

Session 1: God's Picture of Marriage

The sacrificial love in your marriage will reflect the love of God to the world.

PREPARE

Eph. 5:15–33

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

So, what does God display to the world through marriage?

In all that God creates, He is communicating something to us. Whether it's a vibrant sunset or a newborn baby, His glory is on display in all that He designs. We can read about God creating marriage in the book of Genesis. If we know that He was intentional with everything He made, what can we learn from His design of marriage? When God said "it is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18), He's telling us that marriage was created for our good. With the making of woman, God was meeting a tangible need. He fulfilled this need through marriage. God brought two individual people together in a way that formed one united person to demonstrate his fullness and goodness, an act of love for his people and a message of concern for His own glory.

The Apostle Paul elaborates on this picture in Ephesians 5 when he gives instruction on wise living to the church at Ephesus. His teaching was for the husband to imitate Christ and the wife to imitate the Church. Christ initiates; the Church responds. Christ loves; the Church receives. Christ sacrifices; the Church flourishes. As the husband leads through sacrificial love, the wife loves and sacrifices for the husband in a delightful exchange.

Marriage is meant to be enjoyed by a husband and wife. Certainly, this was part of God's intention. Moreover, this beautiful union between two people reflects God's covenant union with us. Christ gave Himself up completely to see us, His Bride, come alive. So, how should we respond? It can only be to receive this grace and submit to His loving care. God gave us a picture of marriage to showcase His love for us. Now, we have the opportunity to reflect that love to the world through marriage.