

February 12, 2023, Ephesians 5:22-33

Difficult conversation's part 6

Marriage is under attack. I believe, that one of the reasons why we see marriage under attack in the world today is because the church has an incomplete view of marriage.

In 2015, the Supreme court ruled that people of the same sex could legally marry. But this man-made law simply determined that two people can legally obtain the benefits that society provides for married couples. It doesn't change what God says about marriage. Do we trust the designer? The only way that we can embrace same-sex marriage is to devalue marriage all together.

People will argue that Jesus didn't specifically speak out against homosexuality. But he was pretty clear about marriage (Matthew 19:4-6). The church must celebrate and teach a Biblical understanding of marriage. It's sad that in the 21st century, we have to define marriage.

This is more than cultural wars, this is spiritual war, Satan hates marriage and has a specific purpose to destroying marriage.

John Stott wrote: *"Marriage is an exclusive heterosexual covenant between one man and one woman, ordained and sealed by God preceded by the leaving of parents, consummated in sexual union, issuing in a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned with the gift of children"*

Sexual immorality is any sexual activity outside of this biblically defined covenant of marriage. Within the Biblical bond of marriage, sex is blessed, while outside, it is sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7).

The reason marriage is so sacred is because the primary role of marriage is to portray and proclaim the Gospel (Ephesians 5:32). Satan hates marriage, because it is a picture of two non-interchangeable and different parties, made one by the work of Christ. Husbands portray Christ, and wives represent the church. Both parties have definite roles and functions, the church cannot do what Jesus is doing. And that is why Satan created a counterfeit, a lie that mocks God's design.

God takes marriage very seriously, and has defined immorality for what it is, regardless of how cleverly the courts, and the entertainment, and media machines have redefined it (Hebrews 13:4).

In Ephesians 5:22-24 Paul focuses on wives. Many people struggle with the language of submission, but this is not about a form of subjection or controlling power. Submission simply means to prefer others. And it is only possible as one is filled with the Spirit of God.

Andreas Kostenberger wrote, *"While some may view submitting to one's husband's authority as something negative, a more accurate way of looking at marital roles is to understand that wives are called to follow their husband's loving leadership."*

Husbands and wives have equal value, but different roles within marriage.

The husband's primary role is to be a priest, being the spiritual leader in the home. Tragically, men have abdicated their authority in this area by giving in to laziness, leisure, pornography, and a general lack of spiritual discipline.

The women's role is to follow and support the husband in the spiritual leadership of the family, ensuring that the home is a place that is sacred and holy to the Lord.

When both are fulfilling their roles, marriage is a beautiful thing to observe.

We must be careful to reject any teaching that says that women are subservient to men, or that the husband is a form of a CEO in the marriage. Submission must be voluntary and follows sacrificial love.

Typical human nature is that women crave love and men desire respect, that's the way God has wired us.

So, we have the two aspects of marriage: love and submission.

Love and submission can both be defined as putting the will of the other person ahead of your own, to prefer the other person. Love and submission are two sides of the same coin.

In verses 25 to 33 Paul addresses husbands. In verse 25 Paul tells husbands, *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”*

What is Christlike love? It is the love that took Jesus to the cross to give his own life for the church. It is sacrificial love.

For men marriage is a call to die to self. It is daily giving yourself away for the good of your bride. It is sacrificial and preferential love. You cannot love your wife like Christ loved the church and be passive. This is loving by serving and giving of your time and energy.

It is also a sanctifying love, as we see in verse 26, *“that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word”*

This does not mean that any husband has the ability to atone for sins, only Jesus can do that. But men are to be the spiritual leader in the home. Encouraging their family to read the Word and allowing the word of God to bring transformation.

Here is a good question for men. Are our wives more like Christ because she’s married to us? Or is she more like Christ in spite of us?

But there is an eternal purpose in marriage. In verse 32, Paul writes that the mystery of marriage refers to Christ and the church. It is beyond our understanding. When God created the world, and the covenant of marriage, he had Christ and the church in mind. Not the other way around.

Marriage is not the ultimate, Christ is.

Christ is ultimate, not our husbands or our wives. Our primary loyalty must be to Jesus.

If I was to ask you, what is the biggest problem that marriages struggle with today, I would get a multitude of answers. But the root problem of every marriage is sin.

Marriage is ordained by God for the glory of God. Therefore, He is the source of the love and the only one who can cause a marriage to flourish and proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the world.

As we shine the light of healthy marriage, the world will see a picture of Christ and the church (John 1:5).