

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

UNIFYING MARRIAGES (EPHESIANS 5:22-33)
MAY 26, 2019



SERMON OUTLINE

No Outline this week

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

MAIN POINT

A healthy Christ-centered marriage reflects the gospel to the world.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Think of a marriage that you admire. What qualities stand out to you about this couple's marriage?

2. How do healthy marriages impact the entire church body?

Leader: God established marriage as a representation of His relationship with His followers; He is our groom and we, as the church, are His bride. Whether or not we are married or have children, God's design for the family teaches us about how we are to relate to one another.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 5:21-24.

3. According to Paul, marriage is a picture of the gospel. How does marriage give a picture of God's relationship with His people?

4. How would you define submission? Why does the word feel so repulsive in our world, especially in the context of marriage?

Leader: Submission doesn't imply losing one's sense of worth or self. It is a voluntary and loving choice to follow another in a way that displays how Christians follow Jesus. Christians don't submit because someone forces them to do so; they submit voluntarily. Paul wasn't calling wives to think of themselves as their husbands' property, but to see themselves as beloved partners who receive sacrificial love.

5. How was Jesus' submission on the cross an example for marriage?

6. How does the church submit to Christ (v.24)? What does this mean for all of His followers?

Leader: All of God's people are called to show sacrificial love toward each other and also those outside of the church. As those who have been shown the grace of Christ, we are called to display this grace to others in every area of our lives.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 5:25-33.](#)

7. How did Paul call husbands to display love for their wives?

8. How does a relationship centered on sacrificial love and submission reflect the gospel? What impact does this make on a marriage? How does this build up other relationships in the church?

Leader: A husband is not to view his leadership as a superior status but as a commitment to sacrifice everything for his wife. Just as Christ nurtures His followers, a husband is to humble himself to seek his wife's best interests, provide unselfishly for her welfare, and give priority to their relationship above all human relationships. In return, a wife is to wholeheartedly love and respect her husband.

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9. How can embracing this biblically mandated relationship for marriage help create a strong and healthy marriage?

Leader: God has built sacrifice and submission into the fabric of marriage, but this is complicated by the fact that a marriage is made up of two sinful people. When we compare our marriage to God's ideal for marriage, we realize how selfish we are and how much we are in need of grace every day.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

10. In your own words, how would you explain the main goal of a Christian marriage?

11. How can Christ-honoring marriages in our church build up not just individual families, but also contribute to the unity of our body as whole?

PRAYER

Pray that our group and community will be characterized by grace-based marriages, families, and friendships.

MEMORIZE

³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." ³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. – Ephesians 5:31-32

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

EPHESIANS 5:22-32

5:22-24. The wife is to be subject to her husband as to the Lord. This does not mean that she submits to her husband in the same way and to the same degree as she does the Lord, since the husband might ask her to disobey God. Rather she serves the Lord by having a submissive heart toward her husband and by obeying him as long as it does not require her to disobey the Lord. The reason she is called upon to be subject to her husband is that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. As the church is to be subject to Christ, so the wife is to

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be subject to her husband. This subjection does not mean inferiority. It is clear that male and female are both created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and that in Christ, where personal worth is concerned, there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). However, in the overall scheme of things, God has placed all of us in differing positions of authority and submission. The man may be in authority at home but submissive at work. The woman may be in submission at home and in authority at work. The point is, all social order depends on people's willingness to work together and ability to determine who is the head of certain endeavors. God's intention is that the husband be the head of the relationship with his wife.

5:25-27. After instructing wives to be subject to their husbands, he instructs husbands to love their wives so completely and so righteously that the wife need never fear or suffer from her life of submission. Husbands are to love [their] wives just as Christ loved the church. How did Christ love the church? He gave himself up for her. Jesus dedicated his life to the establishment and welfare of the church. He ultimately gave his life for the church. To that degree, and in that quality, the husband is to love his wife. He is to give himself up for her. He is to dedicate his life to the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of his wife. Following the example of Christ, he is to give his wife not only all that he has but also all that he is. When a husband loves his wife so completely, the wife need never fear submission.

Paul goes on to extend the picture of Christ and the church. Christ loved the church that he might make her holy, or set her apart for himself. He did this by the washing with water through the word. Some Bible teachers do not think Paul is referring to water (baptism) in this verse. They understand the water to be a figure of speech, referring to the cleansing that the Holy Spirit brings to the soul through repentance, after hearing the Word of God. It is as Jesus said in John 15:3, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." Applying water to the outside of the physical body can have no effect whatsoever to the spiritual cleansing that makes one holy. Through repentance, the water of the word reaches the innermost recesses of the soul, cleansing and making it holy.

Other scholars, however, believe that Paul is, indeed, alluding to baptism here, understanding that the early church would only have baptized someone who had truly repented. In this understanding, baptism would be an outward sign of repentance and of the spiritual cleansing resulting from the repentance, itself a result of hearing and obeying the Word. The New Testament does not suggest that baptism cleanses a person apart from repentance or that baptism apart from personal faith can save a person.

We might amplify the meaning of this phrase by saying that the true church heard the Word of Christ preached and believed it. They were born again, regenerated, washed and cleansed spiritually by believing the Word. If Paul were alluding to baptism here, then the washing of the water in baptism would be symbolic of the inner cleansing that had already taken place through the Word.

The result of this work of Christ is that the church is radiant. . . without stain or wrinkle. . . holy and blameless. If a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, his love and care will have a sanctifying influence on the wife, who will experience personal benefit and progress as a result. The wife will never be perfect, but she becomes more than she would if the husband does not love her as Christ loved the church.

5:28-32. After having presented the work of Christ for the church, Paul now comes back to the reality of husband-wife relationships. He repeats the fact that husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. Even though the husband lives in an imperfect body, he loves it, nourishes it, and cherishes it. So he is to do the same for his wife, even though she is imperfect.

Paul repeats Genesis 2:24, establishing that a husband and wife are to become one flesh, and closes by restating that the relationship between the wife and a husband is like the relationship

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between Christ and the church.

5:33. After discussing the role of the husband, Paul comes back in a summary statement in verse 33 to add that the wife is to respect her husband. In summary, she is to be subject to her husband and to respect him. Respect (phobetai) literally means "fear." It can refer, however, to the fear a person should have before God, a reverence and respect (Luke 1:50; 18:2; Acts 10:35; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7; 19:5). This type of reverence and regard should characterize the relationship of a wife and her husband.