

**Biblical Marriage**  
Ephesians 5:22-33 (04/22/18)  
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Ephesians 5:31 *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.*

Ephesians 1-3 describes your wealth in Christ. You've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 4-6:9 explains your walk in Christ –growing in Christ with lots of teaching about your personal walk and talk. Ephesians 6:9 to the end will be about your warfare in Christ. In Ephesians 5:22ff. God talks about key life relationships that have never changed since the beginning of time - marriage, family, and work. For the next four weeks we will focus on what biblical marriage looks like. There is no more sanctifying relationship than marriage. Two sinners doing life together will always result in some sparks and some conflicts, but the beautiful thing is that God uses those disagreements and difficulties to humble and grow those two sinners.

So how's your marriage? How is it going between the two of you today? I know, when you were dating wow! Even the brush of his arm or the smell of her perfume was breathtaking. Then you got married, children came, bills arrived, employment stress builds, medical problems may develop, aging takes place. Now you've been married 15, 30, 40 years or more. I'm eminently qualified – it'll be 50 years shortly for my wife and me. It started in Goshen, Indiana, in a snow storm. I dropped the pizza on the hotel steps somewhere around Indianapolis. We drove Rt. 50 to Washington DC in my Triumph GT-6, up, down, and around the Smokey Mountains. I was loving it, but then found out my new wife got car sick. Those were days of learning to know each other. And after all these years, by God's grace we're still together. Are you still enjoying your marriage? Is his touch still cherished? Does her smile bless you? Do you pray for him or her regularly? Or have you become critical? Have selfishness, bitterness, distance, loss of respect, presumption, pride, and anger eaten away like acid at your relationship? I hope these next four weeks will be helpful to see God's glory and grace and goodness in your relationship and fill you with thanksgiving and appreciation for your spouse.

Marriage is God's idea; it belongs to Him. God instituted marriage for the entire human race for very important reasons. We'll stay in Ephesians for the next three weeks – the role of the wife, the role of the husband, and how God redeems marriage in a fallen world. This morning we'll look at five fundamental principles that undergird this amazing and sacred institution of marriage. This is Biblical Marriage. Let's go back to the beginning.

Genesis 1:26-28 *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 **So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."***

**1. GOD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE.** This happened on day six, a 24-hour period just like the other days of creation. The triune God agreed, "Let's make two creatures that will reflect us in this grand creation." The creation of man and woman was the apex of God's creation. Everything headed up to this. There is an unbridgeable gap between all the other creatures and man. That's why we pass right by a dead squirrel on the road, but slam on the brakes if we see a human body laying there. That's why we adore those little newborns – little image bearers with fresh little eyes looking out directly into ours. So male and female are equally created in God's image. Not physically but in their invisible part – their capacity to think, reason, choose, their conscience, their memory, their

communication capacity, everything like God, holy and righteous and good. He created them for relationship, first with Him and then with each other.

**2. GOD CREATED THE GENDER DIFFERENCES FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.** News flash! Men and women are different! The male has male chromosomes xy and produces male gametes, and the female has female chromosomes xx and produces female gametes. You've got to have both or the human race would have ended with these two. God uniquely blessed the couple (v. 28). He poured out on them all His rich goodness and love and encouragement and motivation and approval – all involved in God blessing you. God said, "Enjoy My world! I made it for My glory and your pleasure." And what does He bless them to do? Have babies! Yes! Have babies. That's one of God's purposes of marriage. That's where those gametes come in.

Sadly, man in sin has rebelled against God and perverted the divine purpose a heterosexual monogamous faithful relationship into self-serving purposes seen in fornication, abortion, homosexuality, and all kinds of twisted notions that undermine the sanctity of marriage. John Piper wrote, "The fact that we live in a society that can defend two men or two women entering a sexual relationship and...call it marriage shows that the collapse of our culture into debauchery and anarchy is probably not far away!"

So God created them male and female. Men and women are obviously different! Thank God for your feminine, tender wife and your masculine, strong as steel, ripped, chiseled husband. True, sometimes they annoy you. You can't understand why he can't be more sensitive to your feelings, or why she can't be more interested in fast cars or your bulging biceps. But remember, God created them male and female, xy and xx.

Now let's turn the page and get into the details of exactly how marriage is supposed to work.

*Genesis 2:18-23 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a **helper fit** for him." (Then we have Adam naming and checking out all these animals but couldn't find a helper fit for him). 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, "**This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.**"*

**3. GOD CREATED THE WOMAN TO BE A PERFECT FIT FOR THE MAN.** In Genesis 2:7 God grabbed a handful of dirt and made a man. This doesn't surprise me. We men have been tracking dirt around the house ever since. But notice that God didn't go over there and grab another handful of dirt and make a woman. No, when the man couldn't find a complement to his maleness, a "helper suitable" – *kenegdo* – a being who fits him perfectly, someone to help him find the mustard or help him dress appropriately, or actually have those babies. God put Adam to sleep, pulled out a rib (not a toe or a piece of his skull, but his rib), and made this finely-tuned creature, this fitting helper, to be by his side. Then God walked this quintessence of feminine pulchritude down the aisle in the first wedding. When Adam saw her, he exclaimed along with Etta James, "At last my love has come along. My lonely days are over and life is like a song, oh yeah!" Or, "Now that's what I'm talkin' about! Where have you been all my life?" "Thank you, God! You are so good!" Proverbs 18:22, He who finds a wife finds "tobh", finds rich goodness from the Lord. God called her Woman, Ishah, because she was taken from Man, Ish.

Let's take a moment here to say that not only is marriage designed to glorify God and give the man companionship and illustrate Christ and church, but marriage is also to bring great joy and pleasure to the couple. Sadly, it wasn't long before Genesis 3 when sin blasted in and there were all kinds of conflict and selfishness, pride and blaming. We live in that Genesis 3 fallen, broken world. But marriage is still designed by God to bring the greatest possible human joy. Isaac and Rebekah were enjoying each other in Genesis 26:8. In Deuteronomy 22:5 God commanded the new husband to take a full year off to bring his wife happiness. There's a lot to learn in that first year. Proverbs 5:18-19 counsels a husband to be exhilarated always with her love, be intoxicated with her love. Matthew Henry writes, "Let him that is married take delight in his wife, and let him be very fond of her...because she is the wife that God in his

providence appointed for him.” We’ve spied a young married couple kissing in our church parking lot, delighting in each other. A beautiful thing to see.

And then, one of my favorite marriage verses, Ecclesiastes 9:9, “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun.” You’ve got one life with one wife. Stay connected; appreciate each other. I do want to say, though, as happy and exhilarated as you should be with your spouse, your marriage cannot take the place of Christ. Your marriage will not fulfill your heart, your spiritual needs. **ONLY CHRIST WILL BRING YOU SATISFACTION AND FULFILLMENT.** That’s why Christ must be at the center of any God-glorifying marriage.

*Genesis 2:24-25 Therefore a man shall **leave** his father and his mother and **hold fast** to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh**. 25 And the man and his wife were both **naked and were not ashamed**.*

**4. GOD DESIGNED MARRIAGE TO BE A SACRED COVENANT** in which a man leaves his parents, cleaves to his wife, and they weave their lives together as one flesh. Verse 24 is so important that God repeats it three more times, in Mark 10, Matthew 19, and Ephesians 5. This three-fold counsel defines how marriage really works. Ed Wheat notes that all marriage problems come from violating at least one of these aspects of marriage.

**Leave** means a couple is no longer under the authority of their parents. Now your husband is your first go to guy when something goes wrong. One newlywed daughter, after her first argument with her husband, called her daddy, “I want to come home.” Her wise father said, “Honey, you’re already home.” The marriage relationship is the one permanent human relationship. Your husband (your wife) is the most important person on the planet. Parents are temporary and so are the kids. Be careful to not make your children your main relationship. When they marry, don’t try to run their lives. Raise your kids to leave. “Go, get out of here.” The empty nest syndrome is one of the wonderful benefits of growing old.

**Cleave** means you stick like glue to your spouse. The Hebrew word, “dabaq”, means to cling or adhere. ESV says “Hold fast.” Ulysses Grant took a young lady named Julia for a buggy ride one day. They came to a flooded creek spanned by a flimsy bridge. He assured Julia, “Don’t be frightened. I’ll look after you.” Julia replied, “I’ll cling to you whatever happens.” She clung tightly to Grant’s arm and they made it across. A few minutes later Mr. Grant worked up the courage and asked, “You said you’d cling to me whatever happened. Would you like to cling to me for the rest of our lives?” She would, and they were married in August of 1848. Marriage is a covenant or agreement between two people to cling to each other come what may, through thick or thin, right? Come baldness, bunions, bulging belly, bad breath, he loses his job, she no longer looks like Miss America, you are stuck together in an inseparable bond! Biblical counselor Wayne Mack calls it “a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other.”

**Weave** means two different people, a male and female with all kinds of different habits and interests, now unite their lives together physically and in every way. You are one flesh. Martyn Lloyd Jones says you’re not two units but “two halves of one.” What’s yours is hers and hers is yours, including your bodies (1 Cor. 7:1-5). That’s why it says they were naked and not ashamed. They were completely open to each other. One of the comforts of marriage is that you accept each other even with the flaws. You know stuff about each other no one else knows. This relationship obviously includes sexually. God put a fence around the marriage relationship. The joys and warmth of sex are reserved for this relationship. Sexual intimacy and pleasure are the privilege of the sacred commitment of marriage. God intended babies to be reared in the context of a loving, faithful, loyal, stable, committed, sacred marriage.

One flesh also takes us to Matthew 19:4-6. The Pharisees tried to trip Christ up about marriage and divorce. When is it okay to divorce? If she burns your toast or sleeps too long? What I love is that Jesus responds by quoting from both Genesis 1 and 2. He believed Genesis was part of the inspired and authoritative Word of God! Jesus believed marriage was between two distinct, different genders, a male and female. He believed marriage was heterosexual and monogamous and permanent and sacred. God joins two people together when they marry. That’s so good. At every wedding, God is there joining two people for life.

Matthew 19:4-6 *And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."*

Maybe you're struggling right now in your marriage. You may be divorced. You may or may not have been the main cause. You started off so well but now he or she has gone rogue. You may have worked hard to keep it together. You may have forgiven and overlooked and returned good for evil and your spouse still turned away from you. You tried to be sweet, to win him or her, to be as gentle as possible, and it still didn't work out. This is certainly one of the hardest trials in life. God knows what a broken heart feels like. He knows your heart. That's a time to trust God, let Him pour His oil of comfort and strength into your heart. If you know areas you've been wrong, you need to confess and acknowledge your sin first as the worst, and then work on it the most. But know that God's grace is sufficient for the hardest of trials. Every marriage needs tons of mercy and ready forgiveness to keep the relationship sweet. You need Christ!

Now we return to Ephesians 5:22ff. Here is one of the most amazing purposes for marriage. Every wedding of two believers in Christ is the launching of a new human story of the relationship of Christ and His church. This is our last point.

Ephesians 5:23-24 *For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

## **5. GOD DESIGNED MARRIAGE TO BE AN ILLUSTRATION OF CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE.**

Christ promises to be faithful to us, and we respond in loving obedience. A husband promises to be faithful to his wife, to forsake all others and live for her alone, loving her even enough to die for her. A wife likewise promises to be loyal and to cherish her husband and do him good all the days of his life. Every marriage comes short of this, but this is our standard and calling. We husbands fail miserably with selfishness, pride, anger. Wives sometimes come short. What's the main problem? Selfishness. That's why we as husbands and you as wives ought to daily pray that God would keep you humble and help you do all you can to make your spouse the happiest person on the planet. Sometimes, as the song goes, "I never want to see you again. But I want you to know, after all these years, you're still the one I want whisperin' in my ear. You're still the one I want to talk to in bed. Still the one – that turns my head. We're still havin' fun, and you're still the one."

**SO WHAT?** As a church we want to do all we can to help marriages flourish and glorify God. A husband and wife is the most important human relationship; don't build walls, but learn to truly enjoy each other. There are excellent books like *When Sinners Say, "I Do"* and many messages available like Brad Bigney's *When Marriage and Mercy Collide*. Don't sink so far down into marital misery that you lose all hope. Dave Harvey writes, "The cross makes a stunning statement about husbands and wives. We are sinners and our only hope is grace." Put Christ in the center of your marriage.