

Sermon - Gospel Marriage - Ephesians 5:18-25

Gospel Family Intro

Good morning, my name is Matthew, one of the pastors here. Welcome to all of our visitors, and if you are an unbeliever this morning, know that this is a safe place for you to explore christianity.

There's no question that the family is under fire in present day America, and indeed in the world. Biblical foundations have been eroded from our cultural awareness. Structures that have been in place for thousands of years are being dissolved in the name of temperance and convenience. It's devastating. It's devastating to countless individuals and children, its devastating to human flourishing, and its devastating to God's glory, in the sense that His glory is meant to shine through families. In many ways we have left God behind when it comes to family. May God have mercy on us.

I wish I could say that this was only a problem for the unbelieving world. And if that were the case, I would grieve, but I would understand. However, these are issues that have infiltrated the church, God's glorious bride, and it is doubly tragic, and we need a wake up call.

This morning we begin a 4-week series on the family. What does God say about the family? Not what our natural inclinations say, and not what the culture says, but what does God say. What does He say about marriage? What does He say about Parenting? What does He say about Children? What does He say about singleness?

This morning we will be discussing marriage, and we are going to see two things, marriage is a picture of the gospel and marriage is empowered by the gospel. Let's pray.

If you have your bibles, and we have free ones for you in the back, please turn to Eph. 5. Before we jump in here, let me just say one word to us all. I know there are those in here that marriage may bring up a world of hurt and pain for you. I'm really sorry. And I want you to know that there is an abundance of grace and comfort for you.

1. Marriage is a Picture of the Gospel

In **verse 31** Paul quotes **Genesis 2:24** saying,

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church."

We see here in this text the reason why marriage was created was to display and picture the story of the gospel.

Our starting place with marriage is God, marriage is not man's idea, it is God's idea and God's creation. But listen to this, there is incredible purpose here. You see God didn't create marriage and then look around for an appropriate metaphor, and so looked at His Son's relationship with His bride. No, it goes the other way around. God is wanting to showcase His glory, the glory of His covenant, gracious love, and so He creates marriage to do that. God before time began had the gospel in mind, His love was there, the plan was there.

"As God made man in His own image, so He made earthly marriage in the image of His own eternal marriage with His people." -Geoffrey Bromiley

God has eternally entered into an unbreakable, covenant love with His people, which will climax in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, whose blood will purchase, cleanse, and redeem His bride, and the purpose of marriage is to point to that, to display the glory of that, to proclaim that.

That is what marriage is about! That's what our marriages are about. Our marriages are not first about us. They are not first about the survival and procreation of humanity, they are not first about sex, or pleasure, or companionship, romance, or comfort. Marriages are first and foremost about the glory of God in Jesus Christ.

Now we are going to move into some specifics about exactly how God wants us to display the gospel through our marriages. Let's take a look at what He says.

God's Word to Husbands

Husbands, Paul speaks to your role in v.25-30, saying to you, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body."

Husbands in the room, the call on your life in how you are to love your wife could not be any greater. Your role is determined by how Christ has loved His church. How does the Bible say that Christ has loved the church? It says that He gave Himself up for her.

Philippians 2:6-8 Paul says... though Jesus was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Jesus, dwelling in eternal, majestic glory, in the Highest of Heavens, humbles Himself by incarnating Himself as a man, as a creature, and much less, a creature enslaved by other created beings, and in that dynamic, perfectly obeys God even to the point of being crucified and shedding His blood. Why? That He might glorify His Father in Heaven and by His blood He would purchase His bride. The bride had no hope apart from Him. And hear this, He came not because the bride was lovely, there was nothing in us that was beautiful, He came all by grace.

Husbands, we are not the our wives' savior, but everything we do is to point to the fact that He is.

Our love must be characterized by leadership. Or headship. We are the ones that lead, take initiative, make sure we get our wife and family where they need to go. We are going to explore a few traits of this loving leadership.

Our love must be motivated by God's glory. If it's not than your wife is an idol, or you are using her to accomplish your own purposes for other idols. When we love our wife, its unto her glorifying God.

Our love must be sacrificial. Jesus gave Himself. So too you must give yourself to your wife. Not just when it's convenient. In fact right when its not convenient is when you are most able to showcase God's love to her. Does your wife know and feel that you sacrifice for her? Do you make room in your schedule for her, or does she get the leftovers?

Our love must be permanent. Guys we need to grow up. God desires marriage to be permanent. Period. When you leave your wife, or when you cheat on your wife, you proclaim that Jesus leaves His bride. Jesus entered a covenant with us. Marriage is a covenant. Very different from a contract. A contract says as long as you meet x needs in my life, i will do y for you. A covenant says I am here no matter what.

Our love must serve. We are to serve our wives. Pick up the towel, bend the knee, and serve them. We got a lot of husbands in here with wives of young kids. There is frequent opportunity for you to serve your wife.

Our love must protect and provide (physically and spiritually) Christ saved us from our eternal enemy and secured us eternal prosperity. Men, it is our job, primarily, to protect and provide. There may be certain

situations where certain circumstances or giftings may shift this, but in your heart of hearts, its on you to see that she is protected and provided for.

Finally, our love must cherish. Don't think that you can do all the above, and not have this one, and think you are doing a good job. Because all the others address duty, this one really drives at the heart. And your wife will be the first to tell you, she could care less if you are sacrificing and serving her and your heart isn't for her. Men, nourish and cherish your bride.

Husbands, how are we doing? Is Christ on display to our wives and to the world?

Men, we are to be the kind of husbands that wives can joyfully and willingly submit to and honor. Let's turn there now.

Second, God's word to Wives Ephesians 5:22

verses 22-24, saying: Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to The Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

God's Word for wives is to submit in humble service to their husbands. Submission can have a negative connotation in our culture, as it can seem unfair or unhealthy, but the Bible gives us a very different picture. The Bible shows us that submission, when done right is beautiful and glorious in God's eyes! Jesus Himself, both God and man, willingly submitted Himself to the Father's will, even to the point of death! The church does not grow bitter as its called to submit to Jesus, why? Because He is worthy of our submission, and it's in our best interest and joy that we submit to Him. Submission only gets a bad name when it's submitting to things that aren't godly. Now are we talking about submitting to sin and abuse, absolutely not! If that's your situation, you need to seek help immediately.

This issue also inevitably brings up the question of equality. Does submission in marriage mean one is more important than the other? No. Husbands and wives both bear the image of God and have equal value before God, but God has designed partners in marriage to have different roles. Different roles, same value.

The wife's role in marriage is to show her husband and the world by her service, love, and respect for her husband, that CHRIST IS SUFFICIENT FOR HIS CHURCH. Her husband is not her Lord and Savior, Christ is, so that's where she gains all her value, and she is properly submitted to Christ. AS TO THE LORD. So she submits to her husband, as to the Lord, proclaiming Christ is sufficient.

Godly submission finds it's hope in God. Jesus is Lord, not your husband. You are free from making your husband and idol. You are also free from obeying him if he asks you to do anything that is sinful.

Godly submission encourages your husband towards Christlike Leadership. Submission does not mean you no longer care about your husband looking like Christ and doing what he's supposed to. No, you absolutely got to do that. Your husband needs you! Amen! But you got to use some strategy in how you do that.

"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct." 1 Peter 3:1-2.

Godly submission means following in joy. Following begrudgingly is not godly. The church submits to Christ in Joy, and so should you, again, as long as there is no sin.

Godly submission means deferring leadership to your husband. Wives must constantly be on the lookout for sin which seeks to rise up in them to lead their families.

So what is a wife to do? Pray. Win him over with conduct. Support him. Say gracious things to him. Wives have no idea how much power they have to lift a man up or to tear him down.

Pick your times and tones well when you want to talk to your husband about something.

John Piper makes an interesting observation of how sneaky this can be. He says to wives that are in a place of trying to change their husband, probably like most wives. He says this, be very careful of demanding anything from your husband. It may sound very submissive, or very spiritual, “Be the Spiritual Leader of the family.” But doing this has the opposite effect, because you are now really the leader, and this will rarely cause him to rise up as the leader he is meant to be, or if he does, his heart will be crushed.

Wives, how are you doing on this?

Your marriage is to picture the gospel of Jesus Christ to each other and to the world.

Paul gives a summary statement of these roles, at the very end, v. 33, “However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

2. Marriage is Empowered by the Gospel

It is impossible in our own strength to picture the gospel in our marriages. Thankfully God knows our need and is here for us. Listen as earlier in this passage, v.18, Paul encourages us...

...Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

It's easy because of the formatting of our bibles, to miss Paul's line of thought here. The commands that we just went over flow out of this statement. It's all one thought. The primary command before anything else is even possible, is “Be filled with the Spirit.” Or to put it another way, the means by which you do these things, submitting to one another, the wife respecting the husband, the husband leading, is to be filled with the Spirit.

Well, we must naturally then ask, what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? and how can we be filled with the Spirit?

Being filled with the Spirit happens in two ways. There is first an initial filling of the Holy Spirit that happens at the moment you believe. The Holy Spirit gives you new birth, you are changed by His indwelling presence. This never goes away. Then there is this second way to look at the filling of the Holy Spirit, and this is to see it as an ongoing need that all christians have, and this is what Paul has in mind here. Like the tank in your car. You have to constantly fill up in order to drive around town. Same thing with christianity, you have to constantly fill up with the Spirit in order to obey Christ's commands.

This command “Be filled with the Spirit” is an ongoing imperative, its continuous, it's better translated, “Keep on being filled”, meaning, never stop being filled with the Spirit.

So being filled with the Spirit means being empowered by the Spirit to have joy and obedience in Christ.

The next question is how are we filled with the Spirit?

Though there may be several avenues by which we may be filled with the Spirit, whether reading God's Word, Singing songs, fasting and prayer, that's what the disciplines are about, the central way in which we are filled and of which all disciplines are trying to get us to do, is to believe the Gospel.

Romans 15:13; May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

Just as displaying the gospel is the purpose of your marriage, the gospel is also the source and strength of your marriage.

The point I'm making is that what you need to do, more than anything else in marriage, is to know and depend on, trust in, the gospel of Jesus Christ. On the cross Jesus paid penalty for our sin, and in His resurrection He has given us His righteousness. And one day Jesus will redeem all of creation where you will dwell with Him and the family of God in perfect peace and joy, beyond all sin, sickness, and death, for all eternity.

We are being asked to believe in this, and this how we then get the strength to love each other.

"You can only afford to be generous if you actually have some money in the bank to give. In the same way, if your only source of love and meaning is your spouse, then anytime he or she fails you, it will not just cause grief but a psychological cataclysm. If, however, you know something of the work of the Spirit in your life, you have enough love "in the bank" to be generous to your spouse even when you are not getting much affection or kindness at the moment." -Tim Keller

If your conception of God's love for you does not include a heart that is passionately for you, your understanding of God's love is incomplete, and it will impossible for you to love others the way you are supposed to. You need to understand God is passionately in love with you. That's what you need to believe in.

Husbands, you aren't leading, what do you need to do? Believe the gospel. Your wife hasn't been supporting you, she's been critical, she's having a little too much fun at anthropology, what do you do? You believe the gospel. And then you respond in love and sacrificial service, not judgement.

Wives, you aren't respecting, what do you need to do? Believe the gospel. Your husband has been letting you down, he's not pursuing you, He's home from work late again, he hasn't done what he said he would do, he hasn't taken you out on a date in a while, what do you do? You believe the gospel. You get filled up on Jesus, and then offer not judgement, but forgiveness to your husband.

These may be relatively small things, or maybe they could be big in your marriage. But it's this exact same principle applied all across the board. From the slightest offense to the greatest betrayal and act of adultery. Believing and trusting in the gospel is the answer every time, and His grace is sufficient for us.

So we have seen today that marriage is serious. It is not to be taken lightly, but seriousness does not imply there's not joy and unbelievable glory within marriage. Our marriages should be joyful, they should be filled with life, because as they are a picture of the gospel, and the gospel of life, and life abundant. Marriage exists for one reason, for the displaying the glory of God in the gospel. As the weight of that call lands on us, let us not be discouraged, for the gospel is also the means by which we are empowered. Receive fresh grace and forgiveness this morning for failure, and let's repent and get going in the strength that He provides. Let's pray.