

Scripture Text

Ephesians 5:22-33

Context

In Ephesians 4:1 Paul has urged Christians to live lives worthy of the calling they have received in Christ. As Paul goes on to teach what this new, Spirit filled life looks like, he begins to deal with the 'order' of our relationships. Christian relationships are to look entirely different from those in the world, primarily at a heart level. This heart level involves a mutual attitude of submission to each other (v21) that then gets worked out in specific directives for the various parties in relationships.

Observation and Meaning

- What does Paul instruct all Christians in verse 21 and how does that shape our understanding of his instructions in verse 22-33?
- In verse 33, Paul uses the word 'respect' to refer to the wives attitude to their husbands. How does this help us to understand what Paul is getting to when he talks about submission?
- What is the essence of marriage (vs 28-31) and how does this essence of marriage help us to understand the distinct ways that husbands and wives are to relate to each other in marriage?
- What are wives to emulate in this passage, and in what way are they to emulate it?
- Who are husbands meant to emulate in this passage, and in what way are they to emulate Him?
- What is the goal of the husbands loving sacrificial leadership?

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?

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. The way husbands love their wives and wives honour their husbands display the Gospel to a watching world.

Connecting to the whole Bible's storyline

God created men and women for Himself. 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.

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.

Application

- How does Christ's leadership look entirely different from that of the worlds?
- How does this passage challenge cultural ideas of leadership and submission?
- If you are married, how is this passage challenging you to change the way you relate to your spouse?
- If you are not married, how does this passage affect what you would view as being important in a potential spouse?

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.