

Don't Misuse Scripture  
Pastor Eric Brown  
Trinity, Herscher

"However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Ephesians 5:33

Ephesians 5:22-33 is the great and famous (infamous?) passage on wives and husbands, how they are to treat and serve each other. I want to look at how the Scriptures are used (and indeed, misused) - this passage in particular.

A wise pastor I was acquainted with would address this passage in his pre-marital counseling. When he got to the part about wives, he would look at the man and say, "You don't listen here, don't pay attention, and don't ever throw this at your wife." Likewise, when it got to the part on husbands, he would look at the woman and say, "This isn't for you, never throw it back at your husband." The point was this - this passage is meant to shape each of us in our own vocations, not merely to be a weapon we use to lash out at others with.

All too often we weaponize Scripture. This makes sense - it is a weapon - it is the double edge sword of the Spirit. Of course, it is supposed to be used to fend off the attacks of the Devil and to pierce our own hearts when they have become calloused. Badgering or manipulating our neighbors into doing what we want - not so much.

So what's the point of all this? Ephesians 5:22-33 is really a fantastic passage. We misunderstand it often - we aren't in the Greek or Roman Military so we don't understand that the "submissive" ranks were the power of the army, driving the front rank forward and supporting them. We forget that Christ loves the Church not only by dying for her but by constantly forgiving her and lifting her up - even raising her from the dead eventually. It actually is fantastic encouragement for wives and husbands to support each other in powerful, strong ways. But if you read this text as a weapon against someone else, you'll miss the point. And instead of supporting, you'll probably harm them.

We are quick to weaponize the Scriptures against others, to hammer them, to try to bend them to our own will. This week, as you read the Scriptures, don't read them to change others. Read them, and let the Holy Spirit use them to change you. That is why He has preserved them for you, even to this day.