

*Introduction:* Pg. 978 Seminary . . . PHANTOMS

We have false expectations. . . We come into marriage with expectations. How they will serve me and my needs, chase that however you wish. How my spouse will look . . . How much \$\$ they will make . . . How clean they will keep my house. How spiritual they will be. How in shape they are physically... the greatness of their parenting skills. . . and the list goes on and on.

But this continues as they years of marriage pass by. We continue to have unrealistic expectations of our spouse. Seasons change but our propensity to having unrealistic expectations of our spouse does not.

Often this comes by comparing our lives and our marriages to other people. Social media doesn't help. Here's a little secret: people only post their highlight reel. One pastor said: "If you're comparing your real life to someone else's posted life, you will implode."

Two encouragements: 1) Focus on who you need to be. 2) Focus on who your spouse is becoming, not who you want them to be.

Paul is going to help us see who we should be and what our marriages can become in Ephesians 5 this morning...

*FCF:* Most of us would agree that our marriages need continue growth, continued improvement, but marriage is such a joy not simply because of all of the immediate blessing we experience through this bond, but also because there is a greater Marriage . . .

**"The Marriage Revealed in Marriage"  
Ephesians 5:22-33**

Here's what I want you to take away this morning . . .

**The Point: Marriages thrive when they reflect and reveal the greater Marriage in the gospel.**

- In Ephesians 5:22-33, we have the longest statement on marriage in the NT.
- Are you married?
  - Great!
- Are you single?
  - Great! If you desire to be married, listen closely. I pray that God grants you that gift one day, even as you enjoy the gift of singleness today.
  - But even if you are not convinced you will be married one day, here's a two-fold encouragement.
    - So much of this much of this wisdom can be transferred to other relationships.
    - AND we should also listen for the sake of others.
      - Perhaps you will consider a married couple you know today, whether their marriage is beautiful or facing great challenges.
      - Who can you pray for? Who can you encourage with these words?

Framework . . . Behind. Marriage. Beyond...

**I. The Marriage behind the marriage (5:1-21).**

- The universe was created out of love.
- God made us for himself. To dwell in loving relationship with him.
- We were made for unbroken, loving relationship with God.
- Though we turned our back on his love, he displayed even greater love by sending his Son to love us and die for us, that our relationship with God might be restored.
  
- The Bible actually portrays man's relationship with God like that of a marriage. We have been united back to God through Christ!
- The MARRIAGE behind the marriage is the foundation for every marriage.
- The Church is the bride of Christ (5:25ff)
  - **"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. 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; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure" (Revelation 19:6-8)**
- This is the most important marriage. If you are married to Christ you possess what no earthly marriage could ever deliver.
- I love some of my single friends, who will not lower their standards, and enjoy being married to Jesus over settling for someone just to fill the void of companionship in their life. Don't settle.
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- It is our marriage with Christ that Paul has focused on throughout Ephesians. In chapter 5 alone we've seen instructions to . . .
- Be imitators of God.
- Walk in love.
- Walk in light
- Walk in wisdom.
- Be filled with the Spirit.

And here's what Paul does - to get very practical in the fundamental relationships of life to close out his letter, he says: As you imitate God, walking with him in love, light and wisdom, you will be increasingly filled with the Spirit. This is evidence by joy, gratitude, and well-ordered relationships.

This supreme relationship, your relationship with God, should be the motivating force and the model of all human relationships.

- Matthew 22:37ff Love God
- Love neighbor

That's why Paul moves on to talk about in vv. 22-31 and he begins with marriage.

## II. The marriage (5:22-31).

- Here's the deal. Generally speaking, people approach marriage in one of two ways: as covenant or as a consumer.
- *Consumer mentality* says, "What's in it for ME?" I'll take that. And that. And that. And so, fulfillment happens when I receive.
- BUT a *covenant mentality* says, "What's in it for THEM?" Fulfillment happens when we give. .

Paul's aim is to show husbands and wives how they can have a *great* marriage.

- That is my desire for you this am. He says it happens when couples live in their reality of their essential unity: God has made them one!

- BUT as they live in unity, there is diversity in how they fulfill their God-given roles.
- He is going to say: this is how a husband relates in marriage and this is how a wife relates in marriage.

Read 22-31

Now, let me talk about the elephant in the room. As soon as we read the first two words of verse 22, many people in our culture assume it cannot be true.

Here's my job: explain what the Bible means. You can disagree with my understanding of it, but you have to do so with honesty and integrity? In other words, you should have clear reasons based on what the text says, not what you want it to say. :)

- **Egalitarian relationships.**
  - **Equal in essence.** Same dignity and worth.
  - **No distinction in roles & responsibility**
- **Complementary relationships**
  - **Equal in essence.**
  - **Distinction in roles & responsibility.**

#### Four considerations....

- **Be careful not to interpret based on your experience.**
  - Maybe you saw a rocky marriage.
  - The husband abdicated his responsibility to lead. OR abused his responsibility of leadership.
  - Does that mean that God's wisdom is off? Of course not.
  - We don't stop teaching that "God is Father" because there are some irresponsible dads out there.
  - Nor should we throw away this understanding of ordering of relationships in the home.
- **Be careful how you read the Bible.**
  - If this sounds radical to us in our culture today, consider what else we find in the Bible.
  - The entire Xn life is quite radical! Die to yourself. Love your enemies.
  - We can't pick and choose. Our interpretation of the word must be consistent and sound.
  - And if you say, "Well, that's Paul's culture, not ours." You have to answer why Paul is grounded his argument God's created design not the culture.
  - I don't believe that argument stands. (1 Timothy 2 & 1 Corinthians 11)
- **If it's good enough for Jesus, it's good enough for us.**
  - Look at the Trinity.
  - God is one. Equality essence between the Father, Son, and Spirit. "I and the Father are one."
  - God is three. Distinction in role and responsibility. The Father plans. The Son executes. The Spirit applies. "The father is greater than I." "Your will be done."
- **Finally, look at what is expected of husbands!**
  - One of the best arguments I've heard is this... What wife would not joyfully follow the leadership of their husband if they loved them like Jesus loves his bride, the church?
  - Here's the answer: Not one.

T: So, what do vv. 22-24 mean?

**Wives...**

- I think more people would readily embrace it if they really understood what it is saying. First, let me share . . .
- **What this does not mean?**
  - **It does not mean that women submit to all men.**
    - No, Wives submit to *their own* husbands. Wives do not follow the leadership of just any man.
  - **Nor does it mean that men should never submit to women.**
    - While I worked for the President of our seminary for six years in grad school, I also answered to his wife and two primary administrative assistants, who were women. It was wonderful.
    - Additionally . . .
  - **It does not mean whatever the husband says goes.**
    - When first reading this passage, some probably think: “Oooohhhh, so husbands get to be the dictators and wives are doormats.” NO!!!
    - This is “submission to a lover not an ogre.” !! (Stott)
    - Though the husband is called to be the loving leader, it does not mean that he makes all the decisions, nor does it mean that all of his decisions are best or right.
    - A wife should never to follow her husband where God calls you to take a different path. In blunt terms, never follow your husband into sin. You are first married to Christ.
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  - So it is not women submitting to all men or the husband running the marriage like some kind of tyrant. But what does it mean?
- **What it means?**
  - **Submission is “a humble recognition of divine ordering.” (O’Brien)**
    - The word here reveals a wife’s voluntary and willing heart in the relationship.
    - I like what one pastor says here. The wife’s role is to **“be disposed to yield to her husband’s authority and inclined to follow his leadership.” - John Piper**
    - When I lead couples in premarital counseling, this is an easy conversation for us. Why? Because it has really never been an issue in our marriage.
    - Marsha has a voice, a strong voice in our marriage. I listen to her. I often defer to her wisdom. I often say, “You make the call. I trust you.” But God has assigned me to be the leader. She gets that and is thankful for that.
  - **Submission also involves respect!**
    - Look at *verse 33...*
    - You may not always agree, but you can always respect. You can always display love and honor to your husband, even when he has it wrong. :)
    - This should be a glad responsibility.
    - Did you notice in *vv. 23-24* that wives take their cues from the church’s relationship to Christ?
    - Just as the church gladly and joyfully follows the leadership of Christ, so wives are to gladly and joyfully follow the leadership of their husbands.
    - And the most beautiful part is this: as you fulfill this divine ordering in your home, it serves as a way you worship Christ. Check the end of v. 22. “As to the Lord.”
- **Husbands... (25-31)**

## Ephesians 5.22-33. Unity and Love in Marriage

- Paul addresses wives in 40 words. It takes him 115 to address husbands. (Triple the amount of space)
- Why?
  - Because husbands bear the greater weight of accountability as the leaders in the home.
  - Notice that does not instruct man to be the authority. He just tells them to love.
- What? LOVE!! God has called husbands to a great task, to love like Jesus.
  - He wasn't playing in verse 2. "Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us."
  - How does he describe this love?
  - **Love sacrificially.**
    - His once for all sacrifice becomes the model for our daily sacrifice for our wives.
    - There is a stronger appeal to men to abandon self-interest (Keller).
    - What act of love regularly implemented would radically change the dynamics in your marriage?
    - What act of loving sacrifice would cause your wife to know that she's with *the man*?
    - Love the woman God has given you. (Men, you need to hear this *and* women, you do too. We all need to hear this!)
  - **Love with God's Word -**
    - Husbands are to lead their homes with God's Word. We are to build up our wives by speaking his life-giving truth.
    - What does this look like for you? Do you ever share Scripture with your wife? Do you have a set time each week (at dinner, over coffee, before bed)?
    - But it's not just that? It's having a word-saturated home. Pointing to truth. Speaking truth.
  - **Love caringly (28-30)**
    - "nourishing & cherish" Women need this.
    - Paul moves from the lofty heights of Christ's example, to a very easy to follow example for husbands. He says, "Care for your wife like you care for yourself."
    - It's the golden rule for marriage. Take care of your wife, like you want to be cared for."
  - **What is the goal?** You're not ready for this.
    - Look back at verse 27. Here's the goal: **Splendor.**
      - No spot,
      - No wrinkle
      - Nothing that would weaken her beauty in the least. No scratch. No dent. No stain. Nothing.
    - All beautiful. Gloriously beautiful.
    - "You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you." (Song of Solomon 4:7)
    - Our job as husbands is to help our wives become all that God wants them to be! That is our mission. They are beautiful on the inside and outside and our goal is to help them achieve even greater beauty!
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- Now, these distinct responsibilities actually serve to promote the unity and oneness of marriage. *Verse 31.*
- Husbands, we are called to take the lead in every way we are called to be ONE with our wives.

- Spiritually one.
  - We get in the Word together *and* pray together.
  - When is the last time you prayed with your spouse? Not just for your spouse. Not just, well, we went to sleep and I was praying and she was praying, I think. No, together, out loud. . . If you have not ever done this, or if it's been a while, it might be a little awkward, but it is incredibly rewarding!
- Physically one.
  - Just sharing life together is one of the greatest joys of marriage.
- Relationally one.
  - Date your spouse! Spend time together.
  - Who is your best friend? I hope it is, without hesitation, your spouse!
  - Stay connected. When you wrong your spouse, seek forgiveness.
  - When conflict comes in marriage, first think: "I am the issue."
    - Marriage counseling example: do not talk about your spouses' sin. I only want to hear about your sin. It was impossible.
- Emotionally one.
  - When your spouse experiences joy, sorrow, or pain, no one should be more emotionally invested than you.
- Sexually one.
  - I saved this for last to give one piece of advice. The greater your spiritual, physical, relational, and emotional oneness is, the greater your sexual unity will be as well.

Ray Ortland says **"One flesh' is essential to the biblical view of marriage. It means, one mortal life fully shared. Two selfish me's start learning to think like one unified us, sharing one everything: one life, one reputation, one bed, one suffering, one budget, one family, one mission, and so forth. No barriers. No hiding. No aloofness. Now total openness with total sharing and total solidarity, until death parts them."** - Ray Ortland

Here's a warning for your marriage and here is a warning for your life: how does Satan work to destroy your marriage or destroy your relationship with God?

- It's one tiny moment after one time and moment after one time moment at a time.
- "Their friends will support them through this difficult time. What's one more ball game? We can have some quality time together tomorrow. One little lustful look one kill my marriage" (until it becomes 100).
- Conversely, that is also how you build a healthy marriage. Make those little deposits, over time, and watch them pay HUGE dividends in your marriage.

T: So we've talked about the marriage behind the marriage, the marriage itself, now, briefly, let's conclude by considering . . .

### **III. The Marriage beyond the marriage (5:31-33).**

Text: **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 s wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Every Christian marriage is made to tell a story, and it is *not* primarily about those two people. The story of marriage is made to tell the better story, the greater story of the gospel. Remember, the word mystery

refers to something revealed, once concealed. Paul says the mystery is that God patterned marriage after the relationship between Christ and the church. To put it plainly, marriage is made to reveal the beauty of the gospel.

So let me give you three ways your marriage can reveal the greater story of the gospel.

**1. The *foundation* of your marriage reveals the gospel.**

- In order for a marriage to thrive, it must be built on a good foundation, our relationship with God.
- Remember we started by looking at the Marriage behind the marriage. Here's the irony: the marriage behind the marriage is actually part of what enables people to see the Marriage beyond the marriage.
- If you ask me what makes our marriage "go," it's simple: our relationship with Christ.

**2. The *framework* of love in your marriage reveals the gospel.**

- God's love is the pattern for our love.
- Why would we serve? Why would we put our spouse's desires before our own?
- Why would we forgive? Why would we persevere rather than throwing in the towel?
- Why would we really, really, really enjoy being married,
- Why would we enjoy making love to the same person, only one person for years? Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. That's real.
- Tim Keller puts it this way: **"When over the years someone has seen you at your worst, and knows you with all your strengths and flaws, yet commits him- or herself to you wholly, it is a consummate experience. To be loved and not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God."** - Tim Keller

**3. The *fuel* that powers your marriage reveals the gospel.**

- Marriage is work. It requires effort and action.
- To love like Christ loves, and to follow like the church is called to follow, is an impossible task.
- That is why we need the grace and power God supplies to us in marriage.
- As we do this, day by day, when times are really good and times are not so good, we have the opportunity to point people to Christ!

This is the ultimate goal of marriage.

*Conclusion:*

Can you say: "My marriage is what it is because of the gospel."?

I hope you can say that this morning. More than that, I hope you can say, "My life is what it is because of the gospel."