

Marriage And The Gospel Part 3

Ephesians 5:22-33

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Well, it's our joy to be back in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. If you would, turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5. This is part 2 of this section of our marriage series now that we're in the middle of. Marriage to the glory of God. Ephesians 5, specifically verses 22 to 33.

You've probably heard or even used the phrase a picture is worth a thousand words. We use that phrase, of course, because we know it rings true. There's something about seeing a physical image that communicates truth in a way that mere words cannot. This is why in our day and age, if you want to do a house project or want to learn a new hobby, typically rather than picking up an instructional book, you'll find an instructional video online because the video is typically more helpful and more relatable to learn that task.

Or think of it from the instance of hearing about a story or a tragic historical event like the Holocaust or even 9-11 versus actually seeing images and footage from those events. Those pictures and those videos, they hit home with us in a different way than someone just telling us the story or even reading about the story. We feel the emotional impact of those events and we understand better their historical significance for today.

In the same way, God has graciously given us living examples or illustrations of deep spiritual truths. And one essential illustration that he's given to us is the gift of marriage. Of course, we've already studied that the covenant of marriage was designed and instituted by God Himself and it is, of course, meant to be a gift to mankind. It is a joy to us.

But as we read the scriptures, we come to understand that marriage also serves a much greater purpose than just accomplishing human flourishing and human enjoyment. The covenant of marriage is designed to illustrate several crucial elements of gospel truth. And in our passage today, we're going to continue to examine the illustration of marriage and how marriage is to be a gospel light to the world around us.

Now, if you haven't been with us, let me just quickly catch you up to speed on where we've been. We began by looking at this overarching idea that God has created us primarily for the purpose of his glory and enjoying him forever. And only when we're living for those two great aims does everything else fall in place in life and in marriage.

Secondly, we looked at God's perfect design for marriage in Genesis chapter two and the corruption of marriage by sin in Genesis chapter three. But that led us to the promise of a redeemer also in Genesis chapter three, verse 15.

And so we ended up looking at the gospel in Titus chapter three. And we learned that the gospel really is the lifeblood of marriage. If you are not in Christ and the gospel is not permeating your personal life and your marriage, then you can't live in the way that God's intended marriage to be.

So the gospel is of crucial importance to marriage because it's transformative. And we're looking at this transformation of the gospel in a couple of different categories. First of all, **The Gospel Transforms You** as an individual and transforms me. God redeems us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He regenerates us and makes us new on the inside so that we then can walk in a way that honors Him, that grow in sanctification and holiness and the truth. So unless you're born again, regenerated, made new by the Holy Spirit, you cannot walk in godliness and therefore your marriage will not represent the gospel in the way God intends.

But secondly, we've been looking at the fact that **The Gospel Transforms Marriage** itself. And this is what's led us to Ephesians chapter five, verses 22 to 33. Let's read our passage again and then we'll dive in to our text for this morning.

Ephesians 5, 22 begins:

"22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 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. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 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. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

The great theme that we've been unpacking from these verses is that **The gospel transforms the motivation, the standard, and purpose for marriage**. The motivation, standard and purpose for marriage. We see this in Ephesians 5 by three key truths that are highlighted here. We've looked at the first truth already last time and we started the second. Today we'll finish the second truth and look at the third.

But quickly, truth number one that we saw here in verses 22 and 24 is that **The Gospel Transforms Wives**. Paul gives the command here that a Christian wife is to submit to the leadership of her husband. The husband is to lead the family with love and with grace and kindness and she is to willingly submit to his leadership. We talked about the fact that that submission is not simply because she's a Christian but this is part of the created order. This is how God made marriage to be, period, for all of mankind, but as a believer now who's been regenerated and made new, the wife has her true hope as the Spirit works in her of fulfilling the role that God has given her, not in perfection but in the direction of her life.

But secondly, we saw truth number two **The Gospel Transforms Husbands**, to which all the wives said amen and amen, may it be so. And we're thankful for that. We see that in verses 25 to 30. We started this last time. The overarching command of God to husbands throughout the scripture is to love our wives. And just as a wife's submission is to be rooted

in her love and submission ultimately to Christ, the love of a husband for his wife is to be an overflow ultimately of his love and his submission to Christ.

We're given **Two Descriptions of how the Gospel Transforms a Husband's Love**. First of all, we saw last time that a husband is to love his wife **As Christ Loves the Church** and that love in verse 25 is **A Sacrificial Love**, and in verses 26 and 27 it's **A Sanctifying Love**. The love of Christ for the church led Him to give Himself up for the church to lay down His own life to redeem her by His own blood, so that ultimately, He could sanctify her, he says washing her with the water of the word. Ultimately what Christ is doing is redeeming a people for Himself that He will sanctify and one day bring to Himself in glory so that they can be with Him forever.

And so then, the husband's love for his wife is to be saturated with Christ-like sacrificial love and his greatest aim as an individual is to be personal holiness, the growth in personal holiness, and his greatest aim for his wife is to see her transformed into the image of Christ, not by his doing but by the power of the Spirit.

But Paul's not done with husbands. He goes on then to describe the love that we're to have with our wives with a **Second Description** and this is where we pick up with new information today in verse 28. Here's the second description of how husbands are to love their wives. Husbands, love your wives **As You Love Yourself**. As you love yourself. Verses 28 to 30:

"28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body."

Now this is a specific example of the larger principle in Scripture that we are to love our neighbor as ourself. But specifically, Paul takes that and applies it to the husband here and says husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.

Now, notice first of all in verse 28 it says husbands *ought also to love their wives*. The Greek word there is the word "to owe someone something". That is because this is a command of God. Husbands owe it. We are responsible to love our wives in this way. It is commanded, it's expected of us by our Savior. And specifically, he says love your own wife as your own body.

The reason for that is because in marriage the husband and wife are joined together in a one flesh union so that they are permanently connected until death. That's why he says he who loves his wife loves himself. That's because in the eyes of God when you take your wedding vows you are then cemented together. You literally become one in the eyes of God. Your wife is just as much a part of you as your right arm, theologically speaking. And vice versa for her. You are one flesh.

In that sense to love her is to love yourself because she literally is a part of you. That's the way that God sees this marital situation. And of course Paul understands as we do that all people naturally love themselves. If you don't believe that you've never been on social media. It makes it very obvious. All people love themselves. Even when we're disappointed with ourselves, even when we wish something was different about the way we look or

something in our life circumstance, we still love ourselves. That's why Paul says for no one ever hated his own flesh.

We know that because instinctively we know to care for ourselves. When you're hungry you feed yourself. When you're thirsty, you stop what you're doing and you find something to drink. And when you injure yourself, the rest of your body jumps into action to help that part of the body that's hurt.

I want you to think for a moment about the last time you seriously injured yourself. The kind of injury that you will remember for the rest of your life and tell that story. What did you do? Think about that. How did that feel? What did the rest of your body do in response to that injured body part? Let's say you broke your arm. If you break your arm, the rest of your body, I know because unfortunately I've done it, jumps into action to cover up that arm to protect it. And you just let somebody try to come along and see if they can touch that arm. The rest of your body is going to protect that arm. Right? It's going to jump into action. You're not touching my arm.

I'm curious. The last time that you significantly hurt yourself, did you say to that body part, Oh, come on. It's not really that bad. I mean, I understand you're hurting, but this display of emotion is a little bit over the top wouldn't you say? Did you roll your eyes and say, here we go again? Of course not. The rest of your body was deeply concerned about that body part. I mean, you cut your finger and you get sick at your stomach because your body is reacting to this finger. Your stomach's not connected to your finger but it is somehow. It cares. Your whole body cares about every other part of the body.

And that's a perfect illustration for Paul to use then to say, husbands, love your wife like you love your own body. Care for her in the way that you instinctively care for yourself. When she hurts physically or emotionally, you take it seriously and you respond to that hurt or emotion as if it's happened to you personally. And you know, we don't do it based on how much we personally identify with her pain or her perspective. We do it because we've committed to love her as an overflow of our love for Christ.

It's such a crucial thing to understand. It doesn't matter if the thing that has hurt our wife or unsettled our wife is something that would hurt or unsettle you. So many men make the determination on when they're going to show tenderness to their wife based on whether they can mentally understand why she feels the way she feels. And if they come to a different conclusion and say, well, I don't think you should be responding like that, they withhold kindness and care and gentleness. That's not what Paul says. He says you respond to her because you owe it to her to love her this way because it's commanded of you by Christ. You don't have to understand it. You just love her. It concerns her and she concerns you. So you love her.

Peter says it this way in 1 Peter 3:7. He says:

"7 You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."

When Peter speaks here of loving our wives in this way, and he refers to her as one who is weaker, I think he's talking particularly about physical strength, typically because of the way God physiologically has made men and women. The husband's going to be physically stronger than his wife in most cases. And it puts our wife in a vulnerable situation. She's commanded to submit to our leadership. We have physical power over her if we were to exert that. And it puts her in a vulnerable situation. And he says we're to love her in an understanding way to treat her with honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life.

What he's saying is she's not just your wife. She's a sister in Christ. She's an equal heir of eternal life. And our love for our wife ought to reflect that. When he calls us to live with her in an understanding way, he's not saying that we will always understand. We won't, and neither will she always understand us.

It's to choose to live with her in understanding, in an understanding way with gentleness and love because we care about her ultimately as an overflow of our love for Christ. We protect our wives. We are willing to be patient and to listen to them and to show real concern for the things that concern them, remembering always that she's a sister in Christ.

And this is so serious in the mind of God. Look at the consequence there in 1 Peter 3:7 that's given. If we neglect to live with our wives in an understanding way, he says you need to do this *so that your prayers will not be hindered*. Now think about that. Men, love your wives in an understanding way so that your prayers will not be hindered. What has Peter just said? Well, both Paul and Peter are abundantly clear that our marital responsibilities are deeply connected to our relationship with Christ.

Submission for the wife and love for the husband are acts of obedience, again, out of our love for Christ, and that means for us, men, when we choose to show no concern for the things that concern our wives, we incur the discipline of the Lord, and he says, I will not show concern when you bring your concerns to me. That's a pretty strong statement. In other words, God says, husbands, if you don't listen when she brings you her concerns, I won't listen when you bring me yours.

So don't fool yourself into thinking that you have a great relationship with God. It's you and her that have problems. Well, God says it doesn't work that way. If there's sin in the way you're treating your wife, then there's sin this way, too. And that's why it begins with a right relationship here that then leads to a right relationship here.

Now, this kind of love that we automatically give ourselves is described for us here with two key words. Notice the words that Paul uses in verse 29:

"29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it..."

Nourishes and cherishes it. Men, I want us to think for a moment about those two words. The **first aspect** of this kind of love that we naturally show to our bodies is that we **Nourish** our bodies. That is, we provide for the physical needs of our body. We ought to provide for the physical needs of our wife. It's a willingness to provide for her, to protect her. When our bodies tell us they need something, we are willing to respond. Are we as responsive to the needs of our wives?

Now, obviously that applies to her basic needs as a human being. But let's be honest. Do we only provide the basic necessities for our bodies? Not if we can afford to do otherwise.

Right? Many times we eat things not because they have really any nutritional value at all. We eat them for enjoyment because it's something we like. Something we want to eat. We don't just wear whatever clothes are on the rack. We go buy clothes that we like. Clothes that somehow express our personality to the level that we can afford to do so.

We give treatment to our bodies that go beyond just the bare necessities. And we ought to care for our wives, men, with a generous hand, knowing her likes and dislikes. I want you to think of it this way. Be generous with your wife, with all your resources. And by that I mean all resources. Time. Affection. Attention. Finances. Friendship. All the resources God's put at your disposal. Nourish your wife. Be generous with her in those ways. Just as you are naturally to yourself.

The second word, the **second** key word and **aspect** of love here is the word **Cherish**. We cherish our bodies. This is a more intimate word than the word nourish. The only other place in the New Testament where this word is used is in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 talking about a mother's care for her infant child. It says:

"7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children."

Ever paid close attention to the way a mom cares for a newborn baby? She's clued in completely to the needs of that little child. We could be here fellowshiping in this room after service and maybe somebody else is holding the baby on the other side of the room and you just let that little baby start crying and that mom, no matter who she's talking to or what she's doing, knows that cry is her baby's cry and she's on a beeline to find that little baby. And when she gets there, she doesn't take the baby and say thanks again for interrupting my conversation so that I don't get to talk to anybody. She begins to comfort that baby and rock that baby and soothe that baby until it calms down. Why? She cherishes that baby. The baby's precious to her and nobody doubts it. Everyone can see it.

Men, we're to cherish our wives. We're to regard them as precious to us, as gifts entrusted to us by God. We don't see them as inferior. We see them as spiritual equals delegated to us. Their care has been delegated to us. It's a gift. It's a responsibility.

It insinuates that we're not only careful to provide for her physical needs, but we take her preferences and her concerns seriously. She has to know that she is our highest human priority. There's God, and then when it comes to human relationships, she's at the top of the list, unquestionably so. It should never be a doubt in her mind that that's true. When she calls, we take her call. When we're in a room, we try to catch her eye across the room and when we do, we smile with a reassuring smile.

We initiate conversation and we listen to her concerns, her joys, and her cares. We determine to know what makes her tick, to know what she likes and what she dislikes. We want to learn her strengths and her weaknesses. We want to know her fears and how we can pray and we do pray for her in her presence and in private. We want to know her spiritually. We want to know about her time in the word and what she's reading and what

she's meditating on and how we can come alongside and be an encouragement to her as she seeks to follow after Christ. And the list goes on and on and on.

You know, I've found and practically, personally, and in lots of conversations with other men that one of the aspects of love that often our wives are longing for is simply undivided attention. One of the ways that our wives want to be cherished is to know they have our attention. No TV, no cell phone, no being there physically but mentally replaying all the things of the work day. Just eye to eye, fully engaged, excited to be with her.

Cherishing shows up in the way we're careful to speak to her and about her. It shows up in our generosity as I mentioned with our resources. You know, I've met many men who are stingy with their wives financially. When their wives want to buy something they suddenly turn into Dave Ramsey and they pull out the spreadsheet and they explain to her that they're aghast that she would ever think of buying something like that that's outside the budget.

But then a few months later when they're ready for an upgrade in their truck or a new bass boat, suddenly they've got a great story and they bring out the spreadsheet and show how it fits neatly into the budget and how this is really for the family. This will be a great thing for the family in the summer, don't you think?

Men, if we asked your wife today and she was able to answer honestly, would she say that you cherish her? Think of it this way. If you asked your wife to describe the way you treat her in one word, what word would come most quickly to her mind? Would it be a word from this first list like servant, cook, mistress, inconvenience? Or would it be friend, partner, delight, companion? Thankfully men, even in this, Christ is our motivation and He's our example.

Because notice how Paul ties this together at the end of verse 29 and verse 30. He says: *"29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body"*

Now think about that. When it comes to His church, Jesus nourishes and cherishes the church. And He does it unceasingly. He does it often when the church still sins against Him, though we all sin every day. He loves us unfailingly. He never changes. And day in, day out, moment by moment, He offers us this kind of nourishing and cherishing love.

As I thought about the love of Christ and the way the Bible describes the practical ways that Jesus loves us, I thought it would be helpful just to put together a short list. This is just a sample. It's not exhaustive. But of some of the ways that we have chapter and verse ways that **Jesus cares for us on a daily basis**. Here it goes.

- One is **Daily Provision. (Matthew 6)**
- It says in 1 Timothy that He **gives us all things to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17-21)** He desires for us to enjoy the things He gives us in life.
- **He loves us. (John 13:34-35)**
- **He's preparing a future place for us to be together with Him. (John 14)**
- **He prays for us. (Hebrews 7:25)**
- **He sympathizes with our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15)**

- **He comes to our aid in temptation. (Hebrews 2:18)**
- **He gives us peace** as we come to Him in prayer and trust Him. **(Philippians 4:6-7)**
- **He invites us to share our burdens with Him. (1 Peter 5:6-7)**
- **He cares for us. (1 Peter 5:6-7)**
- **He protects us. (John 10:27-29)**
- **He's our friend. (John 15:44)**
- **He treats us as His own flesh and blood. (Ephesians 5:29-30, Colossians 1:18)**
- **He loved us at great personal cost, the highest cost. (Ephesians 5:25)**
- **He gives us wisdom when we ask. (James 1:5)**
- **He always stands ready to forgive us when we repent. (1 John 1:9)**
- **His strength strengthens us by His grace every moment of every day. (2 Corinthians 12:9)**

Just a few ways that He nourishes and cherishes us as His bride. Jonathan Edwards says this, "Whatsoever there is, or can be, that is desirable to be in a friend, is in Christ, and that to the highest degree that can be desired."

He's the perfect friend. He cares for us in every way. And listen, as you hear that list as a husband, as a wife, understand my desire this morning is your encouragement, not your discouragement. I've not brought up these examples to beat us down or to just simply show us where we fail, but to help us understand that where we fail, our Savior never fails. He's always perfect in love, perfect in goodness. And that changes everything.

Because understand, this standard that's laid out for us here in Ephesians 5 is an impossible standard for us, in perfection. Yes, it ought to be in tangible ways the direction of our life and the way we love and care for our wives and the way they respond to our leadership, absolutely. But you will never on a single day in this life perfectly meet these qualifications. Because the qualification is Christ Himself. It keeps coming back to, as Christ does, as Christ does, as Christ does.

It's important for us to remember that you will always be able to find deficiencies in your spouse. And you'll always be able to find deficiencies in yourself. That's true of each one of us. It brings us back to the overarching point that we began with. The hope for marriage is not found in the perfection of your spouse. The hope for marriage is found in the perfection of Jesus Christ. When your spouse is deficient, and they will be, you turn your eyes to Christ, and you find your hope. There's no deficiency in Him.

And this is what motivates us to get up and to keep running for the Lord, and to not give up on our marriage. The hope for marriage is found in the perfection of Christ, which means we can't look at our marriage in isolation from Christ. Look at your marriage through the lens of Christ. Understand what He's doing in your life. Your whole marriage will be one long journey of sanctification. Just as your whole life is one long journey of sanctification. We are always growing by God's grace, but never fully arriving in this life until He brings us home. It's important for us to understand that from the get-go.

It's important if you're single this morning to understand that. Men, if you're looking for the Proverbs 31 woman, understand that is a perfect illustration. It's not about a real woman.

You're not going to find her. If you look for a woman that meets those qualifications in perfection, you'll be single for the rest of your life.

Women, if you're looking for a man who meets the qualifications in Ephesians 5 perfectly, you're asking to marry the Lord Jesus Christ. You won't find Him. The good news is we already have Him. We have Him.

And it's why we have hope. That while we will not find a perfect spouse, nor will we be a perfect spouse, if we fear the Lord, we dedicate ourselves to loving Him and others above ourselves, and we are dogmatically committed to the Word of God as the standard and the rule for our lives, then by God's grace through His Spirit we can grow and have marriages that are sweet and that do reflect, not in perfection, but certainly an illustration of Christ in the church.

But don't you see? The perfect love of Christ becomes the motivation then for obedience. The perfect love for Christ becomes our comfort when we fail, and when our spouse fails. The perfect love of Christ becomes the reason that we have hope that both of us are still in process. God's not done yet. If you're in Christ, He's not done with you, and He's not done with your spouse. So there's loads of hope for the future. It doesn't always have to be this way.

If your marriage is a struggle, it doesn't have to stay that way. God is big, and He's good. So we give our maximum effort towards obeying these commands, and then we choose to enjoy our marriage today as it is along the way, as God grows it to be more and more a reflection of His desire. And when our spouse fails, Christ succeeds. And where our spouse succeeds, Christ gets the glory. It's Christ. He's our hope. He's our object of worship.

So the joy and hope for marriage is directly connected to the fervency of our commitment to the glory of God and the enjoyment of God in all things. But there's another truth here in Ephesians 5 that's crucial to our understanding, and it's **Truth Number Three: The Gospel is Illustrated by Marriage**. The gospel is illustrated by marriage.

Now we've touched on this, but here it comes into full view. This is verses 31 and 32 to start. He writes:

"31 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. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

Now I want you to notice, first of all, that verse 31 just at a quick glance doesn't seem to neatly fit contextually with what we just studied. It seems like it's kind of a shift from verse 30. And that's because, hopefully in your Bible, the lettering there is in a different font, because this is a direct quote from the Old Testament. This is Genesis 2, verse 24. And he's bringing this in to make a very specific point.

Obviously, in its original context, we've already looked at Genesis 2, verse 24. There, Moses is writing, inspired by God, a verse based on that first wedding ceremony in the garden, of Adam and Eve. But here it's something different, obviously.

In its original context, he's saying that because of the reason that God established in the created order marriage, marriage is to go this way. And there are **Three** specific **Descriptions** about marriage, just quickly, that he mentions. For marriage to take place, you're to, one, **Leave Your Parents**, he says. A man shall leave his father and mother. That fundamental relationship that is yours, they are your authority before that time of reaching adulthood. Then, as you become an adult and leave your home, both of you leave your homes, and you have a new primary human relationship.

And that leads to the second aspect. We're to **Cleave To Our Spouse**. He says, you leave your father and mother, and you're joined to your wife or husband. This, again, this word joined is like cemented. It's an unbreakable bond between the two, so much so that the third description becomes a reality, and the two shall become **One Flesh**. So, they leave, cleave, and become one.

That joining together of two individuals becoming one flesh is celebrated, certainly in the physical relationship of marriage, but beyond that. It's a holistic description of two lives coming together in every way, of two people being one together.

But the question is, why does Paul include this quote here, in this context in Ephesians 5? How does this fit? Well, notice, first of all, the first three words in verse 31, *for this reason*. Again, we know what that means in Genesis 2, but here he's saying, for the reason of what he just explained, in this context, a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and so on. We know specifically what he means because of verse 32:

"32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."

Now, the word "mystery" here is a word that Paul often uses. The Greek word refers to, in this context, a truth that was previously unknown to us that's now been disclosed by divine revelation. What Paul is saying is that this has always been true. It's not as if this now suddenly became true in this moment, but it was revealed later in time, after the coming of Christ. God reveals to Paul that all the way back when Moses wrote those words originally, it was not just the creative order that was for this reason, but because Christ was going to come and redeem a people for Himself and be united to those people, the church.

So, God, in instituting marriage from the beginning, had the illustration of Christ and the church in mind, is the point. This is the ultimate design for marriage, to be a living witness and illustration of the fact that we serve a redeeming God who would redeem a people for Himself and that He would be with them forever, that we would be one with Him.

Now, when you understand that, it should revolutionize the way you think about marriage. It's true. Marriage is a gift of God, and it brings much temporal joy in this temporal life. But the goal of marriage is so much more grand than just personal enjoyment. Marriage exists to be a living illustration to a lost and dying world of the redemption of Christ in the gospel. It's a grand purpose.

God chose that He would send His son to rescue a people. The son would come and rescue that people by giving His own life. And then He would save those people and wash them with the word and sanctify them so that one day He could bring them to be with Him

forever. And He would be one with them. His spirit would be in them so that He is in them and they are one with Him.

And that's to be illustrated now through the one flesh union of marriage. Don't you see, Christian? The reason that we persevere in marriage and we seek to be the kind of wife and the kind of husband that God calls us to be is not about our spouse. It's not even about having a happy, easy life. It is about honoring the Lord Jesus Christ and testifying to the world He's come. The redeemer has come and He longs to ransom his people to Himself.

You see how it elevates our understanding of why we're to give such effort towards this. That's why Paul circles back in verse 33 to close out:

"33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

This is a summary statement of all that he said. He summarizes the husband's role down to the phrase *love your wife as yourself* and the wife's role is to *see to it that she respects her husband*. The word respect here is literally the word for "fear" but that's misunderstood easily in our culture especially. That doesn't mean, obviously, to fear your husband in the sense of being afraid of him. It's a call to respect him, to submit to him, to see that his authority is a God-given authority and to respect him in that way.

Notice it says *see to it* that she respects her husband. It's a reminder that this is a willful action. The love of the husband is a willful choice. The submission of the wife is a willful choice. The husband's not to see to it that she submits and she's not to see to it that he loves. They are to do that in obedience and love to Christ.

Now as we think about those things I want to make it clear that you don't have to be married to be an illustration of the gospel. God's called every single Christian, single or married, to illustrate the gospel. We see this in Matthew 5, verses 14 and 16.

"14 'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.'"

That's written to every Christian. We're to let our light shine before men. We do that by speaking the gospel with our words and by living in obedience to the gospel with our lives. And you can do that single or married. So let me encourage you that what Paul is saying here is not that marriage is the only way to illustrate the gospel, but if you are married, you are to live in this way as a husband or wife because it's one of the primary ways that a married couple can illustrate the relationship of Christ and His church.

So let me ask you this morning, whether you're single or married, can you honestly say that your life makes the gospel shine to the lost world? Do you live and speak in such a way that the gospel light shines to the world? If you're married, let me ask you, has your role as a husband or wife been shaped by the gospel in such a way that unbelievers would be intrigued by your relationship? That they would wonder, why are they like that? Why does she treat him that way? Why does he treat her that way? What's different about them? Why isn't our marriage like that? It ought to be a gospel testimony.

And if you look at your life and you say, you know what, as a husband, I don't see myself in that passage at all. As a wife, I don't see those characteristics in myself at all in any way. And you've got to go back to the beginning as we have every message and ask yourself, have you really come to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you turned from your sins and put your faith in Christ, recognizing that only by His life, death, and resurrection can you be saved and made right with God? It begins there and then continues on into sanctification and marriage as we seek to excel still more.

So as we bring this to a close, I want to give a few pointed applications and assignments to us depending on what stage of life we're in. And I want to start with, if you are single this morning, I want to encourage you, if you're single, to do a word study on the one another's in Scripture. The one another's in Scripture are commands and instructions on how we are to live towards one another. Ask yourself, as you go through those different descriptions, am I living as a gospel witness in the way I treat others in the relationships that God has given me in my life?

And to the married, let me speak first to husbands. Let me call us again, as I did last time, to **Evaluate Our Love**. But to evaluate our love specifically in light of the new information that we've studied today. Husbands, can you honestly say that you nourish and cherish your wife? Can you honestly say that your love for Christ has caused you to live with her in an understanding way? How do you respond when your wife is hurting? How do you respond when she asks you honest questions? Do you get defensive? Do you argue back, or are you ready to listen? In what ways do you proactively consider her preferences and desires, and do you seek to place her preferences and desires above your own, in line with Philippians 2:3-4. When's the last time that you personally initiated a deep, undistracted, meaningful conversation with your wife? Not about the details of life, not even about this kid did that, or that kid did this. But I mean, real spiritual conversation, intimate conversation with your wife. Here's your assignment, men, and mine.

This week, **sit down with your wife and ask her this question. How can I better nourish and cherish you on a daily basis?** And when she gives you the answer, don't get defensive, and don't give her a list of all the ways that you believe you are nourishing and cherishing her that she left off the list. Listen, take notes, and prayerfully, by the grace of God, seek to live in light of those things.

Lastly, to couples, **Evaluate The Illustration of Your Marriage**, men and women. What does your marriage relationship currently illustrate to the world? What picture does it paint? If those who know you best took your marriage, what they know of it, and they took the church, and Christ, and that relationship, and put them up against each other, where would be the discrepancies, the deficiencies, the strengths, and the weaknesses? Take an honest look at your marriage, and by God's grace, seek to grow. Ask yourself, what illustration are we putting in front of our children and our grandchildren? When our grandkids come over to the house, are they going home and talking about how Grandma and Grandpa are always bickering at each other? Are kids just seeing a cold marriage, an angry marriage, or are they seeing two people live as intimate friends, seeking to love the Lord and grow in Christ together?

So as a couple, here's your **Assignment: Sit down as a couple this week and have an honest conversation about both the strengths and the weaknesses of the illustration of your marriage.** Talk about those things, and by God's grace, make a plan to grow.

The book that I mentioned at the beginning of the service, *When Sinners Say I Do*, this could be a great tool to use to foster those conversations, but it could be as simple as just a conversation around Ephesians 5, but either way, talk through these things, and may God grow all of us, single or married, that we might be gospel lights to a lost and dying world. Amen?

Let's pray. Lord God, we're so grateful for Your Word, for its clarity. At times we admit it steps on our toes, but they need to be stepped on. We need to hear these things. We need to grow because the stakes are high. It's not just personal happiness that's at stake. It's the gospel of Christ to a lost world. God, we pray that we would live as gospel lights, that we would speak the gospel with our words, but that our lives would not undermine the gospel, but they would uphold it, that others would see in us individually and in our marriage relationships true Christ-like love, the desire for the glory of Christ in all things, and that You would use us powerfully to save Your people through our words and our example. We ask it in Christ's name. Amen.