

Scripture Text

Ephesians 5:22-33

Context

In Ephesians 5:18 Paul has instructed us to be filled with the Spirit, and then gives three subordinate clauses to help us understand how we do this. The third way we are filled with the Spirit in by submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. This submission to each other (or the right order of relationships) is then unpacked in greater detail by Paul as he gives a 'household code'. A household code included instructions understanding pairs of relationships such as husband and wife, parents and children, and slaves and masters. In this section, Paul addresses the relationship between husbands and wives.

Observation and Meaning

- Throughout the passage Paul constantly compares the relationship of a husband and a wife to something specific. What is this comparison?
- Does Paul address the husbands and wives together or separately? Does Paul give them identical or distinctive instructions? Why is this, and what does it tell us about men and women?
- What does Paul say happens to a man and a woman when they get married?
- What implications does the passage draw from this truth (husbands and wives becoming one flesh) about marriage?

Big idea

Earthly marriage is to be a visible display to the world of an even greater marriage, which is the marriage between Christ and the church. This helps us understand the blueprint of marriage, the essence of marriage and give us the power for marriage.

Connecting to the whole Bible's storyline

God made a people to be His people. But his people were unfaithful to Him, going after other lovers. In love however, God pursued his people and Christ laid down his life to make a people for His own possession, a people that are described as His bride, who will spend eternity with him in a perfect marriage.

Sermon outline

1. The blueprint of marriage - Christ and the church
2. The essence of marriage - Covenantal Oneness
3. The power for marriage - entering into true marriage

Application

- If earthly marriage is ultimately a picture of Christ and the church, then marriage is hugely significant and we should take it seriously, but at the same time it takes the pressure off of earthly marriage because there is something even greater than it which we are invited into. How do these two implications affect your view of marriage on earth?
- How does this 'one flesh' idea help you to think about the union of Christ and His body, the church?
- If you are married: How does being loved by God as His eternal bride help you to love your spouse in the way that this passage calls you to?
- If you are married: What changes can you make in your relationship with your spouse to become more united as 'one flesh'?
- If you aren't married: What does this mean for what you should look like in a potential spouse?
- If you aren't married: How does **true marriage** (Christ and the church) help you to view your life as a person who is unmarried on earth?

Guide for Study Leaders

Use the C.O.M.A. (Context, Observation, Meaning, Application) method to work through the biblical text.

Context

Pay attention to the surrounding verses, paragraphs, chapters, events, etc. to see how this passage fits within the context of this particular book of the Bible.

Note how this passage fits within the larger storyline of the whole Bible, i.e. how God is saving a people through Jesus Christ to live under his rule in his place.

Observation & Meaning

Make careful observations of the biblical text. Notice details such as linking words (eg. "for", "if", "therefore"), repetition, dialogue, narrative, OT quotations, etc.

To understand the meaning of the biblical text, we need to discern the author's purpose or intent: Why is the biblical author writing this?

Helpful questions to ask include:

- Who is writing and to whom?
- What is the situation of the author and of the readers?
- Are we made aware of any problems that need to be addressed?
- Are there any repeated themes, or a single idea that holds everything together?

Application

Apply God's word to the heart. Move beyond merely addressing circumstances and behaviour by asking good "heart" questions. For example: Why do we do what we do? What do we really desire?

Always connect the gospel to application. For example, what difference does knowing Christ make to our obedience to God?

Ask what the passage teaches us about God, ourselves, salvation in Christ, the church, the world, etc.