

Intro. I am willing to bet that marriage according to the Bible is far more than you currently think it is.

As we begin the next section of the book of Ephesians, we arrive at one of the most detailed teaching sections on marriage in the Bible. Over the next three weeks we are asking God to renew and change our thinking about marriage as we study and apply these truths to our lives. As we come to Ephesians 5:22-33, there are four contexts that surround this section that will help us understand and obey God's words. These contexts can be seen as 4 concentric circles that must be aligned for us to grasp the significance of marriage as God invented it. The framework necessary for our hearing and applying God's word this morning is described in these four ways:

1. Biblical context. The union of one man and one woman for life in a covenant of companionship was established by God before sin entered the human race. The roles of helper and head were assigned by God before the corruption of sin. The consequential curse and entrance of sin into human relationships produced selfishness, lack of trust and desire for dominance between a man and his wife. Marriage is a crucial provision of God to carry out his purposes. It has been dealt a death blow by the enemy through the entrance of sin. The story line of the Bible begs the question, can the marriage covenant be restored to glorify God and accomplish his purposes even though it has been damaged by sin? Can two sinners love, forgive, submit to and respect one another for God's glory? How?

2. Church/Gospel context. Note that the essential message of Ephesians 1-3 is that God powerfully restores broken relationships caused by sin and death. The gospel is the good news that God has provided and accepted, in his Son Jesus, a substitute sacrifice to pay the penalty for sin, defeat the power of sin and grant new life. Sinners become sons, darkness is transformed to light, Jews and Gentiles become one, those far off are brought near, those without access are brought into union with God, those with no hope have hope and you who were under God's wrath have peace with him. The manipulation and dominance seen first after the fall into sin has been overcome through the gospel. The refusal to submit to God or any authority is reversed in the lordship of Christ.

Marriages can reflect the praise of God's glory despite the incredible pull of sin and selfishness because God saves men and women from sin through Christ. Spirit enabled living even within the marriage bond is both possible and essential. Husbands can love sacrificially and generously because they have been gospel loved. Wives are able to submit and follow because they have placed their ultimate trust in the Father God who has loved them with a deep and everlasting love. Marriage is not intended to make you happy, it's purpose is to make you holy for the glory of God and his great gospel love.

3. Cultural context. As we look in the previous chapter (4) and farther into our current chapter (5) in Ephesians, we notice that marriage has taken on a different look in our culture and experience than God intended. Hard hearts, greed, sexual immorality, unresolved anger, bitterness, resentment and corrupt talk have become the norm in relationships. Marriage, rather than being the joyful union of two people who are devoted to God, has developed an almost unqualified reputation as a place to go if you want to be hurt, unhappy and unsatisfied. Even in the church culture, marriage is viewed as something important to God but primarily it is for the happiness of the people involved. The church and majority culture appear to agree that the essential problems of marriage can be cured through compatibility, communication and counseling.

Every couple I work with in preparation for marriage (almost 30 years of 4-5 weddings a year) I ask the question, would you be satisfied with a marriage like your Mom and Dad's? The rare reply is yes. The typical reply is a squirming, uncomfortable no. Marriage appears to be in trouble. In our culture it has taken on a utilitarian shape that attracts those who desire companionship, want a family and need to satisfy the expectations of family or church in doing so. Is there a message of and from marriage that our culture needs to hear?

4. Cosmic context. The message of Ephesians is clear, Jesus Christ has all authority in heaven and earth, even over the unseen realms of powers, darkness, authorities and spiritual forces in heavenly places. The gospel ensures victory and freedom over Satan and his forces. However there is yet a battle raging for the glory and reputation of God. Satan yet woos and deceives to draw our affections away from the love and trustworthiness of God. Marriage is under attack from every possible vantage point. Every married person and anyone contemplating this wonderful covenant of companionship must understand that the devil seeks to gain footholds from which he leverages your heart away from the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, the satisfaction of pleasing God and the blessedness of giving yourself up for another. This and any study aimed at marital obedience will be opposed in significant ways.

So . . . let's ask God to open our understanding to include why he invented marriage, how the gospel is preached in your marriage, how we can set aside the wrong norms that we have gradually adopted and how we can go to war to shape our lives and marriages according to his word.

Our study begins by looking at verses 22-24 and the first aspect of a marriage that preaches the gospel . . . wives submitting to their husbands. The most basic components of a gospel focused, God pleasing marriage are wives submitting to the husband and husbands loving the wife. It is summarized in 5:33 as love and respect.

Let's look at this 'lightening rod' issue of wifely submission from the perspective of scripture. As relationships are impacted by the gospel, the marriage relationship starts with instructions for the wives.

A. The command to submit to your husband.

22

Note the command is stated and then repeated in these 3 verses. One limiting factor is found in the terms 'your own husband.' This is not a call for universal submission to all husbands or all men. The term is a repeat of the command found in 5:21 which clearly is a call to place yourself under, to subordinate yourself. In our text in the middle voice it is translated to subject oneself, to submit voluntarily. It is a mutual readiness to renounce your own will for others, in this text, the will of your husband.

In his book [This Momentary Marriage](#), John Piper defines submission by the wife as:

... "submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm her husband's leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. That's what we see here as well. It's the disposition to follow a husband's authority, and an inclination to yield to his leadership. It is an attitude that says, "I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead in love. I don't flourish in the relationship when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works."

It may be helpful to consider several things that submission is not or does not mean . . .

- Submission is not about value or worth as a person. Equal in Christ
- Submission does not mean always agreeing with your husband.
- Submission does not mean avoiding efforts to change your husband.
- Submission does not mean limiting your spiritual development to your husband.
- Submission does not mean putting your husband in front of God.

B. The attitude of submission to your husband.

21 'as to the Lord'

Note this descriptive phrase that helps us understand the intended mindset of the wife in submission. Two helpful thoughts are contained in this phrase.

Submission to the husband is similar to but not that same as submission to the Lord.

Voluntary submission to the husband is service and submission rendered to Christ.

Cmp attitude/approach of 6:5-8

C. The reasons you submit to your husband.

23

There are two reasons the Bible teaches as to why a wife should submit to, honor and affirm her husband . . .

The lordship of Jesus Christ. 1:22-23 4:15-16 22- as to the Lord

The headship of her husband. 1Cor. 11:3ff 1Tim.2:11-13

Authority, initiative, sacrifice, sensitivity

Savior – sacrificial concern of headship

D. The model for your submission to your husband.

24

The two standards used to define submission are stated 'as the church submits to Christ' and 'in everything.' The verse begins with an adversative – now or but – to indicate that the husband is not the savior of the wife however the wife still needs to submit. The major emphasis of submission in this model is the willing and voluntary nature of it. The church looks to Christ in a willing, responsive, joyful and complete manner.

1Peter 3:1-7 teaches three specific dimensions of this willing and voluntary response of honoring and affirming her husband in submission.

Holy heart before external beauty. 3:3-5

Hope in God rather than husband, home or career. 3:5-6

Courageous trust in a faithful creator. 3:5-6 3:14; 4:19

Summary:

God has designed and designated your marriage to reflect and incite praise for his glory. All that divides people from God and people from people has been resolved in the gospel of Christ by God's loving grace. Before sin entered the world and before Jesus defeated sin and death on the cross, your marriage was designed and designated by God to preach the gospel.

The first component of a gospel preaching marriage is submission of the wife to the husband. This proclaims and mimics the voluntary and willing response of the church to her Lord Christ. Those who once were in rebellion against Christ and participated in his death now willingly affirm and respond to his authority. Is it possible to submit to authority? Is it satisfying? Is it meaningful? Watch holy hopeful wives to see answers in real time and living color.

Take Aways

1. Ladies, run to Christ. You may have a husband that will help you connect to him, you may not. Acknowledge in a fresh way your selfishness, your need of cleansing, your bitterness, your lack of hope in God. Commit your soul's well being to your faithful Creator.
2. Ladies, build your heart for God and the gospel. Stop listening to all the voices supporting your bitterness and excusing or ignoring your cold heart toward God. Identify and root out the idols of your heart that have replaced a warm and joyful affection for Christ.
3. Ladies, accept your God given mission. Determine to let God use you to win those around you who do not obey the word. That may be your husband or the potential husbands and wives you call your children and grandchildren. Determine to make the hidden person in your heart consistent with the person God uses to attract entire families to himself.