

Following the GPS: Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33

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In 1996, a ranger flying a helicopter over Death Valley, Calif., spotted a minivan in a wash near Anvil Canyon. That was ominous for several reasons: There was no road leading up to the spot, and the area wasn't passable without a four-wheel vehicle.

After investigating the vehicle, park rangers determined that four German tourists — a man, a woman, and their two sons, ages 4 and 11 — had last rented the minivan. But there was no trace of the family itself.

Their remains were not found for about 15 years, until Tom Mahood, a physicist-turned-adventurer, retraced their steps. As he recounts on his website, a series of *reasonable mistakes*, such as *misreading* the steepness of a canyon descent and *being led astray by culturally confusing* map landmarks, likely led to the decisions that ended in them separating, then dying in the scorching desert heat.

The story reveals how easy it is for people to become hopelessly lost in the wilderness.

We don't have to rely on our own senses and old maps to navigate our lives. Yet even Christians get lost in life because we don't pay attention and have lost a true belief in the sufficiency of Scripture to act as our GPS throughout life. Peter reminds us that God's divine power has granted to us *all things that pertain to life and godliness*, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence.

And this certainly includes marriage.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and all was good. God created animals and man and all was good. Yet man was alone and this was not good:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam^[c] there was not found 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." ²⁴ 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. (Genesis 2:18-25, ESV)

It is in this text that God instituted marriage and in it, we see the starting GPS coordinates that include the definition of marriage and the purpose of marriage. This definition and purpose vary greatly from our modern view of marriage, and in fact, even other religious views of marriage. As we look at the topic of marriage this evening, it is critical to understand what God had in mind when he created marriage.

First, we see that it was not good for man to be alone. To help Adam understand this more fully God sent him to “interview”, the animals that had been created. Which one might become a suitable helper for Adam? In my mind’s eye I can see Adam looking at each animal one by one and giving them names, probably based on their physical characteristics, yet becoming disappointed time and time again. There were no animals suitable to be a helper for man. But what does it mean to be a suitable helper for man? What was “not good” in man’s relationships with these animals? Marriage was not man’s idea, but God’s. What did God know that Adam did not?

What the animals could not provide Adam was companionship. While Adam’s puppy and kitty might have brought some comfort, they could never provide the companionship of a wife. Describing what Jay Adams calls the “Covenant of Companionship” he writes, “Marriage was established because Adam was alone, and that was not good. Companionship, therefore, is the essence of marriage.”¹ The purpose of marriage, therefore, is to fulfill man’s need for companionship. God saw that Adam was lonely and so companionship is the essence of marriage.²

Companionship, as the reason for marriage, is not the universal understanding of marriage. The Roman Catholic view is that marriage is intended to provide the means to, “be fruitful and multiply” and so, their understanding of the reason for marriage is procreation. The moralistic segment of our society looks at marriage as a license for sexual activity (even in our culture of openness). They see premarital sex as sin, but marriage allows sexual activity to take place.

Since we understand from Scripture, that the reason for marriage is far more than procreation and moral sexual activity, or GPS direction begins.

But What is Marriage?

God formally introduced marriage in Genesis chapter 2 when he declared, “A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” Since God instituted marriage, we must live by his definition, and not our own preferences. So, we must study the Scripture to determine the rules for marriage that God has placed into the world.

¹ Adams, Jay, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, (Zondervan, 1980), 8

² Adams, Jay, *Solving Marriage Problems*, (Zondervan, 1983), 20

Biblical marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. The church is not a picture of marriage; it is the other way around. Ephesians 5:22-33 give us details on the responsibility of husbands and wives within this marriage covenant. While this instruction begins with mutual submission one to another, the husband is given a specific role in representing Christ in the home. It is God's will for every Christian husband to love and lead his wife the same way that Jesus loves and leads the church.³

Wives (Ephesians 5:22-24)

In verse 22 we see the **command** from God to wives. The command has two parts.

1. The wife is to submit. The term is a term we often see in the military in that it speaks of bending one's will under the authority of another. It is an act of her will, not based on feelings or whether or not the husband deserves it. It in no way indicates that the wife is less of a person, less important, or not equal with the husband. On the contrary, wives and husbands are coequal in Christ. In fact, Peter calls husbands and wives joint heirs in Christ. Secondarily, it shows the love of her wife toward her husband.
2. The second thing we see in this verse is that **standard** to which the wife submits. The wife submits to her husband **as to the Lord** as both the ultimate authority over us and as limiting submission. Wives are to submit to their husbands in all things except sin. It is an attitude or a poise to one's submission to the Lord.

But why does God expect the wife to submit in this way? The husband's headship reflects Christ's headship over the church. It is that simple. It doesn't require detailed examination and a list of what if's.

This command does not exist in a vacuum. Wives are to look to the submission of the church to Christ as a model, a parameter for their own submission to their husbands.

Husbands, this does not mean that your wife is a servant to do your bidding or to bend to your every whim, preference or demand. You are to exercise this kind of authority only when you cannot agree on a necessary decision. You must not view nor treat your wife as being subservient.

Husbands (Ephesians 5:25-33)

So, what is the love of a man is to have for his wife?

Our American culture certainly doesn't help answer this question. The popular view of a man's love for a woman is a macho, sexual conquest attitude. He is the taker, she is the giver.

And even in Christian circles we sometimes get an "I'll do for you if you do for me attitude." Anyone can take, but biblical love is giving! Biblical love is the real test of masculinity. Godlike love gives.

³ Scott, Stewart W., *The Exemplary Husband*, (Focus Publishing, 2002),5

What degrees of love are husbands to show? We see both of these right away in verse 25.

Husbands love your wives. This is really quite a simple **command** yet so often husbands struggle with loving their wives. Why is this? I think it is simply because they do not love by the standard that Paul gives following the command. And that standard is also simple: we love with a Christlike, self-giving, sacrificial love.

Just like there is a **standard** for the way wives are to submit to their husbands, there is a similar standard in the way that husbands are to love their wives. And the purpose for this is stated in verses 26 and 27. His love is aimed about bringing about her best good for the glory and honor of God. And these two things help her fulfill her identity and purpose, the purpose with which God created her and placed her in the marriage.

In verse 28 we then see the phrase “in the same way.” And so in the same way that Jesus sanctifies her and in the same way that Jesus presents the church, the husband is to love her selflessly as well.

He is to love her in a way that cares for her needs. And why do we do this? Because this is what we do for ourselves so we look to caring for our wives in the same way that Christ cares for his body giving special attention to her heart and physical needs as well.

And we do so in our relationship as believers, “for we are members of his body.”

Husbands and Wives (31-32)

All of this truth is rooted in the Old Testament, as we read Paul quoting from Genesis 2:24.

Paul then summarizes in verse 33.

Husbands in your role as a husband, sincerely, sacrificially, and selflessly love your wife.

Wives in your role as a wife, respect and respond to your husband because submission is the key.

We could spend an entire weekend working through this text and to others to paint a more detailed picture of God’s design for marriage. And we could spend another weekend simply answering what if questions for husbands and wives on leadership and submission. Let’s conclude this evening with just a couple answers to those questions.

Husbands: what does leadership look like?

What leadership is not.

- A godly leader is not a dictator.

- A godly leader is not a dominator. Too many men think they must make all of the decisions in the marriage.
- A godly leader is not demanding. He does not force his wife to submit.

What godly leadership is.

- He focuses on needs, the needs of others.
- He is goal oriented, by setting godly goals.
- He is a problem solver. She turns to him for help.
- He is a godly teacher. He leads his wife and family in the Word.
- He is a joy to live with.

Wives: what the submission look like?

What submission is not.

- It does not mean inequality.
- It does not mean the infallibility of the husband.
- It does not mean that you may not speak or give opinions.
- It does not mean that your influence is impossible.
- It does not mean that you must be intellectually stagnant.

What submission is.

- It is a divine plan from God of function and order in the home.
- It is a way of life for every believer (Ephesians 5:21).
- It is an attitude. "As unto the Lord."
- It is an act of the will and not a feeling.
- It is a proof of her love.

A failure to actively pursue a high degree of respect for your husband will result in - growing tension in your marriage, increasing anger, discouragement, a downcast soul and a general hindering of God's work in your home.

Husbands and wives are ill equipped when they marry. So how do they become better equipped?

The essential training for a wife in her family is outlined in Titus 2:2-5. Older women are to train younger women in this area. The highlights of Titus 2 are:

Qualified older women are to train younger women. Not just any Christian woman is to be training younger women but only those who have the character qualities listed in Titus 2.

The content of this training is to teach what is good. Instructing what is true to the Bible and tested cultural wisdom. It is expected that younger women will need instruction in these areas.

And so at the Chapel we have older women available and identified to help teach younger women. Sometimes that is one-on-one, sometimes in a small group, and sometimes through organized women's ministry opportunities.

The essential training for the husband is similar. Older men mentoring younger men. Take advantage of men's training opportunities, look to men who have experience in marriage and who are of sound mind and know their Bible. Seek them out. Look for a mentor. Men this is your responsibility, not that of others.

A wife submits to her husband and she discipless him as her brother because of her coequal hierarchy.

A husband discipless his wife while humbly receiving care from his sister in Christ.

This is an amazing thing.