

The Mystery of Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33

Ephesians 5:22-33 (ESV) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [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. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. [25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [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. [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. [31] "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. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Introduction

- A. *Paul's Letter to the Ephesians* is written with a clear purpose in mind. I would describe that singular purpose this way:
1. The purpose of Ephesians is for Christians to understand what God has done for them in Christ (1-3) and as a result live lives of unity and purity for the glory of God (4-6).
 2. In order to live lives of unity (corporate) and purity (individuals) we know what God has done for us in Christ and we live life in a new way. We have seen the following:
 - Put off the old self, put on the new, don't grieve the Holy Spirit - Ephesians 4:17-32
 - Walk in love - Ephesians 5:1-2
 - Walk as children of light - Ephesians 5:3-14
 - Walk wisely (make the best use of time; be filled with the Holy Spirit) - Ephesians 5:15-21
- B. Last week we saw that to be filled with the Spirit is to be speaking songs to one another, singing to the Lord in our heart, thanksgiving and submitting to others out of reverence for Christ.
1. Ephesians 5:21 is a bridge. It looks back at "be filled with the Spirit" which indicates that everyone walks (lives) under subjection to Christ.
 2. In Ephesians 5:22, submit is not in the original language. Paul now seeks to instruct us about our roles in marriage, family and work.
- C. My title is **The Mystery of Marriage**. For a marriage to prosper, the mystery of marriage will be understood by both spouses.
1. Many of us have found that marriage (or parenting) is the hardest thing we've done.

Everyone who has done any counseling at all soon becomes aware of the fact that there are more family and marriage problems than all the rest put together. Jay Adams in *Divorce and Remarriage*, p 19

- D. We will look at three headings: the role of the wife, the role of the husband, and the mystery of marriage. Keep in mind the big picture of unity and purity (harmony and peace).

We must realize what the Apostle is concerned to do. He is really concerned about one basic point only, namely, harmony and peace and unity as they are displayed in the married relationship and in the home. That being his leading theme he picks out on the two sides the element that needs to be emphasized above every other. What the wife is required to keep her eye on, in maintaining the harmony, is the element of submission; while the

husband has to keep his eye on the element of love. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9*, p 131

I. The role of the wife.

- A. For the wife to live life “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ” means that she applies herself to submit to her husband. This is showing respect (Ephesians 5:33).
1. Against the thinking of modern man this is not because men need respect. Sure, we do better with submission and respect. It is not essential for godliness in the husband.
 2. The wife’s submission to her husband is to the Lord. Your eyes are fixed on Jesus Christ.
 - Notice the husband does not earn this. It does not hinge on whether your husband is good enough. He probably isn’t.
 - The Bible teaches that these roles exist because of creation and because God is concerned to present a picture of the relationship of the church to Christ.
- B. Submission is a disposition or inclination to yield. It is the biblical way a wife follows Christ under subjection to Christ.
1. The wife is not inferior. She is equal in value (if not greater).
Ex: The left tackle. A hammer or fine china?
 2. Not a maid or perhaps worse, a slave.
 3. Not mindless (two brains are better than one).
- C. She, the Christian wife, is the quintessential team player. It is her joy and delight to follow her husband as the church follows Christ (no submission to husband ... no submission to Christ).

II. The role of the husband.

- A. The husband lives his life of submission to Christ by loving his wife. The husband is prone to lack this quality of love (harsh or aloof). We love in a number of ways.
1. We love our wife by **leading** (not her load to carry - single moms). When you need something to happen you need leadership. The role of leadership is to initiate.
Ex: Committee - chairperson; country - president; army - general.
 - The wife’s domain is the home (so we don’t micro-manage). According to Scripture, she is to be busy there. The husband oversees the operation.
 2. We love our wife by **laying down our life** as Christ laid down his life (serve and the cross).
Ex: This is more than a paycheck. A single guy gets a paycheck. Provision is love but we haven’t yet surpassed the single guy.
 - We do not abuse our wives (to do so is to inflict wounds on yourself).
 - We do not neglect our wives (we do things with them).
 - We do not take our wife for granted (usually means talking more).
 - We do not duck our responsibility (we protect).

3. We love our wife by **nourishing** her.

- Biblical fellowship (especially Scripture).

4. We love our wife by **cherishing** her.

- Something or someone is the apple of your eye. Is it your wife? Because we are one flesh nothing on earth should be more valuable.

B. The husband cares for his wife like Christ cares for the church.

1. Christ prays for us without ceasing.
2. Christ works on our behalf.
3. Christ loves us (especially at the cross).

It is because we have never truly seen the full meaning of the cross that we are what we are. That is the cause of our failure and our weakness. We have never realized His love to us. If only we really saw the meaning of the cross. If we but had the experience of Count Zinzendorf who, looking at a picture of the cross, cried out - "Thou hast done this for me, what can I do for Thee?" Looking at that he also said, "I have one passion, it is Christ and Christ alone." Martyn Lloyd-Jones in *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work: An Exposition of Ephesians 5:18-6:9*, p 167

C. What we believe about God (Christ) is crucial to our marriage.

What we believe about God determines the quality of our marriage... It's a wonderful, freeing thing to realize that the durability and quality of your marriage is not ultimately based on the strength of your commitment to your marriage. Dave Harvey in *When Sinners Say "I Do,"* p 20 & 23

1. Marriage is for God and His glory.

III. The mystery of marriage.

A. Only the Christian can fully comprehend the glory of marriage.

1. The unbeliever can marry to satisfy lust or physical attraction. They can marry for reasons of companionship or comfort.

B. The Christian glories in marriage because they see the picture of Christ and the church lived out in this thing we call marriage.

1. One man, one woman, for life. So called same-sex marriage can never give this complete picture of Christ and the church.
2. This is the problem as well with the feminist, socialist and egalitarian moves of our time (a complete loss of authority in marriage, parenting and work). No picture of Christ.

C. Here is what our actions show (and this is why marriage is serious and not a joking matter):

1. When a man courts a lady and wins her heart she is aware of his love for her. She is set apart for one man. He wins her heart.
 - This is a picture of Christ's love for us.

- It is also a picture of the church's devotion to Christ (holy, set apart).
2. It is customary for dad to give away his daughter (the wife leaves and cleaves).
 - Here in Ephesians 5:27 Christ presents the church to himself.
 - She is glorious.

Revelation 19:6-9 (ESV) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. [9] And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

3. Which is why a reception follows a wedding ceremony (marriage supper of the Lamb).
 - Some Puritans (about 350 years ago) did away with the marriage ceremony to combat the Catholics and their incorrect view on marriage as sacrament. Surely wrong!
 - Vows matter - we state our intention to live this picture of Christ and the church.
4. We require pre-marital counseling because we do not prepare for a day. We prepare for a life together for the glory of God. The church is essential.

Close

- A. This text leads us to one question.
 1. What is the condition of our marriage? That is, what picture is portrayed to others? More importantly, to rulers and authorities in heavenly places. Higher yet, God?
- B. The most challenging place to obtain unity and purity in the entire world is in your home. That is why it is a primary test for church leaders.
 1. Elders or pastors (teach and household primary).

1 Timothy 3:1-5 (ESV) The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

2. Deacons (care group leaders).

1 Timothy 3:8, 10-12 (ESV) Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain... [10] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [11] Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. [12] Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well.

- C. Pursue humility when (not if) if you need help. God gives grace to the humble. We need grace.
 1. We aren't any better than CJ & Carolyn, Josh & Shannon, or Abraham & Molly Piper. Our problem is we can't see straight. Therefore, speak up (no suffering spouses).

2. Read books on marriage to gain insight. We are without excuse. My favorites:

- *Love that Lasts* by Gary & Betsy Ricucci
- *When Sinners Say "I Do"* by Dave Harvey

D. Pursue God, pursue unity and purity, pursue your spouse. Cleave by wives, walking in submission (respect) and husbands, by loving your wives (cherish).