

# 'For the husband is the head of the wife': A contextual re-reading of Ephesians 5:22–33 among Nigerian Yoruba Christians



**Author:**  
Solomon O. Ademiluka<sup>1</sup>

**Affiliation:**  
<sup>1</sup>Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

**Corresponding author:**  
Solomon Ademiluka,  
solademiluka@gmail.com

**Dates:**  
Received: 05 Mar. 2020  
Accepted: 10 June 2020  
Published: 04 Feb. 2021

**How to cite this article:**  
Ademiluka, S.O., 2021, "For the husband is the head of the wife': A contextual re-reading of Ephesians 5:22–33 among Nigerian Yoruba Christians", *In die Skriflig* 55(1), a2613. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v55i1.2613>

**Copyright:**  
© 2021. The Authors.  
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

**Read online:**



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

For many African readers, Ephesians 5:22–24 indeed reinforces the patriarchal view of marriage in which the wife is subjugated under her husband's rule. Hence, with specific focus on the Yoruba, this article examines Ephesians 5:22–33 with a view to assessing its relevance for Christian marital relationship in Nigeria. The target population is those Nigerian Christians who have the notion that Ephesians 5:22–24 entrenches the patriarchal view of marital relationship. The article employs the exegetical and descriptive methods. It finds that, in Ephesians 5:22–6:9, Paul borrows the pattern of the Greek household codes, but mitigates the absolute authority of the male head of the house. Instead, he likens the authority of the Christian husband over his wife to Christ's headship over the church. As Christ gave himself up for the church, the Christian husband should place greater value on the well-being of his wife over his own well-being. Understood in this way, the passage is relevant to Nigerian Christians in several ways. In the Nigerian context, the command to wives to be submissive to their husbands means that the wife should submit to her husband as one who has authority over her. In exercising his authority, the Nigerian Christian should seek his wife's pleasure and comfort over his own. Finally, the church should be involved in getting husbands to understand their authority in the manner of Christ's sacrificial love.

**Keywords:** household codes; marital relationship; headship; submission; Nigerian Christians.

## Introduction

In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul<sup>1</sup> commands wives to be subjected to their husbands, while husbands should love their wives as Christ loved his church; the wife must submit to her husband, because the husband is the head of the wife (v. 23). Taken literally, this injunction apparently resonates with the African patriarchal view of marital relationship in which authority is generally 'wielded by the husband while the wife is simply expected to submit to his authority' (Adams 2003:1). For most African communities, Ephesians 5:22–24 indeed reinforces the traditional perception of marriage. In their traditional setting, the Yoruba of southwestern Nigeria belong to this patriarchal culture in which the husband is seen as the master of his wife. Even in modern times, it is common to hear the Yoruba expression '*Oko ni orori aya*' [lit. 'The husband is the head of the wife'],<sup>2</sup> sometimes in affirmation of Ephesians 5:23. For some African Christians therefore, Ephesians 5:22–24 is a basis for the entrenchment of the traditional view of the husband-wife relationship. Perhaps Szesnat (2015) is right when he says that this passage remains relevant for research 'precisely because the text still functions as a tool of oppression today' (p. 137). Hence, with specific focus on the Yoruba, this article examines Ephesians 5:22–33 with a view to assessing its relevance for Christian marital relationship in Nigeria. The significance of the article resides in its application of the text to Nigerian Christian couples, particularly the Yoruba. The work employs the exegetical approach for the study of Ephesians 5:22–33, and the descriptive method for the analysis of the marital relationship among Nigerian Christians. The article begins with an exegesis of Ephesians 5:22–33 in relation to marital relationship. Then it analyses the marital relationship among Nigerian Christians; and finally, it studies how the passage can be applied to achieve the ideal Christian marital relationship among Nigeria Christians.

1.The Pauline authorship of Ephesians is disputed by some scholars, but while the debate is still inconclusive, and the book itself claims Paul's authorship, in this article Paul is accepted as the author.

2.The Yoruba traditions are well-known to me, being a Yoruba myself.

## Ephesians 5:22–33 in relation to marital relationship: An exegesis

The book of Ephesians seems not to be a letter written to a specific church, but a sort of circular letter that was adaptable to many churches (Lovše 2009:118; MacDonald 1995:1903). Two main reasons are often adduced for this view. Firstly, unlike other letters of Paul, it does not treat any specific issue that might be bothering the church. It also does not contain the usual personal greetings characteristic of Paul's epistles, whereas he had spent three years at Ephesus, and many Ephesians must have been well known to him (Acts 19). Scholars usually divide the epistle into two main sections. According to Lovše (2009:120) the first section in Ephesians 1:1–3:21 discusses the new life which God has given to believers through Christ, while in the second (4:1–6:24) the author expounds 'the new standards which God expects of his new society and new relationships into which God brings people'. As Marshall (2003:1385) puts it, Ephesians 'broadly discusses doctrine in the first half and then practical Christian living in its second half'.

Verses 22–33 is part of 5:22–6:9 which reflects the household codes written by the ancient Greek philosophers, reflecting the power differential in the household between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves (Balch 1988:25–50; MacDonald 2000). The philosophers, with Lincoln (1990) as spokesman, had the notion that the man was naturally intended:

[T]o rule as husband, father, and master, and that not to adhere to this proper hierarchy is detrimental not only to the household but also to the life of the state. (p. 358)

In contrast, they had the conviction that women were inferior to men (Bristow 1991:3); hence, Aristotle and Plato taught absolute 'submission on the part of wives, while the role of the husband was ruling his wife' (Adams 2003:10). It has been suggested that the original purpose of the household codes was to safeguard possible erosion of the Roman family values, particularly by the spread of religions from the East such as Isis worship, Judaism and Christianity (Keener 1993:551). Mowczko (2019) explains that the 'Romans were suspicious of new groups, movements and religions that threatened social stability [and would] not tolerate what they saw as subversive teachers or disruptive groups.' Members of these minority religions therefore often tried to show their support for the Roman family values by using a standard form of the household codes. Marshall (2003:1391) opines that, from an early date, the form 'became part of the regular teaching of the church'. To this end, in verses 22–6:9, Paul borrows this pattern of writing, but as shown below, he mitigates the absolute authority of the male head of the house.

In Ephesians 5:22–33, Paul enjoins wives to be subject to their husbands as they would to Christ. This is because the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. Husbands must equally love their wives as Christ

loved the church and give themselves up for their wives (vv. 22–25). Verses 26–32 expatiate on how Jesus loved the church, which is the same way husbands should love their wives. Verse 33 caps it by saying that each man should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband. It is important to note, however, that contrary to what is contained in the English translations, in Greek, verses 22–24 form part of a single sentence which begins from verse 18, and forms one unit with verses 18–24. Turner (1994) states that, although obscured by all translations, verses 18–24:

[A]re grammatically a single sentence [which] means that the injunction to wives and husbands in 22–33 (along with the similar material which follows in 6:1–9) is presented as a typical example of the respectful, submissive wisdom that should characterize believers. (p. 1241; cf. Miles 2006:82)

Similarly, Mowczko (2019) opines that the household code from 5:22–6:9 follows on from the 'teaching on Spirit-led living, which includes mutual participation in worship and mutual submission in relationships [Eph 5:18–21]'. Szesnat (2015:140) explains that the expression, being filled with the Spirit, in verse 18 is explored with three examples, namely in singing psalms (5:19), giving thanks (5:20), and being subject to one another in reverence to Christ (5:21). Therefore, Szesnat (2015) explains:

[T]he household codes that follow are grammatically and thematically subordinate to 5:21. This is underlined by the fact that the first sentence of the code (5:22) does not even have the verb ('submit'), though it is implied ... It is significant that many translations and commentators conclude the paragraph here, at the end of 5:21, and begin a new paragraph in 5:22. The problem with this common presentation is that the connection to the last example (the participial clause, 'being subject to each other') is easily lost, and that is highly problematic. (p. 140)

Other interpreters emphasise the fact that verse 21 holds the key to the understanding of what follows 'because all the household codes Paul proposes are based on' it (Keener 1993:551; cf. Lovše 2009:121). In this regard, some believe that, by virtue of verse 21, in the household code in 5:22–6:9 Paul enjoins mutual submission across hierarchies. In other words, submission is to be reciprocal between husband and wife, parents and children, and masters and slaves. Miles (2006) asserts that:

[T]he injunctions for the submission of wives and the obedience of slaves and children are part of a general instruction that everyone – husbands/fathers/masters included – submit to or be subject to each other. (p. 77)

Keener (1993:551) also believes that, since the verb of verse 22 is borrowed from verse 21, 'it cannot mean something different [hence] in the Greek text, wifely submission to a husband (v. 22) is only one example of general mutual submission of Christians'. According to Marshall (2003:1391), 'this opening requirement [in v. 21] applies to everybody and means that submission and respect are to be shown by husbands, parents and masters'. Lovše (2009) recognises that the theme of submissiveness is often repeated in the Pauline texts with the notion of submission being used:

[O]nly for the attitude of specific groups – women, children and slaves – or for the attitude of believers to the state. However, ... [here] the verb 'to submit' [is] employed for mutual relationships among believers. (p. 121)

Belz (2013) opines that the reason for the mutual submission interpretation is:

[N]ot merely because v. 22, in itself, is originally without this command, but because, by lacking any sort of verb or participle, this verse becomes grammatically dependent on what comes before it [*i.e.*] 'being subordinate to each other in fear of Christ'. (p. 98)

In the opinion of Belz (2013:98), this implies that the submission of a Christian wife to her husband (v. 22) is dependent on his own submission to her; 'a wife's subordination to her husband is not unilateral but reciprocal'.

Nevertheless, it is more plausible to suggest that the admonition in verse 21 is a general statement on submission which the author goes on to apply in detail to each group in the subsequent verses. In other words, he implies mutual submission among Christians, but not necessarily across hierarchies. Contrary to Miles' claim (2006:77) that ὑποτασσω [to submit] does not mean 'to obey', among the dictionary definitions of the word are 'to put in subjection, subject, subordinate, be subject, submit to, obey, be under the authority of, take a subordinate place' (Koehler, Baumgartner & Stamm 1994–2000). Chapell (2009:297) is therefore correct when he says that the meaning of ὑποτασσω 'requires submission of one person to another of greater authority'. Hence, in 6:1–9 where Paul commands children to obey their parents and slaves to obey their masters (even though he uses a different word, ὑπακούετε, but which is generally translated as 'obey'), it is not likely that he means reciprocal obedience. In other words, he could not imply: 'Parents, obey your children'. Therefore, in verse 22 the apostle does not likely mean reciprocal submission between husband and wife. Bruce (1984) plausibly differentiates between the mutual submission in verse 21 and submission by someone of lower hierarchy to another of higher hierarchy in the subsequent verses. Bruce (1984) writes:

While the household code is introduced by a plea for mutual submissiveness, the submissiveness enjoined in the code itself is not mutual. As in the parallel code in Colossians 3:18–4:1, wives are directed to be subject to their husbands, children to be obedient to their parents, and slaves to their masters, but the submissiveness is not reciprocated: husbands are told to love their wives, parents to bring up their children wisely, and masters to treat their slaves considerably. (p. 383)

Turner (1994:1242) recognises that 'the call for the wife to obey her husband was virtually a universal convention of Paul's world'. This is because it came not only from Paul severally, but also from another apostle. Chapell (2009:293) also notes that 'Paul uses the same or related terminology about husbands and wives in at least five other

books (1 Co, Eph, Col, 1 Tim, and Tit)'. In Colossians 3:18 and Titus 2:5, Paul advises women to be subject to their husbands, adding in the latter epistle that they should do this so that no one will despise the word of God on account of their disobedience to their husbands. Similarly, Peter (1 Pt 3:1–2) 'gives instructions to the wives and confirms the same submissive attitude developed by Paul' (Lovše 2009:124). Chapell (2009:293) observes that, in this passage, Paul instructs wives three times (Eph 5:22, 24, 33) to subject themselves to their husbands' authority. Hence, Turner (1994) plausibly concludes:

Verse 21 should be taken ... as a call to mutual submission within each hierarchical level, and of children to parents; slaves to masters, and wives to husbands. Had Paul really meant a totally reciprocal submission (which would be entirely unexpected in the ancient world) he would have needed to clarify that by saying at least once, and explicitly, that, for example, parents should submit to children. (p. 1241)

From these facts, it becomes clear that verse 22 demands submission from wife to husband, but not vice versa. Verses 23 and 24 further dwell on wifely submission. The wife must submit to her husband, because he is her head just as Christ is the head of the church (v. 23); and she must be subject to her husband in everything the same way the church is subject to Christ (v. 24). To understand wifely submission as demanded here, one should have a proper grasp of what the writer means by the husband being the head of his wife. Miles (2006) approaches this concept from the perspective of the meaning of the Greek word κεφαλη [head]. He opines that the word literally means 'head', but it does not have the English metaphorical connotations of 'ruler', 'leader' or 'one having authority over' the other. (Miles 2006) says, neither can κεφαλη:

[B]e translated as 'boss' or even as 'servant-leader' ... If Paul had meant 'boss' or 'leader' in his reference to man as head of the woman, he could have used *arche*, *kyrios* or *despotis* ['lord' or 'master']. (p. 82; [original emphasis])

Miles (2006:83) argues further that κεφαλη as 'one who has authority over' does not make sense in the context of verses 25–33 where headship refers to the expression of love. In his own view, Paul's use of κεφαλη is a metaphor referring to 'the power relations between the head and [the] body' (Miles 2006:83), as he employs it in other parts of this epistle, for example, 1:22–23:

And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Revised Standard Version [RSV]). (p. 83)

Miles (2006:83) understands 'head' in this passage literally as a reference to 'head', as it relates 'to the body, and not the idea of dominance and subordination'.

Nonetheless, Miles is incorrect that κεφαλη does not have the metaphorical sense of a leader or one in authority over

another. Thayer's Greek Lexicon (Koehler et al. 1994–2000) states that, metaphorically, the term sometimes means 'master' or 'lord', citing the example of a husband in relation to his wife as in Ephesians 5:23. Citing 1 Corinthians 11:3, Friberg Lexicon also affirms that *κεφαλη* is used metaphorically 'of persons, designating first or superior rank' (Koehler et al. 1994–2000). Moreover, it is generally agreed that 'head' in Ephesians 1:22–23 is reference to leadership. Lovše (2009:126) opines that the instruction to women in Ephesians 5:23 'intimates the notion of the headship of the husband', buttressing this point with 1:22–23 where 'headship points to the concept of leadership'. Similarly, citing 1 Corinthians 11:3, LaBissoniere (2012) observes that many biblical texts indicate that a wife is under the authority of her husband, affirming that '[t]his scripture clearly explains that the husband is the head of the wife'. Bruce (1984:384) also asserts that, in Ephesians 5:23, *head* 'has the idea of authority attached to it after the analogy of Christ's headship over the church' (cf. also Marshall 2003:1391).

In verses 23 and 24, Paul places the Christian wife under her husband in terms of authority. For this reason, some interpreters have accused him of being conservative and patriarchal, being the 'source of an infamous Christian injunction' that makes women subservient to men (Miles 2006:76). Some see the whole of the household code in Ephesians 5:22–6:9 'as the author's mirroring of [*the ancient*] codes to assure secular authorities of the respectability and conformity of Christian family life' (Miles 2006:76). As Adams (2003) puts it:

[T]here are other scholars who see Ephesians' employment of [*the codes*] ... as providing a veneer of conformity, so that Christian communities would at least appear less subversive, in order to survive in a hostile environment. (p. 26; cf. also Keener 1992:142; Turner 1994:1241)

Dunnam (1982) poses the following:

Within the modern movement of women's liberation Paul is often seen as an oppressor – certainly a 'conservative' who championed the status-quo, subservient position of women, and allowed that position to be the norm within the church. (p. 225)

However, in accusing Paul of conservatism, it is pertinent to note that he likens man's headship of his wife to Christ's headship of the church. The husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church (v. 23). It is therefore necessary to ascertain what Paul means by Christ being the head of the church, in order to know how he views the Christian's authority over his wife. Already in verse 23, Paul gives a hint on this in saying that Christ is head of the church, and he is its saviour. But the concept is fully developed in Ephesians 5:25–27 where he describes the husband's duty towards his wife:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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 (RSV).

From this description, Christ's headship of the church involves loving the church up to the point of giving himself up for her, that is, dying for the church. In other words, says Belz (2013):

Christ's love is synonymous with 'giving himself up' ... It is a love of cost, of self-sacrifice, a love which spends itself for the sake of the one loved ... [*Moreover*] Christ as head and savior loves his Church/body in such a way as to transform her into something glorious and resplendent, serving her needs as his beloved Church-Bride. [*Having given*] himself up for her, he washes her, makes her beautiful, warms her and nourishes her. (p. 106, 126; cf. also Turner 1994:1242)

It is in this manner that Paul expects Christian husbands to exercise their headship over their wives. 'The husband's headship or authority ... is one that is patterned on the unique character of Christ's headship over the Church' (Lovše 2009:127). Like Christ, husbands are to 'give themselves up' for the sake of their wives, which means that 'a husband who loves his wife as Christ loves his Church places a greater value on the life and well-being of his [*wife*] over even his own life' (Belz 2013:126). As Turner (1994:1242) puts it, 'as Christ sees the church as now having become his own body ... and does everything lovingly and for her good, so should the husband for his wife'. In the words of Miles (2006:86), 'Paul thus enjoined husbands to emulate Christ in sacrificing themselves for their wives, treating their wives with the same respect that they have for themselves.' In pragmatic terms, the Christian husband should be to his wife someone who is responsible, a protector, provider, lover and a 'developer' (Lewis & Hendricks 1991:63). Thus, Belz (2013) concludes that a Christian husband's:

[L]ove for his wife is not to be self-serving, calculated for his own gratification or self-promotion; [*rather*], in imitation of Christ's own love for the Church, the Christian husband must be willing to lay down his life for his wife. (p. 127)

In verses 28–32, Paul concludes the husband-and-wife and Christ-and-church analogy of the marital relationship. At the centre of this section seems to stand the Old Testament concept of husband and wife becoming one flesh (v. 31) which the apostle quotes from Genesis 2:24. This passage is part of the literary unit in Genesis 2:18–24, which is often interpreted as the beginning of the institution of marriage. Hillman (1975) asserts that the expression '*one flesh*' 'has the obvious and quite unavoidable connotation of family unity and kinship solidarity' (Gitari 1984:6). Paul must have this interpretation in mind when he states that, because they are one flesh, the husband should consider loving his wife as loving his own body; he cannot afford to hate his own flesh, but rather should nourish and cherish it as Christ does the church. In verse 33, he caps the instruction, saying 'let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband' (RSV). The word, rendered 'respect' here, is the Greek *φοβος* which literally means 'to fear'; but the translation in this context is appropriate, as the word can also mean 'respect, reverence or even adoration' (Lovše 2009:131).

Contrary to the claim of some interpreters as seen earlier, Paul's injunction on marital relationship in Ephesians 5:22–33 is more revolutionary than conservative or patriarchal. As earlier discussed, Dunnam (1982) remarks that Paul addressed people in a stratified culture in which:

[P]ersons were bound into a certain 'station' [*believed to be*] the way the gods had created things ... This was especially true of women [*who*] were seen as chattel, things to be used at whims and fancy, without rights, little more than slaves. (p. 230)

As Miles (2006:85) puts it, it was a society in which the motives for marriage were essentially patriarchal; it was one 'in which men took wives chiefly to serve their own needs for a legitimate heir and for household management'. The ancient household codes that Paul adapted never listed love as a husband's duty, but 'told husbands only to make their wives submit' (Keener 1993:552). Therefore, while Paul upheld the traditional ideal of wifely submission, in urging that a man care about his wife, he did not only 'seriously [*challenge*] patriarchal motives for marriage', but, in fact, went far beyond such values (Miles 2006:85; cf. Keener 1993:552). As against the old order in which men were 'expected to be virile [*and*] dominant, [*in Eph 5*] husbands are to nourish and cherish their wives' (Miles 2006:86). Therefore, as Turner (1994) plausibly asserts:

[T]o affirm that the marital codes [*in Ephesians*] are more socially conformist than revolutionary would be misleading ... [*Rather,*] within the hierarchical social order they uphold they were radical and profoundly liberating; Ephesians brings a particularly radical new Christian understanding to marriage. (p. 1241)

In this new understanding, the wife willingly gives her submission to her husband as a Christian ideal, while the Christian husband exercises his authority over his wife in love, that is, as profound as that of Christ in laying down his life for the church. In other words, from the perspective of the husband, this new understanding of marital relationship is one which focuses more on love and self-denial than on authority. In the following section, this article examines marital relationship among Nigerian Christians in anticipation of applying Ephesians 5:22–33 to impact positively on it in the subsequent section.

## Marital relationship among Nigerian Christians

Like most of African communities, the culture of most Nigerian ethnic groups is essentially patriarchal. Patriarchy is simply defined as 'the rule of the father' (London Feminist Network 2020), but the term has been recognised to have broader connotations. Hence, Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) states:

[*Patriarchy*] ... has progressively been used to refer to the systemic organization of male supremacy and female subordination ... [*It*] is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex which provides material

advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females; with various taboos to ensure conformity with specified gender roles.

This definition is true of most African societies, where male supremacy is taken for granted with the ideology that men are naturally superior to women (Labeodan 2005:6). As Casimir, Chukwuelobe and Ugwu (2014) put it:

In African societies, the traditional gender roles are usually maintained by a system of patriarchy which sees men as pre-eminent human beings and women as secondary whose roles are meant to complement those of men. (p. 170)

In most parts of Nigeria, the subservience of women is commonly accepted as the ideal (Igbelina-Igbokwe 2013). Among the Yoruba, it is the males' will and cultural norms that dominate and legislate (Adeyemi 1998:49; cf. Familusi 2012:301). Discrimination against the womenfolk begins with the girl child to whom the male counterpart is often preferred. The major reason being that girls are 'perceived as expendable commodities who will eventually be married out to other families to procreate and ensure the survival of the spouses' lineage by bearing sons' (Igbelina-Igbokwe 2013). In Yoruba culture, there is the notion of the physical control of a woman's body and its products in that children are viewed to belong to the man's patrilineal family in which case '[s]he is but a beast that produces the man's children on his behalf' (Labeodan 2005:6). At the public level, the African woman is rarely reckoned with. Among the Yoruba, women have no say in the settling of disputes, making of laws governing the conduct of the society, or the distribution and maintenance of land (Olajubu 1998:61).

Among the Yoruba, domination over a woman in marital relationship reflects right from the process of contracting a marriage – the point at which a man pays the bride price on his wife, which by virtue of patriarchy makes her the property of her husband (Ademiluka 2018:349). This is because 'the act of payment of bride price ... is perceived as an outright act of transfer of woman's rights in source family to spouse's family' (Igbelina-Igbokwe 2013). Hence, before and during the wedding, the Yoruba woman is taught that '*oko ni olori aya*' [the husband is the head of the wife], and this she must be prepared to accept it throughout life (Ogoma 2014:101). At the wedding the woman is compelled by tradition to bear her husband's name as surname, dropping her father's name (Adeyemi 1998:52; cf. Labeodan 2005:9). From the wedding ceremony onwards, the new wife is given little regard by her husband's family. According to Labeodan (2005):

[*She is treated*] as one of [*their*] possessions, voiceless, without rights, with constrained freedom and without her own identity. ... She is treated by her in-laws with constraints; [*she*] is left to do all the house chores ... She is forbidden to call anyone from her husband's side (extended family) by first name. She has to use ... coined names for [*them*] such as *iyale* (senior woman), *baba oko* (father/brother-in-law), etc. even if she's older than them. (p. 9)

Added to the discrimination against the wife by his own family is the husband's usual unfaithfulness to her, which is found even among some Yoruba Christians. This habit is explicable against the backdrop of African culture, in which 'the sexuality of married women is perceived to be in the domain of the control of their husbands' (Masenya 2012:128). In view of this perception, while a man is free to have a second wife or a concubine, the woman, even if she is a second wife, should always be faithful to only one man (Kealotswe 2009:302). Regarding men having several wives, the traditional Yoruba seem to believe that God made it so. Hence, according to Alaba (2004) they have a popular saying that:

Awa okunrin le laya mefa; ko buru; okunrin kan soso lOba Oluwa mi yan fobinrin [*We men can each have six wives; it is not bad at all! It is to only one man that my God has assigned a woman.*] (p. 7, [author's translation])

In this way, African culture encourages men to contract polygamous marriages – the culture which is still being practised by many Yoruba Christians (Falaye 2016:21), whereas a woman who engages in extra-marital relations is often condemned as an adulterer (Familusi 2012:304). Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) rightly describes this practice as discriminatory against women.

Among the Yoruba at the household level, patriarchy also reflects in gender role differentiation. In the traditional setting, Alaba (2004) says:

[I]t is the duty of the woman to do all the work connected with the household other than carrying out repairs to the walls and roof of their house or hut ... The preparation and serving of food is one of the most exacting of her duties [*but*] in none of these does the Yoruba husband usually consider it his duty to lend a helping hand. (p. 5)

It is worthy of note that the practice of leaving all house chores to the wife to do, still obtains in many homes, even among Christians. Nevertheless, it is important to note, as Ogoma (2014) rightly points out:

Yoruba women in the past never thought that it was a burden, or unfair treatment for them [*for example*] to cook for their husbands, even if they returned home [*from work*] at the same time. (p. 101)

In fact, tradition has it that a woman could hit her husband with a spoon if he came to the kitchen when she was cooking 'because that is not his area of jurisdiction' (Ogoma 2014:101). In modern times, the wife may not hit her husband with a spoon if found in the kitchen, but it is common knowledge that most Yoruba women are accustomed to doing all cooking alone without involving their husbands.

Worthy of mention are some untoward practices which amount to violence against women. In Nigeria, as in many parts of Africa, corporal punishment for wives 'is widely sanctioned as a form of discipline' (Aihie 2009:2). Hence, some men beat their wives in the name of 'instilling discipline in them ... [*as women*] are regarded as children who can be

prone to indiscipline if not disciplined' (Agbonkheshe & Onuoha 2017). In contemporary times, wife beating may not be viewed by all as accepted means of discipline, but it is commonly reported even among church elders and pastors, to the extent that several women have been beaten to death by these categories of Christians (Anenga 2017; Elekwa 2017; Fowowe 2015). To this end, Adams (2003:84) states that in most African communities, 'many marriage relationships function in the mode of an authoritarian [*sometimes abusive*] patriarchal hierarchy ... simply assumed to be the domestic structure to follow'.

In Nigeria, Paul's teaching in Ephesians 5:22–33 has not had much effect on marital relationship among Christians, even though there is general preaching on love and submission between husbands and wives. Pastor Kumuyi, General Overseer of the Deeper Life Bible Church, once urged Christian wives to be submissive to their husbands; they might look stupid in doing so, but in the end, they might change their husbands. Husbands should also love and honour their wives (Irekamba 2019). Similarly, while delivering her presidential address to the 20th Diocesan Women Conference held in Abuja on 14 October 2019, the wife of the Primate of all Nigeria Anglican Communion, Mrs. Nkasiobi Okoh, spoke 'against the new generation movement that disputes the submission of wives to their husbands'. Wifely submission is God's command, not a matter for debate (Adighibe 2019).

However, it seems that the idea of submission is seldom adequately understood in the manner of the intent of Paul in Ephesians 5. Rather, as Hanson (2015) has correctly observed, '[s]ome African Christians are obsessed with the idea of their wives submitting to them and find "divine" justice in the Bible for this'. As Casimir et al. (2014:170) put it, '[s]ometimes Bible passages [*e.g., Eph 5:21–33; Col 3:18*] are selectively quoted to support the belief in and practice of male superiority and female inferiority'. In this regard, Adams (2003) states:

Pronouncements from the pulpit are vague and unhelpful. [*W*]edding sermons all too frequently ... focus on the mechanics of headship and submission in an attempt to be 'biblical', while leaving the unfortunate impression that Christian marriage is an unequal relationship in which the husband takes all the decisions and the wife merely acquiesces. (p. 87)

According to Nigerian UNICORN (2017), most African men have a wrong understanding of biblical submission in marriage. In their own perception, the wife has to be a puppet to be the perfectly and completely submissive wife. Like children, women are supposed to be seen not heard; the wife must do as the husband says; he may club and hang out with the boys and women at night, while the wife looks after the home; she has to cook whether it is convenient or not. The wife must be 'all-round-the-clock homekeeper, nanny, cleaner, cook, sex slave'. If she is not prepared to 'submit' in this way, she may be sent out of her matrimonial home (Nigerian UNICORN 2017; cf. also Hanson 2015). As this source rightly observes, clubbing and hanging out with

other men, and sometimes other women, are their husbands' common habits that some wives should 'submit' to. Most often, while clubbing and hanging out, some men have extra-marital love affairs, while their wives are abandoned and denied their rightful conjugal and economic rights. In such a situation, 'the wife and the children become destitute if he is the sole bread winner of the family' (Ademiluka 2019:9). It must be noted, however, that sometimes a man's extra-marital affairs are caused by his wife's behaviour. Such behaviour includes 'disobedience, non-submission, nagging, denial of conjugal rights, refusal to perform her house duties, [or] also indulging in extra-marital affairs' (Ademiluka 2019:9). In the section below, the article examines how Ephesians 5:22–33 can be applied to effect a positive change in Nigerian Christians' marital relationships.

## Applying Ephesians 5:22–33 to Christian marital relationship in Nigeria

The foregoing discussion indicates that there are several areas in which Nigerian Christians need to let Ephesians 5:22–33 make effective changes in their marital relationships. Going by the sequence in the passage, women are addressed firstly, enjoined to submit to their husbands in everything (vv. 22, 24); they should also respect their husbands (v. 33). When the command to wives is read in light of verse 23, as understood in the exegesis done in this article, the wife should submit to her husband as one who has authority over her. In the Nigerian context, this command negates the clamour for equality between husband and wife, which is becoming popular even among Christian women. This clamour is sometimes practicalised through habits such as taking decisions in disregard to the husband's consent. Some women may embark on building projects, or purchase of landed property without the consent of their husbands. Most often the advocacy for equality is based on the claim that certain biblical passages such as Ephesians 5:22–24 are interpreted in favour of men subjugating women. Uchem (2005:12) opines that 'some scripture passages ... are derogatory to women in tune with the times and cultures of their authors and interpreters'. Casimir et al. (2014) are of the view that biblical passages such as Ephesians 5:22–24 have been given erroneous interpretation by the church, which has led to inequality and injustice against women:

The discovery of such errors of biblical interpretation has generated a worldwide awareness and civil society advocacy that men and women are in fact equal and this realization should be translated into action. (p. 167)

However, as seen in the exegesis, while Ephesians 5:22–24 places a woman under the authority of her husband in view of verses 25–33, it is certainly not derogatory to women, but in fact more liberating to them than the traditional patriarchal setting as discussed in the previous section. If the whole passage is properly understood, the call for equality between husband and wife becomes superfluous. In this regard, Aiyegbusi's explanation (2019) on submission is apposite, that is:

[F]or [Christian] wives ... [submission] means that you ... trust that God has appointed your husband as the head of the home and the leader in the family ... this means you understand that men and women are completely equal in value and in worth, yet, God has designed us to operate in different roles and functions within marriage ... this does not mean your life and faith should get absorbed in your husband's ... Submission IS NOT helplessness on a wife's part, it is a conscious personal choice to follow her husband's leadership in marriage, a choice that flows out of her obedience to Christ and desire to honor God's plan for marriage.

The injunction to wives to respect their husbands, is particularly significant in the context of the Yoruba culture of respect (Oti & Ayeni 2013:23–29). Among the Yoruba, respect is given a high premium, particularly from younger persons to their elders. It is shown in greeting and addressing elderly persons. The Yoruba man or boy greets an elderly person by prostrating, while a woman or girl does so by kneeling down. They also kneel down when giving something such as food or water to an elder. The Yoruba person does not call someone who is older than him or her by name; it is 'father', 'mother', 'brother' or 'sister', as the English terms *cousin*, *nephew*, *uncle* or *niece* are absent in the traditional vocabulary. Among the Yoruba, respect also involves obedience to one's elders, especially one's parents. In the Yoruba culture, as the wife is under the authority of her husband, she respects him in these same ways. She kneels down to greet her husband, or to give him food or water; she does not call him by name, but *oko mi* [my husband] or by their first child's name when they have a child (e.g. baba Kunle, i.e. Kunle's father). As earlier mentioned, the young wife 'is ranked junior to all members of the descent group born before her marriage [and] must address them with terms of respect' (Lloyd 1968:68). A wife who is obedient to her husband, is considered as virtuous in Yoruba culture. A woman who violates this culture, is regarded as arrogant, and may not enjoy her marriage. It is in this context that Ephesians 5:33 speaks to the Nigerian Christian wife. As stated in verse 24, she should submit to her husband in everything. In relation to respect for the Yoruba Christian wife, this would mean that she should respect him as demanded by culture insofar as her faith is not compromised. It is important to point out here that there are circumstances when the Christian wife, or any woman for that matter, may find it impossible to submit to the husband. The most crucial of such circumstances are those of women abuse such as wife beating, as earlier mentioned. As Ademiluka (2019:10) plausibly suggests, in such situations when 'there is threat to life, one would think that the appropriate response ... should be to dispense with marriage in order to save life'.

From the exegesis of the text, the headship of the husband over his wife, alluded to in verse 23, is explained in verses 25–33. The husband's headship is likened to the unique character of Christ's headship over the church. As the leader of the church, Christ gave himself up for her. In the same way, the Christian should place a greater value on his wife's life and well-being than over even his own life. The

emphasis therefore is on love, not on authority. The Christian husband's love for his wife is not to be self-serving or for self-gratification. Husband and wife are one flesh and therefore the husband's love for his wife should translate to nourishing and cherishing her like his own body – just as Christ does with the church. As indicated in the section above, when compared with this description, many Nigerian Christian husbands' relationships with their spouses fall short of the expectation in Ephesians 5. In the first place, contrary to the intent of Paul as seen in the exegesis, the general assumption is 'that submission in marriage implies suppression or inferiority' (Aiyegbusi 2019). As seen earlier on, in the perception of many Nigerian men, a woman has to be a puppet to be seen as a submissive wife: she does not have a voice in any matter, neither does she have any rights; she is to be seen, not heard, and must always do the husband's bidding. No doubt, men who have this idea of submission will most certainly wield authoritarian headship over their wives, which does not conform to the Christ-like form of headship portrayed in Ephesians 5. Also contradictory to the concept of sacrificial love and cherishing, as taught in the passage, are practices that get the wife overworked in serving her husband and the family, and thereby reducing her status to that of a house maid. This happens when the wife is left to do all the cooking and cleaning in the home, especially when there is not yet a grown-up child to help her. Worse than this, however, are Nigerian Christian marital relationships that are characterised by women abuse such as wife beating, desertion and denial of rights, as earlier discussed. Contrary to all these, the head of the wife, portrayed by Paul in Ephesians 5, is one that would seek the pleasure and comfort of his wife over his own. He is the type that would recognise when his wife needs help, and readily give a helping hand; the type that nourishes and cherishes his wife, who would find it impossible to raise his hand against his wife for any reason. In other words, if the text is properly understood and applied, submission should not turn a wife into a house maid or an abused person. Rather the husband, in his headship role, adores her, putting on the character of Christ, 'who, though he was in the form of God ... emptied himself, taking the form of a servant' (Phlp 2:6–7 – RSV).

For the appropriation of Ephesians 5:22–33 in Nigeria, Lincoln's view (1993) is apposite, as according to him:

*[The text]* is best appropriated today by attempting to do what its writer has done, that is, to bring to bear on the marriage conventions of the day what is held to be the heart of the Christian message ... *[Paul had a view of marriage]* where love ensures that the relationship does not degenerate into a sterile competition for control ... *[Rather]* submission and love *[are]* ... seen as two sides of the same coin – unselfish service of one's partner. (Adams 2003:83)

It is important to note that, in applying the transformative ethos of Ephesians 5 to contemporary times, as Adams (2003) points out:

*[O]ne is not inviting people simply to throw overboard their culturally conditioned concepts of the marriage relationship, but one is rather encouraging people to embrace this ethos and allow it to mould and transform their understanding and practice in relating together as husband and wife. (p. 85)*

Hence, Yoruba Christian couples are not being called upon to forsake their culture of respect, but love must be allowed to override culture. Culture demands that the wife kneels down for her husband on certain occasions; while the wife should willingly do this, if for some understandable reason she cannot, the husband should not insist.

Finally, in applying Ephesians 5:22–33 to Christian marital relationships in Nigeria, the church should do more than it is doing currently. Some denominations engage intending couples in marriage induction courses, but leave them to themselves after the wedding. Most churches also give sermons on marital relationship during wedding ceremonies, but such sermons are usually on love and submission, and often in conformity with the general assumption that submission means subjugation of women. This means that the church needs to go deeper on the concept of husbands' headship. Husbands need to be taught that their authority should be exercised in the manner of sacrificial love that made Jesus give himself up for the church. Moreover, it is inadequate to limit teaching on marital relationship to pre-wedding induction courses and wedding sermons. It will be helpful for couples if the church may organise regular teaching for them on marital relationship, using the Ephesians text among others. Such teachings may be incorporated into all the church manuals and administered to all categories of members. Teaching on marital relationship is particularly important for the younger generations who should be taught to begin to move away from the traditional belief that males do not participate in house chores; away from the idea that husbands have no business in the kitchen.

## Conclusion

Ephesians 5:22–33 is part of 5:22–6:9 which reflects the household codes written by the ancient Greek philosophers to uphold the power differential between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves. Principally these codes reflect the conviction of the ancient Graeco-Roman society of the 1st century that women were inferior to men and that the role of the husband was to rule his wife. In Ephesians 5, Paul borrows this pattern of writing, but mitigates the absolute authority of the male head of the house. Contrary to the absolute authority of husbands in the Graeco-Roman world, Paul likens the authority of the Christian husband over his wife to Christ's headship over the church. As Christ gave himself up for the church, the Christian husband should place greater value on the life and well-being of his wife than over his own life and well-being. Understanding Ephesians 5:22–33 in this way is most relevant in the Nigerian context in which societal expectation of subservience of women is the commonly accepted ideal. Among the Yoruba, women are conceptualised by most men as their chattel, married purposely to do house



chores and bear children. In some cases, Christians still beat their wives as a form of discipline in addition to other forms of women abuse. Therefore, there are several areas in which Nigerian Christians need to make the Ephesians passage to effect changes in their marital relationships. The wife should submit to her husband as one who has authority over her. She should respect her husband within the confines of his culture insofar as her obedience to Christ is not compromised. Nigerian Christians should change the general assumption that submission in marriage implies suppression and subjugation of their wives. The Christian husband should assume the character of the head who seeks the pleasure and comfort of his wife over his own. Finally, the church in Nigeria should make husbands understand that their authority over their wives should be exercised in the manner of the sacrificial love of Jesus.

## Acknowledgements

### Competing interests

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

### Author's contribution

I declare that I am the sole author of this research article.

### Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

### Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

## References

- Adams, D., 2003, 'The transformative ethos of Ephesians 5:21–33 and its implications for a contemporary South African context', MA thesis, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.
- Ademiluka, S.O., 2018, 'Patriarchy and women abuse: Perspectives from Ancient Israel and Africa', *Old Testament Essays* 31(2), 339–362. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2018/v31n2a5>
- Ademiluka, S.O., 2019, 'Reading 1 Corinthians 7:10–11 in the context of intimate partner violence in Nigeria', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 40(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v40i1.1926>
- Adeyemi, L., 1998, 'The Yoruba cultural values and the ideology of feminism', in R. Ajayi, O., Alana & Y. Akinwumi (eds.), *Multi-disciplinary perspectives in Nigerian studies*, pp. 49–58, Nathadex, Ilorin.
- Adighibe, N., 2019, 'Wives' submission to their husbands is not a matter for debate – Mrs. Okoh', *Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)*, 14 October, viewed 02 February 2020, from <https://www.anglican-nig.org/featured/10/14/wives-submission-to-their-husbands-not-a-matter-for-debate-mrs-okoh/>.
- Agbonkheshe, J. & Onuoha, C., 2017, 'Does Nigerian culture permit domestic violence?', *Vanguard*, 24 August, viewed 12 December 2017, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/08/nigerian-culture-permit-domestic-violence/>.
- Aihie, O.N., 2009, 'Prevalence of domestic violence in Nigeria: Implications for counseling', *Edo Journal of Counselling* 2(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ejc.v2i1.52648>
- Aiyegbusi, S., 2019, 'The hardest mission field', *Unlabeled*, viewed 12 January 2020, from <http://www.shegzstuff.com/blogofshegz/2018/3/12/the-hardest-mission-field>
- Alaba, O., 2004, 'Understanding sexuality in the Yoruba culture', *Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre*, pp. 1–13, viewed 31 January 2020, from <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/uhsss/alaba.pdf>.
- Anenga, U., 2017, 'The role of the church in marriage', *The Guardian*, 26 November, viewed 13 July, from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/role-of-the-church-in-marriage/>.
- Balch, D.L., 1988, 'Household Codes', in D.E. Aune (ed.), *Greco-Roman literature and the New Testament: Selected forms and genre*, pp. 25–50, Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA.
- Belz, L.M., 2013, 'The rhetoric of gender in the household of God: Ephesians 5:21–33 and its place in Pauline tradition', PhD dissertation, Loyola University, Chicago, IL.
- Bristow, J.T., 1991, *What Paul really said about women*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, CA.
- Bruce, F.F., 1984, *The epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Casimir, A., Chukwuelobe, M.C. & Ugwu, C., 2014, 'The church and gender equality in Africa: Questioning culture and the theological paradigm on omen oppression', *Open Journal of Philosophy* 4, 166–173. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2014.42024>
- Chapell, B., 2009, *Ephesians*, P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ.
- Dunnam, M.D., 1982, *The preacher's commentary: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.
- Elekwa, E., 2017, 'Nigeria: Ex-boxer on the run for beating wife to death over Xmas food', *Daily Trust*, 29 December, viewed 14 July 2018, from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201712290459.html>.
- Falaye, T.A., 'Polygamy and Christianity in Africa', *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 4(10), 18–28.
- Familusi, O.O., 2012, 'African culture and the status of women: The Yoruba example', *The Journal of Pan African Studies* 5(1), 299–313.
- Fowowe, P., 2015, 'My Pastor beats his wife ... how can I help?', *The Cable*, 03 August, viewed 15 July 2018, from <https://www.thecable.ng/pastor-beats-wife-can-help>
- Gitari, D., 1984, 'The church and polygamy', *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 1(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026537888400100102>
- Hanson, N.A., 2015, 'Do wives have to submit to their husbands?', *This is Africa*, 10 July, viewed 02 February 2020, from <https://thisisafrika.me/lifestyle/wives-submit-husbands/>.
- Hillman, E., 1975, *Polygamy reconsidered-African plural marriage and the Christian churches*, Transafrican Publishers, Maryknoll, Orbis.
- Igbelina-Igbokwe, N., 2013, 'Contextualizing gender based violence within patriarchy in Nigeria', *Pambzuka News: Voices for Freedom and Justice*, viewed 28 January 2018, from <https://tinyurl.com/ycmmoy2g>.
- Irekamba, C., 2019, 'Kumuyi urges Christian wives to be submissive, husbands to honour them', *The Guardian*, 16 June, viewed 02 February 2020, from <https://guardian.ng/sunday-magazine/kumuyi-urges-christian-wives-to-be-submissive-husbands-to-honour-them/>.
- Kealotswe, O.N., 2009, 'Biblical and African forms of marriage and Old Testament prophecy: An interpretation of Isaiah 4:1 in the era of HIV/AIDS by an African Independent Church leader in Botswana', *Theologia Viatorum: Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 33(3), 296–321.
- Keener, C.S., 1992, *Paul, women and wives: Marriage and women's ministry in the letters of Paul*, Hendrickson, Peabody, MA.
- Keener, C.S., 1993, *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament*, InterVarsity, Leicester.
- Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W. & Stamm, J.J., 1994–2000, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, transl. and ed. under supervision of M.E.J. Richardson, 2003 edn., Koninklijke Brill, Leiden. (Bible Works 6).
- Labeodan, M.O., 2005, 'The family lifestyle in Nigeria', *Princeton Education papers*, viewed 12 January 2020, from <https://paa2005.princeton.edu/papers/51248>.
- LaBissoniere, L., 2012, 'A woman's key to a happy marriage: Trusting God in submission', *Beyond Today*, viewed 12 January 2020, from <https://www.ucg.org/the-good-news/a-womans-key-to-a-happy-marriage-trusting-god-in-submission>.
- Lewis, R. & Hendricks, W., 1991, *Rocking the roles*, NavPress, Colorado Springs, COL.
- Lincoln, A.T., 1990, *Ephesians*, Word Books, Dallas, TX.
- Lincoln, A.T., 1993, 'The theology of Ephesians', in A.T. Lincoln & A.J.M. Wedderburn (eds.), *New Testament theology: The theology of the later Pauline letters*, pp. 73–166, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Lloyd, P.C., 1968, 'Divorce among the Yoruba', *American Anthropologist* 70, 67–81. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1968.70.1.02a00070>
- London Feminist Network, 2020, 'What is patriarchy?', *London Feminist Network*, viewed 05 March 2020, from <https://tinyurl.com/y7yzrgzc>.

- Lovše, N., 2009, 'Roles of husbands and wives in the Christian marriage relationship (Ephesians 5)', *KAIROS – Evangelical Journal of Theology* 3(2), 113–134.
- MacDonald, M.Y., 2000, *Colossians and Ephesians*, Sacra Pagina 17, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN.
- MacDonald, W., 1995, *Believer's Bible commentary*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN.
- Marshall, H., 2003, 'Ephesians', in J.D.G. Dunn (ed.), *Eerdmans' commentary on the Bible*, pp. 1385–1393, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Masenya, J.M., 2012, 'Dripping nails, desire and polygynous partnerships: Navigating women's stories in Genesis 29–30 through African love song(s)', *Theologia Viatorum: Journal of Theology and Religion in Africa* 36(1), 125–140.
- Miles, C.A., 2006, 'Patriarchy or gender equality? The letter to the Ephesians on submission, headship, and slavery', *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 39(2), 70–95.
- Mowczko, M., 2019, 'The household codes are about power, not gender', *Marg Mowczko: Exploring the biblical theology of Christian egalitarianism*, viewed 11 January 2020, from <https://margmowczko.com/household-codes-power-not-gender/>.
- Nigerian UNICORN, 2017, 'What most African men actually mean by submission in marriage', *Onigeria*, 20 March, viewed 12 January 2020, from <http://onigeria.com/2017/03/submission-to-most-african-men.html>.
- Ogoma, D.E., 2014, 'Reflection on an African traditional marriage system', *Journal of Social Sciences and Public Affairs* 4(1), 94–104.
- Olajubu, O., 1998, 'Culture as an empowering tool in Africa: A feminist perspective', in R. Ajayi, O., Alana & Y. Akinwumi (eds.), *Multi-disciplinary perspectives in Nigerian studies*, pp. 60–69, Nathadex, Ilorin.
- Oti, A. & Ayeni, O., 2013, 'Yoruba culture of Nigeria: Creating space for an endangered species', *Cross-Cultural Communication* 9(4), 23–29.
- Szesnat, H., 2015, 'Gender-based violence and Ephesians 5: Reflections on the ethics, hermeneutics and didactics of a community Bible study in Suva, Fiji', in F. Nokise & H. Szesnat (eds.), *Oceanic voyages in theology and theological education: Reflections and reminiscences in celebration and the 50th anniversary of Pacific Theological College*, pp. 133–168, Pacific Theological College, Suva.
- Turner, M., 1994, 'Ephesians', in D.A. Carson, G.J. Wenham, J.A. Motyer & R.T. France (eds.), *New Bible Commentary*, pp. 904–945, InterVarsity, Nottingham.
- Uchem, R., 2005, *Gender equality from a Christian perspective*, SNAAP Press, Enugu.