their roots" of African culture, even though often times elements within that African culture were pagan. There are many beautiful African customs that her people should be quick to embrace, but never at the expense of biblical fidelity. The vows of commitment between the husband and wife are crucial, and it matters little if the wedding dress is white or if there are a train of groomsmen.

6.1.7 "How can Tsonga men love their wives in forming the marriage?"

The best way a man can love his wife while forming the marriage is by keeping her sexually pure. He must keep consummation at the end. If Eph 5:25ff tells husbands to love their wives for the purpose of sanctifying them through the word, then a prospective husband should begin practicing this by honoring his wife through chaste actions and speech. There is a reason that virgins in Scripture were prized and set apart. Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe she was wearing which

was designated for virgins because that most high prize had been taken away from her. Even if the culture of the future husband does not prize virginity, the husband must value it more than gold and do all he can to protect his future wife morally.

A second way men can love their wives in forming the marriage is by gaining the consent from her parents. When Jacob worked seven years for Rachel (Ge 29:18), he was showing his future wife honor. When Samson chose a wife without his parent's consent (Jdg 14:1-3), he was *dishonoring* his future wife. When Isaac sought the permission of Laban before marrying Rebekah, he was respecting both his future wife and her parents.

A third way men can honor their wives in forming the marriage covenant is by agreeing to commit to her in the presence of many witnesses. By doing this, he is voluntarily placing upon himself *obligations,* very well knowing that if he breaks his covenant with his wife, there will be grave consequences. It is therefore suggested that a man does not honor his wife when he skips this step.

6.1.8 "How can Tsonga wives submit in forming the marriage?"

Ephesians 5 teaches respect to the husband as to the Lord and not based on worthiness to receive such honor.

After Kubayi (2017:9546) makes a distinction between the *wena* and *n'wina,* the "you" pronouns for respect in Tsonga culture, he says that respectful forms of "you" are losing their appeal among younger women. Those that do *hlonipha* (respect) their husbands with the respectful form (*n'wina*) often do this not by choice but by imposition. Why? Kubayi (2017:9547) explains:

> *This results from the recognition that it is the man who pays lobola (bride's price) for the woman, giving him the upper hand in the marriage; subsequently positioning himself as the inherent head of the family; and the fact that he is the genitor in the spousal relationship, providing the means for the purposes of reproduction, thereby becoming not only the father of the children, but also of the family as a whole, with subsequent decision-making powers. In this sense, nhlonipho can be seen as the platform in which hegemonic masculinity is manifested, to which Vatsonga elderly women in Hlanganani give consent.*

Another way women can honor and respect their husbands is by taking his surname at their marriage. For those that argue that this is never directly stipulated in Scripture, a moral syllogism may be helpful. Scripture says nothing about cheating on their tax returns either, but applying broad commands to specific issues gives us full warrant to call stealing of tax money as sinful.

- Proposition 1: Lying is sinful (Ex 20:16).
- Proposition 2: Avoiding paying taxes is lying.
- Conclusion: Therefore, avoiding paying taxes is sinful.

In the same way, when it comes to women taking the surname of their husband, the moral syllogism is helpful. The syllogism could go as follows:

- Proposition 1: Wives must submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22).
- Proposition 2: A practical way Tsonga wives show submission to their husbands is by taking their surname.
- Conclusion: Wives should take the surname of their husbands.

6.1.9 "How can Tsonga men love their wives right after the wedding?"

One practical example of a way a husband can love his wife directly after marriage is by giving his wife her own place to live. We saw from our study of the word "leave" in Ephesians 5:31 that this doesn't necessarily mean the new couple cannot live on the homestead of his parents (though this is not advised) but it certainly means that a new household has been created. His chief earthly relationship is no longer with his parents but with his wife.

Plummer and Haste (2015:55) do well in carefully clarifying this particular issue in marriage:

> *It's important to recognize the inescapable cultural elements in "leaving". In some cultures and times, the newly married couple lives with the son's parents until they die. Many traditional cultures based around agriculture or animal husbandry continue to follow this tightknit extended family structure.*
>
> *Yet, even if husband and wife live in the same building as their parents, they must still "leave" that prior parent-child relationship. The newly married couple's ultimate loyalty and concern are no longer to their*

> *parents, but to each other. That does not mean indifference towards their parents. Far from it! Children are called to honor their parents all their lives. Yet, when it comes to decisions about where to live, employment, medical treatment, children, or parenting, only two people are allowed into the "inner sanctum" of decision-making—husband and wife.*

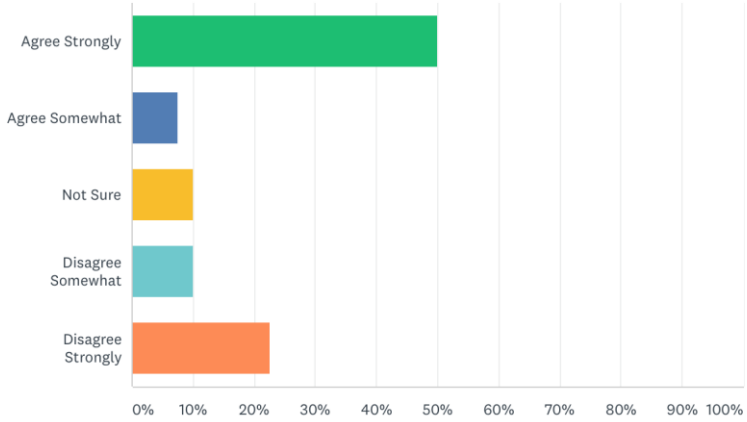
In Tsonga culture, it is common for the new wife to return to her husband's home. She doesn't have her own kitchen, but it is the mother that rules the roost. Magubane in "Marriage in Tsonga Society":

> *After her marriage she stayed in her mother-in-law's house (muti), helping her mother-in-law in her daily duties and in cooking the food. Her mother-in-law would instruct her in the customs of the family. She had to observe a range of rules of behaviour towards her father-in-law and his brothers. She usually moved into her own muti after the birth of her first child, but continued using her mother-in-law's cooking area [Tsonga: kambe wa ha ta tama a tirhisa xa mhani n'wingi] until her husband's younger brother married. His wife then moved in with the mother-in-law.*

This does not seem to be what Paul has in mind in Ephesians 5 or what Moses had in mind in the same verse in Genesis 2:24. How can a woman "leave" family when she is still under the control of her mother-in-law in the kitchen? This often creates divisions of loyalty and bitterness on the part of the wife and/or the mother-in-law. The husband must be aware of this, act accordingly, and also understand that this is not only for the benefit of his wife but also for himself.[149]

[149] Wilberforce (1996:226-227) catches a glimpse of the wife's invaluable benefit when she is able to manage her own home: "It seems to afford to the married man the means of rendering an active share in the business of life...that when the husband should return to his family, worn and harassed by worldly cares or professional labors, the wife, habitually preserving a warmer and more unimpaired spirit of devotion...might revive his languid piety, and that the religious impressions of both might derive new force and tenderness from the animating sympathies of conjugal affection…Can a more pleasing image be presented to a considerate mind, than that of a couple, happy in each other and in the pledges of their mutual love, uniting in an act of grateful adoration to the author of all their mercies: recommending each other, and the objects of their common care, to the divine protection...with a confiding hope that, through all the changes of this uncertain life, the Disposer of all things will assuredly cause all to work together for the good of them that love and put their trust in Him; and that, after this uncertain state shall have passed away, they shall be admitted to a joint participation of never-ending happiness."

6.1.10 “Is it fornication to have sex after lobola but before the wedding?”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Agree Strongly	50.00%
Agree Somewhat	7.50%
Not Sure	10.00%
Disagree Somewhat	10.00%
Disagree Strongly	22.50%

In an online survey I conducted in 2020 of over 140 people in southern Africa, one of the questions asked was if they believed sex after lobola but before the wedding is fornication. Half of the respondents agreed strongly that sex after lobola but before the wedding was fornication.

Biblically, the bride price (lobola) is sometimes is presented as marriage (Ge 19:14; Dt. 22:23-24; Mt. 1:18-20) but more often as pre-marriage (Ge 29:21; Dt. 20:7; 1Co. 7:36-38). It is often an important step *towards* marriage, but rarely is it presented as marriage itself. Moreover, as we showed in chapter five, many have argued it will be difficult to prove an official customary marriage if there was only lobola and no celebration, giving away of the bride or registration of the marriage.

When all of the biblical customs in Scripture are brought to bear, it seems clear that lobola/the bride price falls within the first step of the marriage covenant. To skip over

the “commitment” aspect (the wedding/vows) and move straight to sexual consummation is fornication, sex outside of marriage.

6.1.11 “How important is it to have a wedding at church?”

Hodge (2007:377) argues that the Church is the primary family to hear oaths, not physical family, because they keep the couple accountable in many ways more than the parents or siblings.

> *The vow of mutual fidelity made by husband and wife, is not made exclusively by each one to the other, but by each to God. When a man connects himself with a Christian Church he enters into covenant with his brethren in the Lord; mutual obligations are assumed; but nevertheless the covenant is made with God. He joins the Church in obedience to the will of God; he promises to regulate his faith and practice by the divine word; and the vow of fidelity is made to God. It is the same in marriage. It is a voluntary, mutual compact between husband and wife. They promise to be faithful to each other; but nevertheless they act in obedience to God, and promise to Him that they will live together as man and wife, according to his word. Any violation of the compact is, therefore, a violation of a vow made to God.*

The point is that the wedding vows of believers should be before other believers. The church building itself is not the important matter. It is the promise made before God’s people that should carry the most weight.

6.1.12 “How extravagant should weddings festivities be?”

There are six important observations to keep in mind when considering wedding festivities. First, lavish wedding celebrations are not essential in forming a biblical marriage. It has been argued in chapters 4-5 that while wedding feasts can be both important and desirable to highlight the momentous occasion of marriage, these festivities are not necessary to form a marital union before God. What is requisite is consent, commitment through vows and consummation (Ge 2:24). For those who argue that elaborate celebrations are necessary for *African* weddings, it is interesting to note that a recent study, *African Christian Marriage in Southern Africa* (Krigeg and Comaroff, 1981), says relatively little about wedding celebrations in African culture. *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life* (Phillips, 1953) says little about church weddings as well.

Second, joyous wedding celebrations are the norm in Scripture. Going all the way back to the book of Genesis (e.g. chapter 24), gifts were often exchanged during the wedding procedures. There were marriage feasts, often lasting a full week, and guests were prevalent (Lk 14:8). So it should not be concluded that wedding celebrations are somehow sinful or unimportant, for they are often valuable in featuring the sacred event of matrimony.

Third, expensive wedding parties often financially cripple the couple or her family for many years to come. Often in African culture today, weddings are significantly more expensive than the earning power of that particular family. A brief survey of the internet shows that wedding events can cost anywhere from R50,000 to R800,000. *Business Tech* (2016) says the average cost for a South African wedding was about R80,000 for a hundred people back in 2016 but could easily move to R200,000. It should not be surprising, then, that the same article said wedding celebrations have been in steady decline over the past decade. Suppose a prospective groom is earning a modest salary of R12,000 a month. If he spends R150,000 for the wedding, he is using an entire year's worth of funds just for a day or two event. This is foolish for at least two reasons. First, Scripture rebukes those that cannot deny themselves the pleasures of this world (Ecc 2:10). The love of money and the display of opulence often brings anxiety (Mt 6:25-34), dissatisfaction (Ecc 5:10), and envy (Ps 73:3-5). Second, financial problems put tremendous strain on a marriage. It is the height of foolishness to immediately place upon an infant marriage the financial pressures of heavy debt.

Fourth, high-priced celebrations often stem from pride. Even church weddings often have more to do with status than with the Savior. According to Erlank (2014:33), "most of the practices associated with the wedding [have] little to do with faith and more to do with clothing and other accouterments." This attitude isn't new. Erlank gave examples from investigative church meetings in South Africa from over one hundred years ago that found the money spent for weddings to be frivolous and foolish. Per Erlank (2014:38), the conclusion from some of the church minutes was that "too much is spent and that rivalry is very largely at the root of the extravagance."

Fifth, opulent wedding festivals often misconstrue the character and status of the groom. Suppose there is a hardworking man that has been sexually pure with his fiancé, has received permission from her family to marry her, and is prepared to provide for her in a simple but adequate way. And let us also suppose that this couple

chose to wear very simple clothing at the celebration, invite a modest number of people, and prepare an inexpensive meal for the guests in order that their savings may go toward a down payment on a house. This is biblical wisdom (Pr 10:4) and the groom should be praised for his foresight, even though many who know the couple may disparage what they see as a classless display. Unfortunately, a groom that takes out an extravagant loan to "wow" his guests would almost certainly gain a certain kind of immediate "respect" from those in attendance.

Sixth, extravagant banquets for weddings often hampers registration for the marriage. The thinking is that the couple can *live* together as husband and wife but cannot formally register it until there is some kind of formal wedding celebration. Thus they are caught in a kind of limbo between marriage and singleness. It is not unusual to hear a Tsonga say an obvious paradox: "I have a wife, but I'm not yet married." He means by this that he paid some kind of lobola and he lives with a woman he calls his wife, but there has been no formal celebration and no registration of the marriage. As time goes by and the money for a "wedding" never materializes, the marriage is often never registered. It is not uncommon for grown children to see on their deceased parent's death certificate, "Not married".

Erlank (2014:38) quotes from a South African church's minutes to address this very point: "All are agreed that the results of such a standard of expense are disastrous and lead to the avoidance of Christian marriage either…[elopement] or by going to office. . . . [Until] native people can realize that a quiet and inexpensive wedding is legitimate & honourable, there will be a growing tendency to encourage escape from Christian marriage."

In light of these six points above, it seems that joyous wedding banquets and celebrations are virtuous, biblical and valid for those couples that can afford it without going into debt but unwise and even foolish for those with a tight budget. A better course for the latter group would be for a man and woman to wear their nicest clothes to church and solemnize their marriage covenant with vows before family and the local body of Christ and then register their marriage with the magistrate.

6.1.13 “What is the proper age for marriage?”

According to Garenne (2004:75), the median age for first marriages are much lower in Africa than in other developed countries. This is changing, however. Many Tsongas these days are waiting until their late twenties and early thirties to get married. Is this wise?

There are some benefits of not marrying young. It increases the chances of furthering one’s education, as being married while attending university or just after graduation provides some unique challenges. Waiting to get married also allows for travel and other experiences less likely to be enjoyed after marriage. Moreover, young people often make foolish decisions, so the thinking of some is that delaying marriage increases the chances of making a wise choice for a mate.

But I believe the benefits of marrying young far outweigh the dangers. First, it helps young men and women avoid fornication. Scripture gives marriage as the best method to avoid sexual temptation (1Co. 7:1). Since a young man’s sexual desires are stronger at 18-25 years old than at 35-42 years old, he should seek to overcome this by finding a wife.

The world says that the goal for young people should be to avoid *pregnancy,* thus the massive and ungodly campaigns that encourage “safe sex”. Scripture never speaks of “safe sex”, but instead sanctified sex and pure sex (Heb 13:4). Scripture urges believers to be examples of purity *in their youth* (1Ti 4:12). God’s will is for Christians to stay far away from sexual immorality (1Th 4:3). The way to do this is not by dating a girl from years 18-25, hoping upon hope and praying with fasting that somehow you can avoid sleeping with her. The solution is marriage.

Second, marrying young gives men the help they need early on. If God has designed the woman to be her husband’s helper (Ge 2:18), why is that she can only help him *after* he has finished seven years of school, paid off his university bills, and established himself in a job? Why force a man to save for lobola for seven years before the woman God has designed for him can start to help him? Men need assistance getting through the last year of college at age 23 just as much as they need assistance with the kids at age 33.

Third, marrying young is helpful because raising children requires a lot of work. It will be easier for you to start having kids at age 25 than at age 35 because you'll have more energy. This is another reason why the common African practice of grandparents raising their grandkids is so misguided. Never does Scripture give grandparents the responsibility to raise their children, though they certainly can give wise counsel. God has designed parents in their youth to enjoy the massive amount of physical and emotional strength it takes to raise children. The longer a couple takes to marry, the less energy they will have for this critical task.

6.2 A way forward

Looking back is always the best way to go forward. It is when we forget what was written long ago within the sacred Scriptures that we begin to lose our way. The Tsonga people have many beautiful customs that can and should be implemented within the marriage union, as long as those traditions remain subservient to the inerrant word of God.

This study has argued that the material cause of marriage is a covenant, for this substance of matrimony. We have contended that this marriage covenant between a man and a woman is formed when it is commenced by consent, continued by commitment, and concluded by consummation. Moreover, both God and the vows of the husband and wife are what brings the marriage into existence. Finally, the purpose of marriage is for procreation, companionship and most importantly, the glory of God!

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Appendix A

An Brief Analysis of σώζω as it Relates to σωτὴρ in Eph 5:23

Jesus is called the "Savior" (σωτὴρ) of the body in Eph 5:23. The verb form of σωτὴρ is σώζω (*ponisa*). It is my argument here that the primary idea of σώζω is deliverance and the context will tell the reader from what the object is being delivered.[150] Since this is true for the verb, the same idea translates to the noun and will help us better analze the meaning of Eph 5:23.

Below is a brief analysis of σώζω.

In all its forms σώζω is used 106 times in the NT. It is used 471 times in the whole Bible (including the LXX). Luke uses σώζω the most. First Cor is the Pauline book that uses most σώζω often. Galatians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon, 2 Peter, 1,2,3 John, and Revelation never use the verb. The gospels use σώζω fifty-three times.

The word σώζω is essentially used in three ways: spiritual deliverance, physical deliverance and deliverance from danger. These categories are seen below:

1. **Deliverance from Danger** (Rescue)

- **Matthew 14:30** But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."
- **Matthew 24:22** And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.
- **Matthew 27:40** and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross."
- 42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him.
- 49 But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."

[150] *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* gives nine definitions of σώζω. (1996:389).

- **1 Timothy 2:15** Yet she will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

2. **Deliverance Spiritually** (Salvation)

- **Matthew 1:21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

- **Matthew 10:22** and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- **Matthew 16:25** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- **Matthew 19:25** When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

- **Matthew 24:13** But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- **Mark 10:26** And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?"

- **Mark 8:35** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.

- **Mark 13:13** And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

- **Mark 13:20** And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days.

- **Mark 16:16** Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

- ***Luke 7:50** And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

- **Luke 8:12** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved.

- **Luke 13:23** And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them,

- **Luke 18:26** Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

- **Luke 19:10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

- **John 3:17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

- **John 5:34** Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

- **John 10:9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

- **John 12:47** If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

- **Acts 2:21** And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

- 40 And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

- 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- **Acts 4:12** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- **Acts 11:14** he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

- **Acts 15:1** ¶ But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

- 11 But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

- **Acts 16:30** Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

- 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

- **Romans 5:9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

- 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

- **Romans 8:24** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?

- **Romans 9:27** ¶ And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved,

- **Romans 10:9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

- [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

- **Romans 11:14** in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them.

- **Romans 11:26** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

- **1 Corinthians 1:18** ¶ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

- [21] For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

- **1 Corinthians 3:15** If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

- **1 Corinthians 5:5** you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

- **1 Corinthians 7:16** For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

- **1 Corinthians 9:22** To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.

- **1 Corinthians 10:33** just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.

- **1 Corinthians 15:2** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.

- **2 Corinthians 2:15** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing,

- **Ephesians 2:5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--

- [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

- **1 Thessalonians 2:16** by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved--so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

- **2 Thessalonians 2:10** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

- **1 Timothy 1:15** The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

- **1 Timothy 2:4** who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

- **1 Timothy 4:16** Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

- **2 Timothy 1:9** who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began,

- **Titus 3:5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

- **Hebrews 7:25** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

- **James 1:21** Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

- **James 2:14** ¶ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

- **James 4:12** There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?

- **James 5:20** let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- **1 Peter 3:21** Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

- **1 Peter 4:18** And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

- **Jude 1:23** save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

3. **Deliverance Physically** (Healing)

- **Matthew 9:21** for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well."

- *[22] Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

- **Mark 5:23** and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live."

- [28] For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well."
- [34] And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."
- **Mark 6:56** And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.
- **Mark 10:52** And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.
- **Luke 8:36** And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed.
- [50] But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well."
- **John 11:12** The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover."
- **Acts 4:9** if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,
- **Acts 14:9** He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,

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- **Luke 8:48** And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."
- **Luke 9:24** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.
- **Luke 17:19** And he said to him, "Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well."
- **Luke 18:42** And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well."