

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Drama of Marriage — The Commands

Ephesians 5:22-33

PowerPoint Presentation: None

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SermonAudio blurb: Having established the basis and background of marriage. And having reminded the listener that every marriage is marred and affected by sin; we now look to the commands attached to this institution. Specifically, as we step onto the divinely wrought stage what is expected by God of both the man and woman? What is interesting is how the things commanded are broad principles rather than specific, narrow commands. These are the principles, in light of the gospel, by which we are to order our marriages. They are the borders in which we live with our spouses before God, man, and the rulers in the heavenly places.

I. Introduction.

- A. I have established the basis and background of marriage.
 - 1. We know that the bible tells us that marriage is a creation of God and therefore it is defined by Him alone.
 - 2. We know that the bible tells us that the husband and wife have unique orientations to this creation but that they are designed to complement each other.
 - 3. And finally we learned that because of sin everything is hard and broken and twisted. Only in Jesus Christ can that all-encompassing sin issue be resolved.
 - a. We must battle against godlessness.
 - b. We must realize that the great problem in our marriage is not our spouse but sin itself.
- B. We now look to the commands attached to this institution.
 - 1. Specifically, as we step onto the divinely wrought stage what is expected by God of both the man and woman?
 - 2. Read Ephesians 5:22-33.
 - 3. What is interesting is how the things commanded are broad principles rather than specific, narrow commands.
 - 4. In a sense these principles are like bumper bowling — they keep you in the proper lane.

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- a. These are the principles, in light of the gospel, by which we are to order our marriages.
 - b. They are the borders in which we live with our spouses before God, man, and the rulers in the heavenly places.
 - c. And as we stay within these borders we can't really go wrong. Like bumper bowling, we may not score real high but we are in the right lane.
 - d. The problem only begins when we go out of these borders, because of lack of knowledge, carelessness, or out of rebellion.
- C. Today my goal is to remove the first of those problems, a lack of knowledge and perhaps help some of you step out of carelessness and back to watchfulness and sober thinking.
- D. We will do this by establishing 7 principles that are either overtly commanded or strongly implied by the context.
1. Please remember this is not merely some marriage clinic where we try to restore the romance or fix communication problems.
 2. We are being told to live this way by God because in doing so we are living out the very essence of Ephesians 3:8-12.
 3. So this is much bigger than just your marriage and even more bigger than just you and your happiness. It is an issue of worship and of proclaiming truth and to reflect the glory of our redeeming, sinner-saving, adopting God.

II. The Commands.

- A. The first principle is built off of vs 21 — we need to have humility in our marriages.
1. There is the expectation that we live in submission to one another, and that takes humility.
 - a. Notice what is the reason for this heart of humility toward one another – fear/reverence for Christ.
 - b. We worship and love our Lord and we therefore, in that spirit, orient our lives to reflect Jesus.
 - c. There is a doctrine that many don't know about but is an important doctrine in the Christian faith. It is called the “The eternal submission of the Son to the Father.”

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- d. When we reflect the mind of Christ we reflect this submission.
 - e. When you have one or both parties in the marriage proud, stubborn or arrogant you will have problems. Humility of mind and heart is paramount.
2. To submit means that you voluntarily place yourself in a subordinate relationship.
 - a. In one way or another all believers are to show that type of spirit.
 - b. Jesus Christ made it clear in Matthew 28:20-28.
 - c. It is reflected in many other places in the New Testament, but Philippians 2:3 a key passage.
 3. However, do not make more of this submission to one another than the passage allows.
 - a. Understand that vs 21 functions as an introduction to this entire section through to 6:9.
 - b. It is not speaking specifically of everyone submitting to each other as much as describing various key relationships which are to model this submission.
 - c. Each relationship has one who has some level of authority and one who is in submission to that reality.
 - (1) Husband/wife, parent/child, master/slave.
 - (2) But the one in authority is not given a *carte blanche* freedom to act as he or she wishes. They are given clear commands that control and define their boundaries.
- B. Second, God calls the wife to submit to their husband.
1. It doesn't require a brain surgeon to tell us that this is not a popular position in our culture. But it doesn't take a brain surgeon to tell us that it is a normal reality that the Christian life is counter-cultural.
 2. Literally this verse reads, "the wives, to their own husbands as to the Lord." The command of submission is assumed as this is vitally connected to vs 21.
 - a. First, notice that this submission is not some blind one without thought. It is the same heart of submission that she has for Christ.

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- (1) It is the same or similar to the child (6:1) and the servant/slave (6:5-7).
 - (2) What makes this important is that the wife is first assumed to be in submission to Christ. In other words we are talking about a Christian wife, not any wife.
 - (3) The flow starts with Jesus and moves to the husband. And therefore her first responsibility is to the Lord. So it is not a blind submission.
- b. Second, it is important to note the word “own” here.
- C. Third, the reason for the wife submitting is that the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church (23-24).
1. “For,” “just as,” “as,” and “so also” are very important terms here to understand the command and rationale. Worth underlining.
 2. “Head” here speaks of oversight, responsibility and authority.
 - a. There is a huge effort in the Church today to try to make the meaning something else and the trick to do so is to have so many repeat the same bad research until it is assumed true.
 - b. The context makes it very clear what “head” means. Just let the rest of vs 23 and all of 24 define it.
 3. What is important to take away right now is that Paul is connecting the relationship between the husband and wife with the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church.
 4. Also understand that the man is not commanded here to be the head of the wife. He simply is.
 - a. Indicative/imperative difference.
 - b. Every husband is the head of the wife. That is just a fact that passages like in 1 Corinthians 11 and here make it clear.
 - c. The only question is whether the husband is being a faithful head and if the wife is faithfully submitting.
 5. Note also the extensiveness of this as well. Vs 24 shows that it is in everything.
- D. Fourth, the husband is commanded to love his wife.

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1. Now I just pointed out that the command is not to be the head. That is a reality. The command is to love your wife.
2. The common problem I find with husbands is trying to make their wife submit. That is not your calling, that is your wife's. You are to love her.
 - a. The important words to underline here are "just as" in vs 25 and "so that" in vs 26 and "that" in vs 27.
 - b. If you are unsure how you should love your wife you need only to consider the love Christ showed and shows to His Church.
 - (1) A love that is life-giving, where you die to self. You sacrifice yourself for your wife.
 - (2) Not in a way that some husbands do, thinking that this means whatever the wife expects she gets.
 - (3) vss 26-27 help us see the way this love for your wife is to manifest itself.
 - (a) Jesus is making His Church holy in vs 26. So too a husband is to create and promote an atmosphere where the wife is able to grow in her faith.
 - (b) He protects his wife from influences and standards that will detract from that.
 - (c) His desire is to be able to help her in such a way that the weaknesses and such in her life are being worked out and resolved, just as Christ is doing in His Church.
 - (d) This means you need humility and wisdom. It means you need to be diligent and faithful. It means you need to get over the fact you are in authority and use that authority in a way to serve your wife.
 - (e) Matt Steele tweeted a quote that I will slightly change, "Christian husbands work to the bone to provide for their families and then come home and hold the baby so mom can rest."
 - (f) This takes work men. Your first thought may be "I'm in authority" but it must be trained to be changed to "I must love her."

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- E. Fifth, husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies (28-31).
1. This is something that may sound strange to your ears but there is a connection back to the book of Genesis that may help you see what is going on.
 2. Genesis 2:24, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Remember how it was from Adam’s actual body that a rib was taken and from that Eve was made.
 3. That is what is driving this point by Paul. Husbands we are to remember that this relationship is not two people living together. It is two becoming one.
 4. Before sin, Adam loved his wife as he would himself. But once sin came in there was that radical breakdown where he is immediately shifting blame to her rather than owning it as the head.
 5. In Jesus Christ we need to retake that original thought process. When we think of what it looks like to love her we ask how do we “love” ourselves?
 - a. We care for our needs without a thought.
 - b. We give ourselves good and pleasant things.
 - c. We overlook our weaknesses and we seek to grow and flourish.
 - d. So we are to do this with our wife. This is our life-long responsibility. And a wise husband makes it his joy.
 6. When we treat our wives in an improper way the hard reality is that we are merely harming ourselves. And when we do her good we are doing good to ourselves.
 7. Again recognize that this is what is true of Christ and His Church.
 - a. When Paul, then Saul, was persecuting the church in Acts 9 he was confronted by the risen Christ. The question posed to him was why he was persecuting Jesus.
 - b. When Jesus considers His Church He makes no distinction between Her and Himself. That is worthy of a lot of your thinking this week.
- F. Sixth, grasp that your marriage is much more than just you and your spouse (32).

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1. In verses 32, Paul refers to the relationship between human marriage and the divine marriage being a “mystery that is great.” Remember that the word “mystery” in the Bible speaks to something unknown before but that is now revealed by God to us.
 2. This reminds us of the mystery of God and how He works. When Moses wrote the creation account he did not know what the marriage meant, but God did.
 3. But we also learn from this that how we view marriage cannot be controlled by our culture, of the thinking of this age.
 - a. There is something much bigger going on and the better you remember that the better you will function in your marriage.
 - b. Your marriage is a model to a watching world of what the gospel looks like. It is not an institution that is for your needs or your happiness. It is to reflect the love of Christ for His Church and the Church’s proper response to Him.
 - c. As the power of this age watch on each God-honoring marriage lifts up its fist in rebellion as the victory of Christ is displayed.
- G. Seventh, the wife is called by God to respect her husband (33b).
1. The term “respect” is actually the Greek word for “fear.” It is not fear, as in terror, but more like showing “reverence” and “honor” towards someone. I think honor or respect fits best in how we use words today.
 2. Why respect? It really comes down to what God has ordained. The husband is the head of the house and therefore the wife should reflect that in how she deals with him.
 3. Notice once again that the husband is not to make his wife respect him.
 4. Notice also that the wife is not called to respect only in what she finds respectable.

III. Application.

- A. To those who are single.
1. Don’t wait for marriage to begin to put on and to practice these qualities. Do that and you will find marriage to be a terrible burden.
 2. Men, practice what it looks like to serve and lay down your life for others. What does it look like to put others needs before your desires?

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3. Women, practice a heart of submission. But remember that this is not to be toward just anyone. I would say focus on those places where God has given you His ordained authority points: Fathers, employer, elders, governing authorities.
 4. To both: When considering a potential mate look for these qualities in them. Just remember that their father, or they, themselves will have little interest in you if you don't model your specific qualities and attitudes.
 5. Remember that marriage is designed for life so choose wisely and enter into that relationship
- B. To the wife:
1. Embrace that you are called to take a weaker, more vulnerable position. The more you fight it the harder it is because you will not have the Holy Spirit helping you.
 2. Strive to be a pleasure to lead. You may be a stubborn woman or one of great pride. Realize that in your marriage God is teaching you to put it to death.
 3. Look for ways to encourage him and consider what actually encourages him.
 4. Remember you married a sinner so don't be shocked when he fails. Thank him when he leads well and remember that good leading doesn't mean it is always fun for you to follow.
 5. When he forgets or fails to do something before you react too quickly consider how he is doing in the "big" things. Is he working hard to provide for you and the children? Is he seeking to lead you and trying to figure out what it means to properly husband you? Then show him the grace you desire.
- C. To the husbands:
1. Embrace that you are the head of that home no matter what. That means that everything may not be your fault but it is your responsibility so no whining. This is huge so give it serious thought.
 2. Stop trying to get her to submit or to respect you. Focus on loving her regardless and loving her well and properly. Supply her needs and seek to meet her proper desires and you will do well.
 3. Douglas Wilson gives a good illustration to men. They are to see their wives as a garden and they are to cultivate her so that she flourishes like a

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well cared for garden. If he is lazy in this then weeds and thistles will abound. The temptation will be to blame the garden but it is the one who is to care for the garden who is ultimately responsible.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. The Christian marriage is a rebellious marriage. It refuses to give in to the constant barrage of the wisdom of this age telling you how to function.
- B. The Christian marriage is to be a hope-filled marriage. It is a marriage that shows others that there is hope and joy in a world that consistently fails us. There are untold millions who have never witnessed a marriage that is a truly Christian marriage.
- C. The Christian marriage is to be a maturing marriage. It is a marriage that is always reassessing and growing in to the image of Christ and His Church.
- D. The Christian marriage is to be a gospel-oriented marriage.
 - 1. We are either showing this watching world, not to mention our children, what that gospel looks like or we are not.
 - 2. We either are giving a true testimony of the gospel or a distorted one.
 - 3. And because of sin the chance of a distorted one is very real, which means we need to cling and hope in the gospel all the more.

Community Group Questions

- **What one thing stood out in this sermon and why?**
- **For men, how can you better learn to lay down your life and serve? Especially those who are married?**
- **For women, how can you better prepare your life to be showing both a heart of submission and respect?**
- **How might what you were taught in this sermon differ from what you watched and learned growing up?**