

Marriage: A Living Picture of the Gospel

Scripture: Ephesians 5:22-33

Main Point: God designed marriage as a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman that displays Christ's sacrificial, sanctifying, and faithful love for His church.

Opening Discussion

- What messages does our culture give us about the purpose of marriage?
- What happens when personal happiness or compatibility is expected to sustain a lifelong marriage?

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

Paul describes marriage as a profound mystery that points beyond the husband and wife to Christ and the church.

Cross-References: Genesis 2:24; Romans 5:8

1. What Does This Passage Teach Us About God?

Marriage begins with God's design. Ephesians 5:31 points back to Genesis 2:24. Christ is the pattern for marriage. He loves His bride, gives Himself for her, sanctifies her, and faithfully nourishes and cherishes her.

- What words and actions in verses 25-30 describe Christ's love for the church?
- What do these verses teach us about the cost, purpose, and faithfulness of Christ's love?
- Why do you think God chose marriage as a picture of Christ's relationship with His church?

Key Takeaway: The pattern for marriage begins with Christ, who loved His bride and gave Himself for her.

2. What Does This Passage Teach Us About Ourselves?

Marriage joins a man and a woman who still battle sin. We are tempted to keep score, protect ourselves, demand fulfillment, and withdraw when our expectations are unmet.

Covenant provides stability when emotions change and compatibility feels strained. Romans 5:8 reminds us that Christ loved us while we were still sinners. His grace teaches spouses to confess, forgive, serve, and remain faithful.

- Why is marriage weakened when personal happiness becomes its highest goal?
- How do selfishness and sin turn marriage away from God's design?
- How can the covenant of marriage create room for confession, forgiveness, and growth?
- How does a healthy marriage show people (or reveal) the gospel to the world?
- How does this passage speak to unmarried believers and the whole church?

Key Takeaway: Marriage exposes our need for grace and gives us daily opportunities to reflect the grace we have received in Christ.

3. What Do We Need to Do in Response?

Husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially, die to themselves, and accept accountability before God for the spiritual leadership of their families. They are to nourish and cherish their wives as Christ does the church.

Wives are called to submit to and respect their husbands as an act of faith in the Lord.

Both responsibilities require self-denial and willing service. Husbands and wives are equal in worth before God while being entrusted with distinct responsibilities.

- For husbands: Where is Christ calling you to die to yourself for the good of your wife?
- For wives: What would practical respect and willing submission look like in your marriage this week?
- For unmarried believers: How should this passage shape your expectations for marriage and the way you support married friends?
- How can our group strengthen marriages that are discouraged or under pressure?

Leader Note: Submission never includes following a spouse into sin or concealing abuse. If a safety concern is disclosed, protect confidentiality and involve pastoral leadership immediately.

Marriage as a Gospel Witness

Ephesians 5:32 identifies the mystery of marriage with Christ and the church. A Christian marriage tells a story:

- Sacrificial love points to the cross.
- Respectful submission reflects the church's response to Christ.
- Confession and forgiveness display grace.
- Covenant faithfulness demonstrates that Christ does not abandon His bride.

Discuss

- What could friends, family members, future children, and neighbors learn about Christ by watching a gospel-shaped marriage?
- What message do we communicate when we speak well of our spouse?
- What message do we communicate when we tear our spouse down?
- What is one specific way you can make Christ's love visible this week, whether you are married or unmarried?

Missional Moment

- Is there a married couple you could encourage, serve, or pray for this week?
- Is there someone whose experience of marriage could open a conversation about the faithful love of Christ?
- What is one practical act of care our group can take together?

Closing Summary

Marriage was designed to point beyond the husband and wife to Christ and His church. A husband's sacrificial love, a wife's respect and submission, and their shared covenant faithfulness make the gospel visible.

Closing Prayer

Pray that:

- Husbands would love their wives sacrificially.
- Wives would respond with respect and submission.
- Unmarried believers would honor God's design for marriage.
- The church would strengthen and protect marriages.
- Christian marriages would make the love of Christ visible to the world.