

Message 20: Christ, Husbands, and Wives

4.16.23

Preface: I generally preach through Books of the Bible.

A. I do this for several reasons:

1. It helps us really understand what we are reading.
 - a. It helps us see how to read our Bible as it is presented.
 - b. It really allows us to go deeper than we would normally.
2. It also ensures we don't just cover stuff we like.
 - a. We all have our favorite topics and stories.
 - b. There are also elements that are confusing and convicting.

B. Today, if this is your first Sunday, you are catching us as we walk through Ephesians.

1. Don't worry; many of the messages are online.
2. Each message stands alone.

C. Today, we are in a passage many people have heard about.

1. But I think the Lord is leading us to view this passage in a way that moves beyond husbands and wives.
2. Let's turn to Ephesians 5, beginning with 21.
3. We aren't preaching all of this today, but I want us to see the bigger picture and how it all fits.

Ephesians 5:21–6:9 (CSB)

²¹submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, ²³because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of

the body. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. ²⁷ He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰ since we are members of his body. ³¹ **For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.** ³² This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³ To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, because this is right. ² **Honor your father and mother**, which is the first commandment with a promise, ³ **so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land.** ⁴ Fathers, don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

SLAVES AND MASTERS

⁵ Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as you would Christ. ⁶ Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, do God's will from your heart. ⁷ Serve with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to people, ⁸ knowing that whatever good each one does, slave or free, he will receive this back from the Lord. ⁹ And masters, treat your slaves the same way, without threatening them, because you know that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Introduction: The end of Ephesians 5 may be one of the most misused Scriptures.

A. Let's Think through Ephesians so far:

1. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are Seated in Christ in heavenly places.

2. We are empowered to Walk worthy of our Calling in this world through the ministry of Holy Spirit.
3. We are learning to speak to one another in ways that do not grieve Holy Spirit, with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
4. We are preparing to wrestle against principalities and powers with the full armor of God in Ephesians 6.
5. Ephesus has no middle ground: everything is either in Christ or out of Christ.

B. Where are all of these wonderful and glorious truths lived out?

1. At home, at work, and with each other.
2. "Be subject to one another. . ." (5:21), followed by an immersion in the details of family life and work relationships. If we were expecting something cosmic, this is like a door slammed in our faces." (Peterson)
3. Paul doesn't point the Ephesians to new levels of Kingdom authority, or reveal mysteries of the third heaven, or anything seemingly supernatural.
 - a. Instead, Paul points us to where the principles of Christ's Kingdom are most readily practiced: at home, at work, and at church.
 - b. Simply put: the Kingdom is practiced with people.
4. **If we want to change the world we must start at home, at work, and in community.**
5. The Apostle demonstrates this in the most intense of human relationships: **Marriage**.

1. What is marriage?

A. The Apostle Paul views Marriage as an enacted illustration.

1. He quotes Genesis, declaring that it was God's idea for people to be united in marriage.

2. From the beginning, God intended the marriage relationship to represent the relationship between God and humanity.

B. This leads us to our first difficulty for our culture:

1. Who has the authority to define marriage?

a. If marriage is a state institution, then the State can allow anyone they want to be married.

b. If marriage is a religious, biblical institution, then the Scripture determines who can be married.

2. Because I am coming from a worldview and perspective that believes marriage is a biblical and religious institution, **According to Scripture, Marriage can only be between a man and a woman, because any other combination does not reflect the relationship of Jesus to the Church.**

a. **Because Marriage is a divine mystery**, pointing people to God, our marriages are to reflect the perfect relationship God has with His Church.

b. And in all of Scripture, nowhere is Jesus in a homosexual relationship.

1. I know there are some fringe theories out there that show on the History channel at 1am.

2. But these are not real scholarship.

c. Furthermore, Jesus is also not in a polyamorous or polygamous relationship: His only "love" is the Church.

3. Unfortunately, the Church does not understand this well enough to articulate the beauty and significance of marriage.

a. The more we understand this passage and this imagery, the more sacred marriage becomes to us.

b. Human marriage is not perfect.

c. We are marred by sin and too often mess up this most important relationship.

d. One of the greatest ways we can change the world and change culture is by living out healthy, God-honoring marriages.

2. Marriage: A Holy Mystery.

A. All throughout Scripture, we have imagery relating God to humanity in a marriage relationship.

1. God called Israel His wife.
2. The Old Testament Prophets condemned idolatry as spiritual adultery since worshipping other gods meant forsaking their True God.
3. The New Testament calls the Church the Bride of Christ, and the culminating event of Heaven is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

B. We shouldn't be surprised that the Apostle Paul uses marriage language in Ephesians.

1. Paul has written multiple verses in Ephesians explaining our relationship to God through Christ.

2. And now Paul explains that our relationship with others reflects our relationship with God.

a. It always surprises me that Christians can be so mean, angry, and hateful.

b. In all my time as Pastor, I cannot understand how we can sing "Oh how I love Jesus" or sing about the Reckless Love of God one minute and chew someone out the next.

c. Or why restaurant servers have reason to dread the church crowd on Sunday.

3. The quality of our human relationships are an indication of the health of our relationship with God.

a. Remember, we are called to be right both vertically and horizontally.

b. A pitch isn't a strike unless it crosses the plate vertically and horizontally.

c. "You can't be a Christlike jerk!"

C. Paul is not taking it easy on the Ephesians or us.

1. Are we "really" in right relationship with Jesus if our human relationships are all out of alignment?

2. Paul starts at the most intense relationship most of us have: a marriage relationship.

What is the key to a thriving relationship?

3. Mutual submission applies to all relationships.

²¹submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.

A. First of all, what does submission mean?

1. The word for submitting means: "to be or become inclined or willing to submit to orders or wishes of others or showing such inclination."

a. Submission can look like letting the person with one thing in their cart check out before you do.

b. Submission to one another is tapping the break when you want to hit the gas.

2. Submission is a practice not just for women but for every one of us.

a. We submit to each other out of "fear"/respect for Jesus.

b. Because Jesus values people, and because they are created in the "image of God," we submit one to another.

B. Love and Submission are not different coins but different sides of the same coin.

1. When I look at my spouse through this coin, when she sees submit, I'm looking at love.

2. "But preacher, it doesn't say wives love your husband..."

3. But because this relationship is perfected and embodied in our relationship with Christ, let me ask you:

1. Do you love Jesus?

2. We show our love to Jesus by submission.

3. We show our submission to Jesus through love.

4. **Where there is Christ-like love, there is Christ-like submission.**

B. I cannot love my wife while I'm prideful, haughty, demeaning, and self-centered.

1. In other words, true love is submissive, willing to put the other first.

2. Furthermore, **a person who submits without love is a slave, not a spouse.**

3. I don't want a slave: I want a loving spouse.

4. Husbands, Love: A Radical new way of life.

A. Paul is proposing a way of life contrary to cultures and human history.

1. One commentary notes, "Nowhere in Hellenistic texts are husbands called on to love their wives."¹

2. That's fancy language to say that NO other piece of Greek literature says what Paul is saying.

B. **Ancient and modern history are full of examples of women submitting while the husband does whatever.**

¹ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. [Ephesians: Verse by Verse](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: LeIXham Press.

1. But Christianity demands something other cultures and religions do not: Husbands, LOVE YOUR WIVES.

2. This is radical, for it empowers the woman.

3. This is radical, for it contradicts what most men think or believe.

4. Paul calls for a radical reorientation because we reflect Jesus' relationship with us.

C. Paul spends twice the amount of space telling husbands to LOVE than he does telling wives to submit.

1. That's because the emphasis is on "husbands, love as Christ loves the Church."

2. Men demonstrate their love for Jesus publicly by loving their spouses well privately.

a. There is no such thing as a perfect marriage.

b. But for those who are married, we are called to healthy marriage.

5. Christ's love for the Church is intense.

A. He gave himself for her. vs. 25

Ephesians 5:25–26 (CSB)

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word.

1. Many men here are willing to die for their spouse.

a. But how many of you are willing to wash the dishes?

b. How many are willing to pray for her and encourage her?

c. The love Paul has in view is a sacrificial love.

1. Not a fad love.

2. Not “puppy” love.

3. But a love that pours itself out for the other person’s benefit.

d. The Apostle Paul said in Romans, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

1. Jesus didn’t love us for what we could give in return.

2. Men are not to love their wives because of anything they can give us.

3. Love is a calling, not a condition.

2. This phrase “cleansing her with the washing of water by the word” is wedding language.

a. “Before the bride was presented to the bridegroom she received a cleansing bath and was then dressed in her bridal array.”²

b. Part of my responsibility as a husband and is to create an environment where my wife wants to draw closer to Jesus.

1. This applies to parents and even to coworkers.

2. We all have a responsibility to encourage each other in such a way that loving Jesus is easier, not harder.

c. Jesus does this for the Church through the washing of water by the word.

1. This probably involves the importance of baptism and the confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

² Bruce, F. F. 1984. [*The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*](#). The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

2. For our personal relationships, I can't help but picture this in negative terms:

3. How many spouses, children, or coworkers have looked at us and our relationship with Jesus and said, "if that is Christianity, I don't want to be part of it."

d. When we love each other well, people want to be part of something like that.

B. Christ's intense love shows in how He presents her in splendor...vs. 27

1. This could also be translated as "radiant."

a. The image is that of a lovely bride on her wedding day as she goes in procession to meet her groom.³

b. When Jesus returns to take His Bride, the Church, home to the "place that He has prepared for us," it's as if Jesus will show the Father and say, "Isn't she beautiful!"

2. True Love builds up.

a. True love does not disparage.

b. True love does not mock.

c. True love is intense.

3. When we are struggling with relationships with our spouse, our kids, or our coworkers, take a moment and remember how Jesus loves you!

a. When I think about the suffering Jesus experienced for my sake, many of our conflicts deescalate.

³ Osborne, Grant R. 2017. [*Ephesians: Verse by Verse*](#). Osborne New Testament Commentaries. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

b. I can walk in love and submission to others because of Jesus' intense love for me.

C. Jesus cares for the Church like his body vs. 28.

Ephesians 5:28–30 (CSB)

²⁸In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰since we are members of his body.

1. The two greatest commandments are “love God, love your neighbor.”

2. Paul says that husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies.

a. This includes care, protection, and covering.

b. When I love my wife well, I reflect God's love for me.

Apply: What do I do with this message?

A. The hard part of a message like this is applying this to our life if we aren't married or our spouse isn't saved.

1. Isn't it amazing that Jesus and the Apostle Paul gave the best marriage and parenting advice ever given: two men who were never married and had no biological children.

2. So what was the beauty that Paul saw in marriage, even though he wasn't married?

B. Even though Paul wasn't married, he saw the beauty of Christ's relationship with the Church.

1. Paul marveled that the God of the universe would want to be in relationship with him and others like him.

2. Even though Paul was not married, he encouraged healthy marriages for others while practicing submission to Jesus.

- a. Paul knew that Christ loved him, so he practiced submission to Christ.
- b. All of Paul's missionary journeys, all of Paul's preaching and persecutions arose from his desire to submit and love Jesus.
- c. All of us are called to love and submit to Jesus, regardless of our relationship status.

C. For those of us married, the application is easy to say but hard to practice.

1. A question for us to ask today is this: Does our most important relationship depict the way Jesus loves us?

a. We are not called to mimic the marriages or relationships of movie stars, cultural norms, or even our parents.

b. Instead, we are called to mimic and model the relationship between Christ and the Church.

2. As I lead us in a time of prayer today, I want to pray for all of our most important relationships.

3. Lord, help us to love and submit like you have taught us, modeled for us, and commanded us to.