

Principles of a Godly Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-23

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, November 15, 2020

If you would, open your Bibles with me this morning to the book of Ephesians. We're going to look at chapter five together, which I would like to read to you. Before we get started, let's read chapter 5 starting in verse eighteen. There Paul says this,

And do not get drunk with wine for that as dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also as the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands and everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** This mystery is great, but I'm speaking with reference to Christ in the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also has to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it, that she respects her husband.

We'll end the reading there. Just to say a few words about this. While we're talking about the studies that we've done here at Grace fellowship, if you've been with us for a while, you'll know that we are currently in a study that we've been in for a long time as a church. This is our longest running series we've ever done, and it's on the book of Ephesians. In fact, I counted it up this week, and if you can believe it, this is the 43rd sermon we've done in this book. So we've done 43 messages so far, and we've done 25 since the Coronavirus, started. When the virus first started here in North America, we were doing it from our homes, right? You guys were watching at home and I was preaching from my basement. And now we're back together again, Praise the Lord. But the reason we're going so slowly, and the reason we're moving so cautiously through the book is because it tells us so much about God and what he wants from us. And one thing it tells us in this passage is that God wants to fill us. That's how this text begins. If you notice, in verse 18, it says He doesn't want to just touch us or zap us or just make a dent. It says this: "Do not get drunk with wine for that as dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." I've told you before that this is a strange passage. When you read it, it sounds very odd. But the word "filled" here is the Greek word "pleroo" and it means "to fill up" or "fill to the top". One Bible Dictionary says it means to fill until your cup runs over and spills out over the sides. And Paul says this is what you need to do with God. This is what you need to do with His spirit. Because that's how you defeat sin. The context for the passage and chapters four and five are

all about sin. The theme of those chapters is sin, and Paul says this is how you defeat sin now. This is how you kill it: you need to be filled with the Spirit. Again, that the word “fill” there is kind of an idea of it's a total thing in your life. You're not just moved on a Sunday morning you're not just touched. This is an absolute takeover. Sin wants to take you over and the only solution to that is to let God in the Spirit do it. And verse 19 says as you do that, here's what happens: you will worship. As you're filled with the Spirit, you will sing songs and hymns and spiritual songs, which is another way of saying that in your worship you will give glory to God. And verse 21 says, as you do that, this is what happens next in the text, you will submit on to what it says you will. In its own words here, if you're filled with a spirit, Paul says you will be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. That was the topic of our sermon last week, but this is another interesting passage in this chapter. It's very helpful because we don't often think of submission as an act of worship. We don't often think of our relationships with other people as part of our prayers to God. But Paul says it is a form of praise, because God cares how you treat people. God cares how you interact with each other, so you can't worship Him. Until you do this, you can't say that all I need is God and my Bible and that's it. Or you can't say as we like to do here in British Columbia, “All I need is Jesus in the woods and my fishing pole.” That's not true. Paul says, you need more than that, you need others. You need to be with other people. You can go out in the woods, but you need to come back. You also can't say this, (this is another thing you hear today) “It doesn't matter how I treat others, as long as God likes me.” It doesn't matter if I yell at them and shout at them and scream at them at work as long as God approves. Because Paul says God does not approve of that. He doesn't like it. When you do that you need to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, though the word subject there, the idea of the text is you need to respect each other. There's an element of respect in here, which is what the rest of the book of Ephesians is about. I've told you before, the theme of the rest of this book is about this idea of submission. Because verse 21, is a transitional verse, it forms a break with everything that's been said before, because the rest of this book, Paul's going to tell you what it means to do this. And if you notice in the passage, he starts here: he starts with the home. That's where he begins this discussion of submission. He starts with the family.

Verse 22 mentions wives and then verse 25 mentions husbands because that's your family. And he does this because this is the most important relationship you have; this is the most important relationship on earth to you. It's your family. They're the ones that love you the most. They're the ones that know you the most. So it all starts here. Paul is going to talk about other relationships in this book, as we're going to see. He's going to talk about relationships you have at work and, and maybe at school and in society. But it all pales in comparison to this: you need to focus on your family. Because you may like your coworkers, you may appreciate them and enjoy them and get along with them fine, but they're only around for so long. They retire and then they're gone. But your family never does. Your family never retires. So you need to make them a priority. It's the same way with your next door neighbors. It's the same way with the people in your neighborhood, you may love them, you may appreciate them. But they're only around for so long as well. They're only around until they sell their house and move away. And your family never does that. They never move away. So you need to treat them accordingly. In fact, this is interesting, because from what we can tell, Paul was a single man; he was never married, so didn't know what this was like from experience. He's not writing about this firsthand. But just using common sense, he says if we're going to talk about relationships, we need to start here. If we're going to start talking about getting along with people, we've got to start in the most obvious place and that's your home. It's the saddest thing in the world to me, when you go to a restaurant, and you sit next to an older couple, and they don't talk to each other the entire time they're there. They don't even know each other. And then the moment they get up, they start talking to somebody else as if they've known them all their life. It's not supposed to be that way. This is the most important

relationship that you have. If you want to see how he says this, in verse 22, Paul tells the wives to be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. We'll say a little bit about that in a moment. And in verse 25, he tells the husbands to love your wives, just as Christ also loves the church. And as you read that, you can tell that there's an interaction taking place here; there's an exchange going on between husband and wife. And it's going to last for the rest of the chapter; it's going to go on for the next 12 verses from verse 22, all the way down to verse 33, because the family is that important to God. It is that essential. I told you before the book of Ephesians is about walking the Christian life. In the first part of the book, chapters one through three tell you that you're saved. The next part of the book, chapters four, five, and six, tell you what that looks like. And this is what takes up the majority of space. To your family, this is important to talk about; it's an important reminder. Because of the way some people act, you wouldn't think their family is that important to them. They are too busy to bother with it. They are too distracted to care. Their minds are all taken up with work, and sports and hobbies or they are all caught up in social media, or they're on the phone all the time. They wouldn't spend two verses on their family, let alone 12. Paul says it shouldn't be that way with us. This needs to be a priority. You know, to say this another way, this is an important topic for me personally. After several years of ministry, I'll say this is the biggest issue that I face as a pastor. The biggest problem that we deal with as elders is conflict in the home; conflict in the family. It comes up over and over again and is a constant theme. I don't say that as a complaint, it's just a fact. The reason is simple: you can't hide from your spouse. You can't hide from the one you love. They know everything about you.

They see you at your worst. They know what you're like when you come home from church. They know what you're like when you come home from work and the lights are off and the doors are shut and your guard is down. The mask is off, and that's where the conflict comes in. They see the ugly side of you. And what Paul says here in this chapter is that if you want your marriage to survive all of that, if you want your marriage to make it when the ugly side comes out, you're going to have to work at it. You're going to have to make some changes. If Paul thought your marriage was all about feelings and emotions and just attraction, and that's it, he wouldn't have said all this. If he thought you could just go with the flow and make it work and that sort of thing, he wouldn't have gone through all this trouble. That's not what he says here. We read Psalm 127 during Scripture reading time, but v.1 says "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." And what that means is that unless you build your house with the Lord's help, unless you build your house with the Lord's guidance and principles and His Word, you labor in vain. It's all for nothing, because it won't last. It's like building your house on sand and it falls apart. You see a lot of people doing that today. Proverbs 24 v.3 says, "By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established." That means your house is built by the wisdom of God. It's built by his understanding and not your own. And the place, the only place, where you find that is in the Bible; the only place where you find the wisdom of God is in Scripture. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning.

If you're taking notes, in Ephesians chapter five, we're going to look at three principles for a godly marriage. Because this is such an important topic and it's so essential that we need an entire week to talk about it. Later on, we're going to go through these verses verse by verse very meticulously. But before we do that, we need to step back and just get the overall picture of what he's saying here. This week, we're talking about the principles. Next week, we'll talk about the pitfalls, because I don't have to tell you that there's a lot of confusion surrounding this subject of marriage today. There is a lot of chaos on this issue. If you don't believe it, just get to know your next door neighbour; get to know your coworker. It's confusing out there because so many people are trying to build their marriage on other things. They're trying to build it on other truths and it's not working. They keep falling

apart. That's why you see so much conflict in the home and Paul says here that we don't have to do that. God has given us instructions for our marriage, he's giving us something to build on, which needs to be our focus. So let's talk about that this morning with three principles of a godly marriage. These are very basic, but you're going to see they're very important.

The first one is this: marriage was created by God. The first principle of a godly marriage is that marriage was created by God, which means it is His idea. It is his concept in the first place. So he sets the rules for it. He sets the guidelines. You don't. I don't. The specialists don't. Just to go back over a little bit of the context here, if you look in verses 18 through 23, Paul says this:

And do not get drunk with wine for that as dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Wives be subject to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.

I told you before that verse 21 is a very helpful verse in this passage, and it gives us a helpful word, because it tells us to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. That word subject here, it's the Greek word *hypotasso*, which is a compound word from "*hupo*", which means "under" and "*tasso*" which means "to put". It means to put yourself under someone, or to willingly follow their lead. This is not to be done to you, it's something you willingly do. It was a military term in the first century. If you're familiar with the military, you'll know this is how it works. It has a chain of command where one soldier lines up under another, so that a private lines up under a sergeant and a sergeant lines up under a lieutenant and the lieutenant lines up under a major and a major under a general. That's what this word means. That's the concept here. Paul says it's a basic principle of relationships in human society, that we line up under each other. All of us do this on some level; we all follow somebody. Paul says we should be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. That means that we're to do this with people in the church; we're to do this with people in the body of Christ. We are to submit in the fear of Christ, which means this is part of our worship; this is part of our giving glory to God and Paul begins with the family. This is where the text starts, it starts in the home. Because verse 22 mentions wives, and then verse 23 mentions husbands, it's a reference to spouses in the home and as you read this, as you see this text, there's an underlying principle here that you've got to see which is that marriage was created by God. Paul doesn't come out and say it, but it is understood in the text. Marriage was God's idea. It came from the mind of God, it came from the mind of heaven. No one taught it to Him. No one showed it to Him. It wasn't like God was sitting up in heaven and one of the angels said, "You know, Lord, here's what you should do with those people down there. You should get them married." It didn't happen that way; that's not the way it worked. It came from the mind of the Lord, which gives a certain dignity to this.

As you read this passage, it gives a certain honour to the Institute of marriage that's missing today. There's a certain holiness about this passage; there's a certain reverence here. When God created mankind, when he created people, He made them male and female and the first thing He did was to marry them. The first thing He did was

to put them together. He didn't leave them alone. He didn't keep them apart. He didn't put them in clusters or communities or villages. He put them in marriage, within the covenant of marriage, which means that marriage is not a free for all. It's not wide open. You can't make this whatever you want it to be, because it's not your creation. It's God's. My kids like to make things in the room all the time; they create little toys. And as soon as one of the kids tries to mess with it, the other one says, "That's mine! I made it! Back off!" Marriage is God's creation. He has ownership of it. He has possession, so He makes the rules. And we need to add that you can't have a healthy marriage until you understand this. You can't have a godly marriage until you get this point that it all starts here: you are under the authority of God on this issue. You don't get to do as you please; you don't get to do whatever you want. It's not that way. There are a lot of issues God gives us freedom on but this is not one of them. You have freedom in your marriage, but you don't have freedom to just do whatever you want.

When Dr. John Street was with us for our spring conference last year (some of you will remember this) but he said when you read the psychology textbooks on marriage, and you read the secular textbooks, they get it so wrong, because they make it sound like marriage started when two cavemen met each other. I just started right by accident when one Neanderthal looked at the other one and said, "I like you, let's live together in my cave." And the other one said, "Oh, okay." And that's how it started. That's how it began. No, no dignity, no reverence. Just one big mistake. And that's not true. That's a lie. But so many people believe that today; so many people have bought into this concept and it gives them the impression that they are under no authority at all. Paul says here that's not the case. Marriage was created by God. It's not random. It's not an accident. It didn't come from the mind of a caveman. It came from the mind of the Lord. If you if you remember, the Bible says this way back in the book of Genesis. It says this way back in the beginning, the marriage came to us by God. In fact, if you look in chapter five verse 31 of this passage, Paul quotes from the book of Genesis in chapter two of that book, and he says, "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." That's an interesting quotation. It's very important, because it comes from the day that God made Adam and Eve. It comes from the day when God created the first man and the first woman. He created them into two sexes, two genders, not three, or four or five or six, two, and then he married them right away. Right after He created them, He married them because that was His intention all along. This is what He wanted to do with the human race. If you want to know what the human race has been called to do, this is it. It says that you find them so closely together, that they became one flesh, which gives an idea of permanence to marriage. You don't get to tear your flesh apart without huge consequences. You don't get to tear your body apart. The same way with the institution of marriage, this is how it started before you had neighbours, before you had coworkers, before you had friends, before you had enemies. You had this: you had marriage. You had marriage before you had kids. This is so important. This is why we're spending time on this this morning. This is so huge, because this is the bedrock of our society. This is this is the foundation for everything. I mean, so goes marriage, so goes the culture because the home is what teaches the kids.

The home is where we learn how to be humans. I don't have to teach my boys and you don't have to teach your boys and girls, that they learn how to be boys from the men around them. And they learn how to be girls from the women around them. That's common sense. If you take that away, what do you have left? And this is so scary, because if you think about it, there's been so much tampering with the institution of marriage. Recently there has been so much change happening to it. And we don't even have to go into too much of this. But just a few examples. One example is the whole idea of common law marriage. We've talked about this before, but the idea

that you can be married to someone without any covenant, without any commitment, without any vows. You just live together. Sleep around. In other parts of the world, you see polygamy happening depending on where you're from. But I've talked to some people from Africa and places like that, and marriage has become one man marrying one woman after another, together having three or four or five spouses at a time. Here in Canada were much too civilized for that. But we accept other things like homosexuality, same sex marriage, which is so confusing. It's so messy and it wouldn't be that way if we went back to this: Marriage was created by God.

Marriage is His institution, which means this if you're wondering what's wrong with some of those changes, if you're wondering what's wrong with homosexuality, or common law marriage, or polygamy, the thing that's wrong with it is God. God does not approve, and if He says it's wrong, then it's wrong. It's His creation; He made it, He sets the rules. If you're wondering this morning, why should I stay faithful to my spouse? Why should I keep my wedding vows? The answer is the same thing: you do it because of God. You're going to answer to him one day for what you did with those wedding vows. If you wonder why is marriage permanent, why does it last a lifetime, why it is one flesh, this is all because of God.

We didn't make this up. We lose so much when we forget this. Marriage has been given to us by the hand of God and leads us to another point to consider this morning. The first one is enough right there, we could just close and go home, right? We've forgotten this as a society. I would argue that we've forgotten this in many circles as a church. There are churches today that have forgotten the fact that they're going to have to answer to God for what they're telling their people about marriage. We have to take this seriously. So the first principle of a godly marriage is that marriage was created by God, which means it's His idea. It's His creation, so He sets the rules. He's the one who makes the boundaries and the guidelines which leads us to another point to consider this morning, another principle for a godly marriage: our roles were created by God as well.

Not only was marriage created by God, but secondly, our roles were created by God in marriage, which means that we can't make those up either. We can't tamper with the roles He created, the office of husband and wife. Not only did He create the big picture of marriage, but He created the details as well. If you look in verse 22, Paul goes on and says, "Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also as the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her." Just to stop there and say a little bit about this, as you read this, you can tell there's a comparison being made in this passage. There's a contrast being made between our marriage and Christ's marriage, between the marriage that we have with each other and the marriage Jesus has with us, which is important. This is actually significant because there are several comparisons that are made in the book of Ephesians. There are several contrasts that you see in this book, for example, just a few of them in chapter two, the church is compared to a citizenship, compared to a government. Because chapter two verse 19 says, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints. That's a governmental expression there. You're inside the country, now you're inside the boundaries. That's one comparison. Another one in chapter two is that the church is compared to a building. Chapter two verse 21 says, "In whom the whole building being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple. So those are two comparisons, the church is a building and a temple. Later on in the book, the church will be compared to a body, and a man, a new man, a brand new man, a brand new self. But here in chapter five, the church is compared to marriage; it is

compared to the relationship that a man has with his wife. For this reason that nothing is closer than that on this earth. Nothing is more intimate than that and that's how close Christ is to you.

This shows you how invested God is in our salvation. This is how involved He is. You can like the building you live in, but there's no big deal of demolishing it and tearing it down. You don't feel that way about your spouse. That's how much Christ loves us. To explain this some more (going back to our topic this morning), Paul shows us here what this looks like by giving us our roles in the family. In other words, our roles aren't random. They're not an accident. The idea of husband and wife didn't come from a caveman either. It didn't come about when some Neanderthal hit another one on the head with a club and dragged them back to their cave. It's not the idea here. It's so much more reverent than that. So for example, referring to the wives in v.22, it says, "wives be subject to your own husbands to the Lord." We've said a few words about this, and we're going to talk about this passage more in the weeks to come because I know it raises some questions. But let me just say the point I'm making here, this is the wife's role. This is what God wants her to do. She is to be subject to her own husband, not to any other husband but to her own husband, just as the church does for Christ. That was God's idea. That was His plan. And this is important to talk about because the way some people see this, the way some people look at this first, they think this is something that sinful men created in order to put women down. Some people see this text and I can quote to you from authors, we may do that in the next couple of weeks. Some people see this text as something that evil men did in order to keep women in their place and in the home and washing dishes. This is like a return to the dark ages to them. But if you notice as you read this is not the case. Paul says this came from the mind of God, this came from His hand, which gives this a sense of dignity. This role for a wife has a sense of honor if it's carried out in the right way. On the flip side, you see the same thing happening with husbands. In verse 25, it says, "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church. It's a very interesting thing to say, because after telling the wives to submit, you would think He would tell the husbands to lead but he doesn't. He tells the husbands to love their wives. He actually mentions that five times, because if husbands ever fail in anything, they fail in that. This is his role. This is what God wants him to do. He has to love his wife the same way Christ did for the church, which is a high standard, it's extraordinarily high. That came from the mind of God. Some people feel unsafe in their marriage but that's not because of God. This is what God wants in your marriage. This was not the creation of men are sinful man or sinful woman. Some people look at this verse in verse 25 and they see it as something that maybe sinful women created in order to keep their husbands down, in order to keep them soft and feminine and writing poetry. They see it as a return to the Victorian era where men wore frilly shirts and powdered wigs. That's not what this is saying. It didn't come from that. This is a manly thing. This is a masculine thing. If you want to know what true natural marriage looks like, this is it.

Everything else is unnatural. Everything else is an abomination, but the point is that God created our roles in marriage, He created the parts that we are to play, these are permanent, they can't be changed. They're not up for debate. They're not up for discussion. This is not something you vote on. A lot of times today, it's gotten to the point where the way we're determining marriage in this country and in America is by vote. Whatever gets to the Supreme Court, that's what marriage looks like in the US now. That's not what this said, which leads to some applications here. For one thing, this means that there are roles in your marriage. Marriage is not a free for all. There is a job to do. And we could say it like this: godly marriage takes work. It's not easy. We don't always like to talk about that because it sounds so unromantic to say. "Hey, honey, I'm going to work on our marriage." That can sound so dull, but it takes work. This has become so distorted today in our world, because we all have been

influenced by things like Hollywood and the Disney Channel. But if you watch a Disney movie, you'll know that the story is always the same. The plot is always the same: two people meet and they fall in love, right? It's just happily ever after it right after that. They don't even have to talk beforehand. They don't even have to know each other's name. They just fall in love. Can I just tell you guys that that's why it doesn't work that way. A day is going to come when you're going to argue. A day is going to come when you butt heads and you have to talk. And then what do you do? Stare deeply into each other's eyes again? well, if the eyes are full of rage, you don't want to look right at them. You got to go back to something else. And Paul says, we go back to this. These are our roles in marriage. This is what we're supposed to do. The husband needs to love his wife the way Christ loved the church and sacrifice for her and give himself up for her. And the wife needs to follow her husband. She follows his lead as he loves her.

This doesn't solve all your problems. It doesn't make them go away right away, but it's the place to start, which leads to another application: Marriage is not about your rights. It's about your duties. It's not about what you can get out of it from the other person. It's about what you can give. This text here, verse 22, was not written to husbands, it was written to wives. And what that means is that this isn't something for the wife to do for her husband, this is not something for the husband to demand of her. The same way in verse 25. This is not something for the wife to nag your husband about, this is a command for the husband to do himself.

I read an interesting statistic this week that said that the number one reason marriages fail is because of selfishness. Boy, that's a no brainer. Selfishness is the number one reason because of pride, because both people come into the relationship and they say, me, me, me, me, I want I want, I want I want, and it's not long before that doesn't work. They wanted their own way. Just not how this is written here. One commentator said it this way: he said, "The example of marriage that is set before us here is Jesus Christ. He's the one we are to imitate in our marriage, and He did not think about his rights when he died on the cross."

If you want a Christian marriage, a Christian marriage is a selfless marriage. It's not selfish. Christian marriage is where you give to others you don't get; you don't go into it to get. We have a saying in biblical counseling, that marriages and funerals go together. And what that means is that in order for a marriage to work, both parties have to die to something. Because both of them can have everything they want. It just doesn't work that way. I did a wedding for a young couple recently and I told them in the premarital counseling that this is how it works: when you stand at the altar, one of you, the groom, will hope his wife will never change, you will want her to look like that for all eternity. And the other one, the wife, the bride, is already thinking about ways to change him. And you're both going to have to die to that. You're both going to have to give something up. It's not about you. It's not about your rights. It's about the glory of God and the good of others.

This leads to one more point to talk about this morning, just one more principle for a godly marriage. Before that, let's review the other ones. The first one is that marriage was created by God. Marriage came to us from the mind of God, this was His idea. This was His creation. He gets to determine what it looks like. He sets the boundaries. A second principle for a godly marriage is that our roles are created by God as well. The parts that we play within the marriage are His idea too. He tells us what a husband and wife looks like. He tells us what it looks like to love each other care for each other and those things can't be changed either. Even if society doesn't like them, even if the world doesn't agree, that doesn't matter. This is what God has called us to do.

It brings us to one more point to consider this morning; one more principle for a godly marriage. I won't say too much about this one because we've talked about it before and we're going to be talking about this one a lot, but that is this: our marriage is only created to work in Christ. A godly marriage like this that looks like this is only created to work in Him, which means you can't do this on your own. You can't do this in your own power. You can only do this in the power of God. If you're reading this passage and saying, "There is no way. I can't do this. Have you met my husband? Have you met my wife?" Let me tell you that God has. He's met them and He says you can do it in the power of Christ. I've already read this to you, so I won't read it here, but one thing you notice as you read this passage is how many times the word Christ appears in here. It's actually an unusual thing. In the New Testament, most of the time the authors would talk about Jesus or they would use the word He or Him or Lord. But the word Christ appears five times in here. And if you add up the references, it appears 10 times. To remind you, Christ is the only way you can do this. This is the only way you can have a marriage like this. What I mean is this: for the wives, you may be able to submit outwardly, you may be able to go through the motions and follow your husband in a superficial sense on your own and grin and bear it and put up with him, but you can't follow him inwardly and willingly without Christ. It's just not possible. You can't do that. And husbands, you may be able to love your wives in a superficial sense of the term. You may be able to go through the motions in that way. You can buy her flowers and take her out on a date, but you can't do this on your own. You can't give yourself the way Christ did. But you can do it with His help. You can do it in Christ. He's the only one who makes this possible, which is why Paul keeps mentioning Him here. That's why he keeps bringing Him up: to show you that if you struggle in this, you can go back to Christ. If you wrestle with this, you can go back to Christ. If you don't always know what this looks like in your marriage, you can go back to Him. In fact, this is the only thing that separates a godly marriage from an ungodly one. This is the only thing that separates a Christian marriage from a non-Christian one: Christ.

It's not like the I don't think this is any revelation to you guys. But it's not like a Christian marriage is made up of people who are smarter and godlier and holier than everybody else. That's not true. It's not like a Christian marriage is made up of people who work harder and try harder. That's not it either. You get all of this because of Jesus. I was talking with someone this past week who told me they were struggling in their marriage, they were having a hard time. And the first thing I asked him (because I was studying this passage) was how is your relationship to Christ? Tell me about that because nothing can help you like He can. Nothing can change your marriage like Him. That person went on to tell me that this was difficult, and they felt alone and lonely. I said, "But you're not alone. If you're a believer, you've brought Christ into this marriage, and He can do something about it." In fact, there's an interesting parallel in this text, and that is this: the closer you draw to Jesus, the closer your marriage becomes. And the closer you get to Him, the closer you get to one another, but it all goes back to Him. He's the one who makes it work. R.C. Sproul once said that your marriage cannot be redeemed overnight, but the direction of it, the pattern, can change from bad to good. That can only happen through Christ, which leads me to ask, do you believe that this morning? Do you believe that your marriage can be healed and saved in Christ? I don't know where you're at on this today. I don't know where everyone's at on this issue of marriage. But I know that for some of you, you may be struggling in this. For some of you, you may be thinking your marriage is over. But as you read this passage, let me ask you, do you see that's not the case. Your marriage can make it with the Lord's help. There's not just two of you in the marriage. There's three. The Lord is there. To ask you another question: Do you look at marriage this way today? Do you see it as a creation of God and something special? If our world has done anything today, it has taken away the specialness of marriage and it's made it a very bland thing. I want you to see after looking at this that way back in the beginning, way back in the book of

Genesis, God gave a dignity and a reverence and a holiness to marriage that He gave to nothing else. Before there were jobs, before there were schools, before there was much of anything, there was marriage. We have to see marriage as a sacred thing that came from the mind of God. You know, in my studies this week, I came across an article from a British newspaper about a couple who had a very unusual wedding in a very unusual ceremony because the groom carried his bride down the aisle. He didn't walk her down the aisle, he literally picked her up and carried her. He did this because right before the wedding day, she was involved in a car accident, the bride was involved in a terrible collision which paralyzed her on one side so that she couldn't walk. And so at the ceremony, the groom met her at the steps, picked her up out of her wheelchair, and carried her to the altar. The wedding photographer said it was one of the most moving things he had ever seen. But friends, I tell you that story because that's what this passage is about.

This is what God is calling us to do in our marriages. He wants us to care for each other. He wants us to serve each other like this, which is a tremendously high calling. It's extraordinarily high. But the good news is on the front end of this study, you don't have to be intimidated by this. You can do this in the power of God. If God made marriage, He knows how to carry you through it and He and we're going to talk about that more in the weeks to come. But for now, let me close us in a word of prayer and ask for God's blessing on this series.

Heavenly Father, as we close up this sermon this morning, and as we consider this text in our hearts, and the things that we've talked about, I don't think there's anybody who doesn't put their hand over their mouth and feel ashamed. Our marriages don't look like this. Our homes don't look like this. We're so influenced by the world. And yet the good news is we have a Savior. We have One who has forgiven our sins, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only has He saved our sins, and not only is He saved our souls. He has saved our marriages. He can save us in our homes and Lord, that's my prayer for grace Fellowship Church. Lord, would you save the marriages among us? Lord, if there's any who are struggling this morning and they feel like they're at the end, would you let them know they're not at the end with You? You are God of grace and mercy You can turn things around in their home. If there's any who are here this morning who don't know Christ, Lord, would You show them what they're missing? They're missing a change that can alter every part of them and make them right with You and make them right with their spouse and, Lord, I pray You would save souls among us today. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.