

## The Reason for Marriage

### Ephesians 5:22-33

#### **Ephesians 5:22-33**

'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything...

- Note: This is one of the most misunderstood, misused, and abused passages in all of scripture.
- The Bible does NOT teach that marriage is a hierarchy, as some have led us to believe.
- We will discuss this more in part two of this sermon.

...For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault...

...In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body...

...As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.'

#### **Prayer:**

- Story about Eugene.
- **A right perspective is everything.**
- A "celebration of life" funeral, is different no doubt, than a birthday party, but it can still be a joyous occasion.
- However, a "celebration of life" funeral that you THINK is a birthday party, will only be confusing and humiliating.
- A national survey on the "meaning of marriage" revealed that the majority of Americans believe that marriage is primarily about having their own personal needs and desires, met.

- It is the idea of a *soul mate*. “If I can just find the right person, they will somehow complete something that is missing or lacking, in my life.”
- Emily and I got married very young.
- Both of our parents were divorced so we feared marrying the wrong person, so we asked God to show who our spouse was meant to be.
- When He did, we ASSUMED this ALSO meant that the other was perfectly COMPATIBLE.
- We were in for a big surprise, when our first big disagreement and silent treatment showed up on our honeymoon just a few days after our wedding.
- Maybe we weren’t as perfectly compatible, as we had thought.
- ‘As a pastor... I’ve heard [married couples] say over and over, “Love shouldn’t be this hard.” In response, I always say something like, “Why believe that? Would someone who wants to play professional baseball say, ‘It shouldn’t be so hard to hit a fastball?’... The understandable retort is, “But this is not baseball... This is love. Love should just come naturally if two people are compatible, if they are truly soul mates.” The Christian answer to this is that no two people are compatible.’ (Timothy & Kathy Keller - *The Meaning of Marriage*)
- He goes to talk about how, even if you do find a truly compatible person, marriage has a way of changing people, and no one can know EXACTLY how the other will change until we are married.
- *Each spouse must then learn to love a person who can almost seem like a stranger, at times which may eventually lead to a strong, tender marriage, but **it won’t be because you married someone perfectly compatible, that person doesn’t exist.*** (paraphrase from *The Meaning of Marriage* by Timothy & Kathy Keller)
- False understanding of the reason for marriage leads to false expectations, which inevitably leads to disappointment, frustration, disillusionment, or worse.
- **We end like poor ole Eugene who showed up to a funeral, thinking it was birthday.**
- **Now, I am IN NO WAY implying that marriage is like a funeral... but it is certainly not like your birthday, where everything is only about you.**
- So, what IS it about?
- God designed marriage. He alone can reveal the meaning of it.

**5 reasons for marriage, according the principles of scripture:**

## **1. MARRIAGE IS INTENDED TO IMAGE GOD**

- To be married is to exist **in relationship**, and to exist **in relationship** is to exist like God exists.

- 'Then God said, "Let **us** make human beings in **our** image, to be like **us**...so God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created **them: male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)**"
- Here we see that **God Himself is a relational being** (Father, Son, Spirit - 3 in 1), and that **Humanity images God best in relationship with one another.**
- **The image of God is best seen in male and female existing TOGETHER, in relational harmony. That IS marriage.**
- After all, when we read the creation account, a solitary Adam was the only thing that God said was NOT GOOD.
- **So God create woman because**
- **People cannot bear the divine image in solitude, nor can one gender bear the divine image without the other.**
- **But it is not just the the co-existence of husband and wife, that is intended to image, it is the ONENESS.**
- As it said it in our passage (v. 31) and "**the two shall become ONE**".
- The only oldest and most famous prayer in all of Israel, was "Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad" — "The Lord, our God. He is ONE."
- Jesus prayed for his followers in **John 17: "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one..." (John 17:21a)**
- We often apply this to our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, forgetting that our FIRST brother or sister in the body of Christ, is the one we're married to.
- We ought to do all we can to keep the unity with them.
- **Friends, We don't just work to stay MARRIED, but to stay UNITED.**
- **God didn't intend us to just LIVE together, but to be emotionally, relationally, and physically connected.**
- Everyday you have a choice, in marriage, to make your goal **connection** or **distance**.
- And that goal will determine the decisions you make — how you treat your spouse, how quickly you forgive, the words you use, etc.
- But connection takes courage, as my lovely wife said to me when I was preparing this part of the sermon:
- **"It takes courage for wives and husbands to continually turn toward each other and entrust their minds, hearts, and bodies to one another, especially when we are so prone to hurt each another." (Emily Balli)**
- **But when we fight for connection and KEEP IT, it images how Father, Son, and Spirit are connected, and reminds us how WE were intended to connect with God, which I think is WHY is it SO DARN satisfying to live in connection with your spouse — it is the DESIGN of God to be connected with another.**

## 2. MARRIAGE IS INTENDED TO DISPLAY THE GOSPEL AND GOODNESS OF GOD

- 'As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, **but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.**' (vv. 31-32)
- Did you know that when you treat your spouse the way that Christ has treated you, it displays the gospel? This happens first to our spouse.
- Friends, you can show your spouse Jesus, by the way you treat them.
- Eg. When we give ourselves for our spouse, it puts the gospel of Jesus, on display.
- When we experience the goodness of God, that changes us, right?
- Part of how your spouse can **experience** the goodness of God is actually by how YOU, treat them.
- We have the power to reflect the gospel and goodness of God BACK to our spouse.
- Marriage was ALSO intended to display the gospel and goodness of God, to the world around us.
- For instance, you may never preach to your family member with words, but every time they see you extend grace and mercy to your spouse, your actions actually preach the grace and mercy of God, which is our motivation in the first place, as we will look at in part 2. .

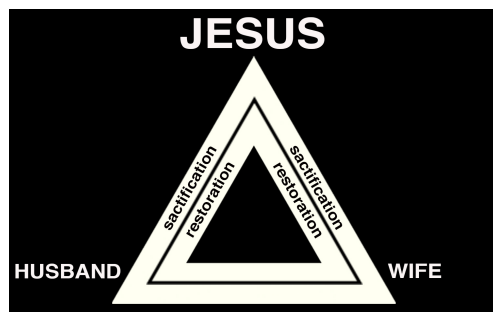
### 3. MARRIAGE USHERS IN THE NEXT GENERATION

- This should be no surprise to us. This is a huge reason why God created marriage.
- 'Then God blessed them [Adam and Eve] and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.'" (**Genesis 1:28a**)
- Jesus said something similar to his disciples: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations." (**Matthew 28:19**)
- **Our call as believers, married or not, is to teach people who Jesus is, and help them find Him.**
- For those who are parents, the first place we do this, is with our children.
- This goes for couple's who have children naturally, or who adopt.
- It goes for single parents, or even a single person who adopts.
  - We have the privilege, and responsibility, of discipling our children, to Jesus.
- For the couple who is unable to have children, this doesn't make your marriage somehow less legitimate or not as valuable.
- God alone is sovereign over the womb. If and when, He grants you children, raise them up in the ways of God.
- Until, then, this commission from Jesus applies to all us: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations." "Preach the gospel to every living creature." (**Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15**)

#### 4. MARRIAGE EXPOSES OUR WEAK SPOTS, IN ORDER TO RESTORE AND SANCTIFY US

- “This is the will of God, your sanctification.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3)
- Someday Jesus will return and “restore all things” (see Acts 3:21)
- When we are saved, it happens INSTANTANEOUSLY.
- But, **SANCTIFICATION and RESTORATION are a process?**
- **Sanctification is the process of making us more like Jesus. Restoration is the process of restoring to us, that which was taken from us because of the fall.**
- Your spouse was given to you to be a source of, both sanctification and restoration— healing and refining.
- **And in the process of both, our weak spots are exposed.**
- You may look at a huge over pass on a freeway, and see no structural flaws in it.
- Upon closer inspection you may notice some hairline fractures. Still nothing to be overly concerned about... until a 10-ton Mac begins to drives across it.
- **The pressure of the truck will not only expose the hairline fractures, but will increase and expand them.**
- We all enter marriage with some weak spots. Some caused by things done TO us. Some caused by things WE have done. And some are there just because we have a sin nature and were born into a fallen world.
- Our friends may have not been noticed many of these weak spots.
- Family had a closer perspective and mostly likely saw them, but didn’t make too big of a deal about them.
- **But then we get married, and living in that kind of proximity to someone with that kind of relational connection creates PRESSURE that exposes AND expands those weak spots.**
- **This is ACTUALLY by design, SO THAT these things can be healed, not avoided or brushed under the carpet.**
  - After all, you would never look at the newly expanded cracks in that bridge and say, “quick cover them up” otherwise this bridge will eventually crumble.
  - You also wouldn’t blame the TRUCK for causing those cracks. You might even be **thankful** for the pressure of the truck that exposed the **need** for restoration.
  - **Similarly, we can learn to be thankful, for even the hardest things in marriage, when we start to see that maybe God allowed them, in order to bring a deeper healing and restoration.**
- **God doesn’t want us to crumble. He wants to restore us.**

- ***A personal example...***
- So, in His love, God allows the pressure of situations in our marriages to expose our weak spots so that we could begin to heal them.
- **It's like gold in the fire. It is the heat of the fire that brings the impurities of the gold to the surface so they can be removed.**
  - God uses the heat of marriage to expose our impurities, so they can be removed.
- IMP: The refiner's fire is NOT things like abuse from a spouse, or a spouse's UNREPENTANT SIN, or INFIDELITY.
- If you find yourself in a situation like that today, please reach out to someone for help, today. Please.
- **So, we all enter marriage with different types of brokenness and sinfulness.**
- God doesn't want to leave us like that.
- **So, in HIS LOVE, He brings us a spouse which is often His primarily tool of sanctification and restoration.**
- **This is a gift to be received. Not a curse to be avoided.**
- We must remember that God's primary goal is not our happiness, but our holiness.
- **The irony is that, when we are made holy, we actually become more happy.**
- **And when becoming more like Jesus, is the MUTUAL goal our connection with one another actually grows as sanctification and restoration take place.**



## 5. MARRIAGE IS INTENDED TO CAUSE THE GLORY OF MY SPOUSE TO COME FORTH

- **"Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)**
- This is what happens when we put your trust in Jesus. Our POSITION and IDENTITY are transformed. But PRACTICALLY speaking, God is still RESTORING everything about us!
- God put you in your spouse's life to help them become the fullest, most complete, God-glorifying version of themselves.

- In the same way that God wants to **RESTORE YOU**, He wants to restore your spouse.
- **And yes, some of that will come through the pressure, the fire, the rough patches.**
  - YOU are not to INITIATE those things (Trust me, they'll come without trying).
- **But there is another part to this — And THIS YOU SHOULD INITIATE.**
- **God wants to use YOU to help UNCOVER the beauty and glory of who God made your spouse to be.**
- 'Within this Christian vision for marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that."... Each spouse should see the great thing that Jesus is doing in the life of their mate... and should give him - or herself to be a vehicle for that work, and envision the day that you will stand together before God, seeing each other presented in spotless beauty and glory.' (Timothy & Kathy Keller - *The Meaning of Marriage*)
- When Michelangelo was asked how he carved his magnificent David, he said, "I looked inside the marble and just took away the bits that weren't David." (Michelangelo on his *David*)
- This is our job — to see who our spouse CAN and WILL BE, and participate in helping to bring that forth.
- And, just like Michelangelo with his David, it must be done with the uttermost gentleness and care.
- **The first job** given to humanity in the garden was to "cause flourishing" in that which God had given to Adam and Eve.
- **This is our job with EVERYTHING, our marriage in particular — our job in marriage is to do whatever needs to be done in order to cause our spouse to flourish.**
- And this makes the heart glad.
- I love my wife, and when I am able to cause her to flourish in some way, and come alive, it brings the greatest joy!
- It really is more blessed to give than to receive.
- BUT THEN you know what happens? She feels so loved and treasured that she wants to do it back!!
- Pretty soon, we're two flourishing, blossoming, fruit bearing trees in a vineyard of love and connection and safety and depth and growth! Talk about a marriage that shows the world Jesus.
- That's the kind of marriage we want.
- For the person married to someone who doesn't know Jesus yet, you can do this too!
- You can participate in their redeemed self coming forth, even though it's not a reality yet.

- From experience, when you understand the **REAL REASON** for marriage, it sets us **FREE**. You don't have to live disappointed or frustrated or confused.
- Marriage can truly come alive and become a source of great joy, when we see and live **INTO** what God intended for it.

*Emily come up...*