

Ephesians 5:21-33

Introduction

Before looking at the specific roles of wives and husbands, let's look at Paul's underlying assumption in this passage: marriage was created by God and exists to give God glory by being a picture of Christ and the church.

The Passage

I. Paul's quotation of Genesis 2:24 (v. 31)

A. The Genesis story

- v. 7: God creates Adam
- v. 18: It's God's that Adam shouldn't be alone
- v. 18-22: God makes a suitable helper
- v. 22: God is the first "father of the bride" who gives away the bride
- v. 23: she is a perfect counterpart
- v. 24: a one flesh union
 - a. v. 24 makes it clear that God's intent is to bring about this one-flesh union in every marriage
 - b. Clearly the union is God's doing (this is Jesus' point in Mt 19:1-12: "What God has joined together")

B. The big idea: marriage is God's doing from start to finish

We may have experienced our marriage as something we did/decided, but ultimately our marriage was God's doing

Implication: since it's God's doing, we are not to undo what He has done

II. Paul's radical Spirit-inspired interpretation of Gen 2:24 (v. 32)

A. The "mystery"

A mystery is something previously kept secret by God that He has now made known to us (e.g. the mystery of the Gentiles in Ephesians 3:6)

B. The mystery is that Gen 2:24 is ultimately talking about Christ and the church

1. God knew all along that that reality of two becoming one flesh would ultimately be fulfilled in relationship of Christ and church
2. Marriage was meant to be a picture pointing us to that ultimate relationship between Christ and the church
3. John Piper on how Christ fulfills 2:24: "Christ leaves his father and takes the church as his bride, at the cost of his life, and holds fast to her in a one-spirit union forever."

We are members of Christ's body: Eph 5:29

C. So, our marriage is to be a picture of Christ and the church

III. Our marriages should reflect the core realities of the relationship between Christ and church

A. Christ and the church: what does the cross show us?

1. Agape love: a commitment that leads to costly sacrifice (the "blood of the covenant" in Mt 26:27-28)

2. The forgiveness of sins (the “forgiveness of sins in Mt 26:27-28)
- B. Our marriages
1. Agape love: a commitment that leads to costly sacrifice
 - a. Hollywood paints a picture of relational consumerism: romance, feeling special feelings, amazing chemistry
 - b. Culture says: marriage exists to meet my needs
 - c. Bible says: marriage exists to provide me an opportunity to radically commit to and sacrifice for another human being.
 - d. Question 1: What are the areas in your marriage where you have an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to your spouse in a way that is costly? What are areas where you feel like your needs are not being met but where you can demonstrate agape love?
 2. Forgiveness of sins
 - a. Grace and forgiveness should be the foundation and atmosphere of our marriages.
 - b. See Colossians 2:13-14: God canceled the written record of our sins and nailed them to the cross
 - c. “Love keeps no record of wrongs”
 - d. We’re tempted to take our spouse’s record of sins down from the cross and hold it in their faces: criticism, resentment, bitterness
 - e. We have to always remember that on the cross God has already forgiven them all their sins, and so must we
 - f. Question 2: Where do I need to extend grace to my spouse? Where have I grown bitter, critical, resentful?

IV. Marriage is a just a picture of Christ and the church

- A. Marriage is not the ultimate end-all-be-all reality
1. Marriages are temporary: One day our marriages will dissolve when the real marriage (Christ and the church) comes in eternal life (Mt. 22:23-33)
 2. When the reality comes we won’t need the pictures of that reality
- B. Single people
1. Don’t idolize marriage. Singleness should not be viewed as a plan B
 2. Singleness affords certain opportunities for God’s kingdom not afforded by marriage (e.g. the raising of more spiritual children)
- C. Married people
1. Don’t idolize your marriage

Don’t look to your spouse to meet your deepest needs for intimacy, meaning, security, significance, acceptance. They were never meant to ultimately fulfill those needs. Only Christ himself can.
 2. The most loving thing you can do for your spouse is pursue your own relationship with Jesus and get your deepest needs met from him so that you are freed to love your spouse.

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. If you are married, how has your view of marriage changed since you first got married?
3. Before we look ahead to the specific roles of wife and husband, how does this fundamental picture of the analogy with the relationship between Christ and the church influence how you want to approach your marriage?
4. The first core posture we talked about is agape love defined as “a commitment which leads to costly sacrifice.” What is a specific area in your marriage right now where you have an opportunity to demonstrate commitment in a way that is costly?
5. The second core posture we talked about was the grace and the forgiveness of sins. What is an area in your marriage where you feel God’s urging to extend more grace to your spouse?
6. We talked about marriage being just a picture of the ultimate reality (our relationship with Christ) rather than the ultimate reality itself. How have you idolized your marriage? That is, how have you expected things from you marriage/spouse that marriage was never intended to fulfill?