

XXII. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective
Foundations From Genesis
"A Theology of Marriage Part 3 – Redemption"
Ephesians 5:21-33
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Notice the exhortation Paul comes to as he goes through this walk of life and then he looks at how we submit to the Lord and one another in relationships. First he goes to marriage, then in Ephesians 6 he goes to family, parent/child and then in society but we will be focusing on what he is saying in marriage. Ephesians 5:21-33 which says *[21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

[25] Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We have already looked at marriage in creation and then marriage in the fall of sin and what sin has done to marriage and relationships. Now we are looking at the theology of marriage in terms of redemption. I will get started on it in this study and finish it up in the next study, both studies being from Ephesians 5. We will do a little more than an overview of this text in this study and then in the next we'll go deeper and also give some suggested best practices for marriage.

The first three chapters of Ephesians are devoted to tell us as Christians who we are in Christ by God's grace through the love of Christ. Then Paul moves from having declared the blessings of God for the elect in Christ, to the responsibilities of the elect in Christ – how we ought to live our lives. He starts with our personal matter – walk in a manner worthy of your calling, as he talks about that worthy walk by putting off the old and putting on the new, stewardship, redemptive labor and communication, etc. He includes our relationships within Christ's church and that is covered in Ephesians 4. Then he talks about how we are to submit to one another, not only in the body of Christ but in our relationships.

Paul goes to the foundational institution of the creation of the family. Then he deals in particular with the family but when Paul starts discipling the Christians that are going to receive this letter, and as he is teaching on marriage, he doesn't start with a Gospel marriage but with a creation marriage – marriage according to the creation mandate. A Gospel marriage, a redeemed

marriage is one that returns back to the sanctity of marriage in creation. It will build on it as well but it doesn't start with a new concept of marriage. Christianity doesn't develop a new doctrine of marriage in the name of the work of the Gospel. No, the work of the Gospel reclaims the sanctity of marriage.

Because Paul starts with the doctrine of marriage there is something that we are reminded of. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 which says [31] *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* In the Gospels, when Jesus is challenged about marriage and divorce He answers the question by going back to Genesis 2:24 also. The reason I point this out so much is that I believe everything that we need foundationally for life to the glory of God in Christ is found in the book of Genesis.

The origin of time, space, matter, sin, grace, etc. are included and declared for us in the book of Genesis and it's why I believe it's the most attacked and in some cases the most hated book of the Bible. The most hated of Genesis is Genesis 1 through 11 and in particular Genesis 1 through 3. It is the place of most constant assault both outside the church and inside the church where apostasy has begun. The very place that would confront our rebellion against God in society is the very place where the attack is given to us.

If Jesus is quoting from Genesis 2:24 do you think it's important toward the doctrine of marriage? Yes and what affirms this even more is that Paul uses Genesis 2:24 when he talks about the doctrine of marriage as well. It's crucially important. Paul is affirming the historicity, the transgenerational and the transcultural truth that is revealed in the book of Genesis. Paul is not treating it as myth, allegory, fable or speculation. He is treating it as a historical narrative – this is what God did. To begin space, time and matter and to end space, time and matter – therefore the book of Genesis is transcultural in what it reveals about who God is and what God has done as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

It is also a declaration of the sanctity of marriage. We live in a society right now that says to God ‘we will define marriage the way we desire to define marriage.’ You can be assured that God will not be mocked. You can break God's law but when you break God's law it will eventually break you. You cannot build a society on the whims, the fashions, the fads and perversities of a culture in rebellion against God. There will be consequences to it and it won't be long until they are felt.

We start on a creation foundation of what marriage is. A marriage is a covenantal, monogamous, heterosexual, conjugal relationship. That means it has a covenant with a sign and seal of that covenant. It has promises, commitments, vows with statements of intent. It is between one man and one woman. The man and woman are joined in the deepest of intimacy spiritually, emotionally, biologically, physically and sexually for they become one flesh. God has so created it to be this way, drawn us to be this way and God has so established it. The sign and seal of this relationship is not a ring for that's just a cultural conventional we do in a wedding ceremony to be appropriate in public affairs but actually it is upon the consummation of this union before God. I'm fully aware in the eyes of the state when the vows are taken then the marriage is legal. A covenant has a sacramental sign and seal but marriage is not a sacrament. So what is the sign and seal of the marriage – it's the consummation upon the marriage bed.

I'm fully aware that there are issues that happen because of sin in society where sometimes people can't get to that point of consummation therefore intimacy can be expressed in multiple ways but in this study I'm not going beyond that for two reasons. One I'm in a pulpit and two I get embarrassed. Hebrews 13:4 says [4] *Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.* So

the sexual relationship is either shameless in the sanctity of marriage or it is in rebellion with shame and guilt that comes outside of marriage. The writer of Hebrews puts it into two categories – ‘the honorable sexuality of the marriage bed.’ That’s what happens in the wedding ceremony.

If you map out marriage in the Old Testament you would see it begins with a commitment which then moves to a ceremony and then to the marriage bed and the consummation. It has three steps – the commitment/consensus, the ceremony and the consummation. In the ceremony is set up a Biblical covenant of marriage thus the marriage bed becomes the sign and seal of the relationship which is where the consummation has taken place. This is the basic layout that the Scripture gives us.

For instance, we see this with Mary and Joseph. They had the commitment/consensus but they had not yet had the ceremony (the wedding feast) or the consummation (where they would become one). The commitment was still considered a binding contract and that’s why Mary would be called a wife but Joseph knew there was no way he could be the father of the child she was carrying in the womb because there had been no ceremony and consummation. The commitment carried much more weight than our engagements do for to have finished or ended the commitment there would have had to have been a divorce because it was a public commitment that had been made. We do know that the baby she was carrying had come from the Spirit of God who places the Son of God in her womb.

I want you to see that you start with a Christian marriage, not by building what we think is a Christian marriage but we go right back to creation. This is where Paul starts when he disciples those back at the church in Ephesus, back at Genesis 2:24. Paul shows them what marriage is to be as God designed it – the historicity of it, the transcultural and transgenerational nature of it, but he also takes them to the reality of the fall as this text acknowledges there is a fall.

How does this text acknowledge the fall? Ephesians 5:22-24 says [22] *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.* Why would Paul tell the wives to submit and not only submit but to submit to their own husband? Then the wife is to submit to her husband in everything, so why would Paul bring focus to this?

Then in the following text, why does Paul go to the matter of loving his wife? As the wife received an example, an illustration in the bride as the churches relationship to Christ to guide her, now the husband gets an illustration and that is the Bridegroom Christ for His bride and that love is defined. Ephesians 5:25-33 says [25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. [28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” [32] This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

The first illustration the husband is given is to love his wife as Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for her and the second illustration he is given is to love his wife as he does his own body. Unless the insanity of sin has taken over nobody mutilates their own body unless they have been carried away by sin. We take care of our bodies and we should know because there are numerous multi-billion dollar companies built around this whole idea. My grandmother put on so many different creams before she went to bed, I lost count. Now, our bodies are groaning for they are not going to last but praise the Lord we will get a new body, but we're told to take care of our bodies because it is a temple of the Holy Spirit and bodily discipline is of some profit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). The husband is not only to take care of himself but of her for his wife is part and parcel of the husband. The husband is not to think any more outside of his relationship with his wife. This was started when you were leaving and cleaving.

The creation says one plus one equals one and nothing else. When you leave you have now started a new family where the previous immediate family becomes your extended family. So when my daughter got married I did lose a daughter and I didn't just gain a son, but once they were united now I get both of them and I become a part of that extended family that they now have as their family, just they are a part of my wife and I and our extended family. It is so crucial to understand the leaving and cleaving to become one and once you become one you never do anything in life as a husband apart from the knowledge of your union with your wife. She is part and parcel of you as your very own body.

A husband's love for his wife ought to nourish her and cherish her. The husband's sacrificial love moves her spiritually – you wash her with the water of the Word. A husband's daily love is love in which he is nourishing and cherishing her in your relationship and in her responsibilities in life, because we are members of His body.

Paul brings us to these multiple responsibilities but know what Paul assumes in the Ephesians text. Why would I have to wash my wife with the water of the Word unless there was growth she needed in grace and why would I have to be reminded to love my wife? Why would she need to be reminded to submit to me? We answered this when we studied the fall and what happens when the curse of sin enters the world. The curse that came upon Eve (the woman) was the Eve principle which affects her marriage and her daughters. The Eve principle is that women who are born would be born with the impulse and compulsion as predators of their husband's position – it preys on his position. This is the curse of sin when we are born with a sin nature from the line of Eve. The woman's compulsion is to take her husband's position and responsibilities.

The next text of the curse of sin for the man says that he will rule over the wife. The noun form of the word rule is the word for tyrant. So the man in his sinfulness will tyrannize his wife and he does this in one of two ways – either ignoring them and leaving them out to fin for themselves or intimidating them physically, verbally or emotionally. These are dastardly acts of sin. This is why Paul when he talks of the Christian marriage lays before men two responsibilities. One is the man is head of his wife as Christ is to the church where the man is called to lead his wife as Christ leads and Christ leads by serving. Christ takes the towel and washes the feet of the church in the Upper Room. Men are called to servant leadership – not dictatorial leadership or tyrannical leadership but leadership with a servant's heart.

Even in shepherding leadership the rod and staff in the hands of the Good Shepherd – they comfort. The rod is used to tend the sheep as the hook rescues them. The rod is also used to defend the sheep as the pointed end wards off the adversaries. Men are called to servant leadership and our wives do not exist for our fame, our applause or simply to meet our needs.

When you get married it is a call from Christ to shepherd, to serve, to lead with a shepherd's heart and servant leadership. The shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Then the husband is called to love her and you love her through your shepherding and servant leadership and sacrificial love as you nourish her. You love your wife as Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for her. This is a sacrificial love and leadership that you give to her. I want you to see these principles in light of the fall and in the next study we'll go over some suggested best practices that we won't do perfectly but will help in nourishing the marriage. The reason we are asked to love and lead in this way is because in us is an old man that would cause us to tyrannize our wives and we're called to say 'no' to that. We are called to have a countercultural marriage that is not like the world's and we don't just run through wives until we get the one that we can manage them to do whatever we want them to do.

No, when we have made a commitment it is one man, one woman, one life and the husband's calling is to love them and lead them. The wife's calling is not to compete or conquer their husband but to come alongside of their husband in submission. Eve came from Adam's side, not his head to be over him or his feet to be under him but to come alongside him to be a helper completer. The side/rib is that which is closest to the heart so we cherish her – heart of my heart. I love Martin Luther's nickname for his wife and that was prime rib (smile). We cherish, nurture, willing to sacrifice, serve, love and lead them. The wife submits, honors, and respects her husband.

Proverbs 12:4 says [4] *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.* Probably, just as men resort to their resources, size and strength as tyrants, sometimes women can very powerfully resort to the facility of the tongue that absolutely destroys that which is in a man's heart. I want you to see that responsibilities don't just come out of the blue. There is in a sense when I'm supposed to submit to my wife and I certainly want my wife to love me. This Ephesians text centers on my love and leadership for her but there are other texts of Scripture that tell her to love me. Yet in this text Paul focuses on submission and honor for the woman and her relationship with her husband. Paul is combating the fall here. He is telling us that God's grace in our marriages is greater than sin's curse. Therefore instead of men tyrannizing, we have men sacrificing, serving, nourishing and loving with servant and shepherding leadership and we can have this by God's grace and only in God's grace and His Spirit. Look at how distinctive that would be before a watching world.

Secondly, we have women who don't desire their husband's position. They realize, praise the Lord, they're different and they are different for a reason. Yes we are both made in the image of God and bear the image of God but we are made different so that we can unite for we're not just a partnership of repetition. When God said it wasn't good for Adam to be alone He didn't make another Adam – He made Eve, the reflection and therefore they were joined together as they were fitly made physically, biologically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and sexually. God made Adam a corresponding helpmate.

So I have given you the responsibilities of a husband and a wife and I will be coming back to them in the next study when we give suggested best practices to help our marriages. When we each do our responsibilities in His Spirit we are getting back to the creation order when God joined them together He said it was very good. We can go beyond there in the adversity of the face of a fallen world as we establish a counterculture in the face of this world. I long for this culture to embrace some facsimile of Christian marriage by common grace, but I don't expect it until God's people build Christian marriages that honor the creation mandate of marriage that overcome the power of sin in relationships by the power of God's grace.

I am an example of this where brilliant gifted women don't overshadow their husband but they find a way to honor and respect them so that in the gates of the city the people speak well of him (Proverbs 31). Those kinds of marriages are what produce a world that at least wants something like it. Sadly right now the world says they don't want anything like that, but we have to stay on our game in terms of what God has called us to be and do. I want to conclude with some observations.

The first observation is we not only get back to the creation mandate and God's grace overcomes the fall by producing men who love sacrificially, nourishingly, cherishingly and lead as servants and shepherds and women who love, submit, honor and respect their husbands as they come alongside of them, but we get to walk away from the first Adam and embrace the second Adam – Jesus Christ. Think about what would have happened if Adam had stepped up when Eve offered him the fruit and said 'Eve, wait you just misquoted God's Word' as he would be sanctifying her with the washing of the Word. Also, what if Adam would have said 'yes I ate of the fruit' when God asked him if he did and then said 'Don't take her, take me'? That is what the second Adam – Jesus – did. He said 'don't take my bride, take Me.' What if that picture and profile was embraced by God's people?

Many people would rather go buy a book that will give them three steps to helping them rather than digging down deep in God's Word and seeing what God says about the fall and the redeeming grace of God. Most want the quick and easy way out but discipleship is hard work. You have to get into the Word and rely on the Spirit of God and then you have to love one another well.

Another observation is that this Christian marriage that we are looking at on the one hand is foundational for the flourishing of all in society for what we are doing to marriage right now will destroy us and it won't take long, for you can't rip the pillars of the creation order out and expect it to stand in the vicissitudes of this age, because Paul says this mystery is great but Paul is speaking of Christ and His church. Paul doesn't give the picture of saving grace from Christ the Bridegroom and the church as His bride as an available illustration. No, God made marriage not only for the wellbeing and flourishing of humanity but He made marriage from the creation to be there to proclaim the work of redemption – His covenant love for His covenant people through His Son Jesus. Marriage was put here at the creation in anticipation of the fall and in anticipation of the work of redemption through Jesus Christ.

We have a sacred institution not only designed to bless us and from which we bless the Lord, but we have an institution (Christian marriage) to tell the world of God's covenant faithfulness to His bride – His people. By God's grace may we lift it up out of the mud and mire of this world graciously, confidently and intentionally. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word and go deeper into it. Bless my brothers and sisters not only in their life as we walk through this together but as they give this away to others but help us reclaim the glory and honor of the sanctity of marriage one marriage at a time and may the world see the truth, stability and power of Your Word and work in the hearts, lives and relationships of Your people. May they see Christ's love for His bride by looking at our relationships as bridegrooms and brides for Christ, to point to Christ, in Jesus' Name, Amen.