

- ***Read Ephesians 5:22-33*** I'm sure we have all heard of the scary statistics involving marriage and divorce. Many have stated that nearly half of all marriages end in divorce. Some would dispute this percentage, but even if we drop the percentage, the picture does not become any more encouraging. The sad reality, is that far too many people enter into marriage thinking that they know what is best in regards to how a successful marriage can be had. Obviously, married couples relying on themselves are not doing a very good job.
- As with many things....when man thinks he knows best...things seem to have a nasty habit of failing. You see, too many people enter into marriage thinking that marriage is to be centered around warm fuzzy feelings and dances through fields of sweet smelling flowers with bunny rabbits. However, anyone that has been married for at least 37 seconds has realized that marriage takes effort and things are not always a bed full of roses. So what then can help our marriages succeed and be healthy? Our text here in **Ephesians 5:22-33** gives us the blueprint for a healthy and successful marriage, and the blueprint is something that is mind boggling....make Christ the center of your marriage. If we will strive to have Christ centered marriages, then we will be on the right track towards a healthy and successful marriage that glorifies God, the One who has given us the blessing of marriage.

I. A Christ centered marriage involves a husband who...

A. leads his wife righteously. (v.23)

1. We live in a society where gender roles are under fierce attack, & to simply suggest that the husband is to be the head of the marital relationship can open one up to great scrutiny and abuse. However, God did not create these roles in an effort to smother women. But instead, at least partly, these roles were a result of what happened in the garden those many years ago. (**Gen. 3:12,16,17; I Tim. 2:13,14**)
2. One of the things that hurts God's design for marriage is the fact that too many men try to take advantage of God's design instead of leading their wives and marriages, they try to rule their wives and their marriages. It really just makes you scratch your head and wonder why some women have a hard time following their husbands, right?
3. Let's show from God's Word that our Lord has never had it within His design of marriage for husbands to rule with an iron fist and doing simply as he pleases because of his greed.
4. Firstly, let's notice that husbands are to lead as Christ leads the Church. (**v.23**) Jesus has authority over the church, and the same is true for the husband and his wife & family.
5. However, as has been mentioned, the husband does not lead with an iron fist. Instead, he is to be benevolent leader who leads with his wives interest in mind. (**I Peter 3:7-9**) These instructions don't seem to leave any room for a domineering husband who looks out only for his own needs.
6. He is to also to provide for the needs of the family. He is to provide that leadership. He is to provide for their physical needs. (**Gen. 3:17-19; I Tim. 5:8**) He is to provide for their spiritual needs. (**Eph. 6:4; I Pet. 3:7**)
7. A husband is to lead his family, but he is to do so in a righteous way. He is to lead just as Christ has lead His Church. For the good of the church and not His own. Same ought to be so for husbands.

B. loves his wife as himself. (vv.25-33)

1. 4 times in this text of **Ephesians 5:22ff** we find Paul mentioning the need for husbands to love their wives. He is to love his wife the same way that Christ loves the Church that He gave Himself for. The husband is to love His wife as his own body, & in doing so he will care for her every need, just as Jesus gave of Himself for the Church's every need.
2. Jesus in His leading of the Church does so out of love for each person, and a husband is responsible for leading his wife out of love for her and her soul and her needs. A selfish husband only looks out for himself, but a husband who is seeking to imitate the leadership of Christ seeks to do things with his wife's needs at the forefront of his mind. (**Phil. 2:3-5**)
3. If a husband is dedicated to showing love towards his wife, then the other half of this aspect of the marital relationship from the wife shouldn't be hard to come by. However, when a husband fails to show love for his wife, then it makes it much more difficult for her to respect him.
4. But, even if she doesn't respect him, he is responsible to show her love and treat her as well as he treats himself in providing for her every need.

II. A Christ centered marriage involves a wife who...

A. follows her husband faithfully. (vv.21-23)

1. A body with two heads, might as well have no head at all. This idea is true in all aspects of life and that same thing is true when it comes to the marital relationship. God designed for the husband to lead, thus the wife must strive to follow his role of leadership. Again, many would scoff at such an idea, but God's Word is clear, & Paul explains the wife's role as a follower of her husband in this text.
2. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands, says Paul in **v.22**. Notice the fact that there aren't any qualifiers in this statement. He simply says that they are to be subjection, and he parallels this subjection with the relationship between the Church and Jesus. (**v.24**)

3. Someone might object with, "well what about the husband who is not a Christian?" Peter answers that question for us in **I Peter 3:1-6**. Wives are to follow their husbands, even if they are not Christians, and the hope is that by their conduct they many be won over to the faith. Sarah is their example of a wife who followed her husband in all things.
 4. Back in **Eph. 4:22**, Paul gives a little more insight into how she ought to follow her husband. He says that she is to follow and be subject , "as to the Lord." The only time a wife ought not follow her husband is when he is leading her into something involving sin. Our Lord doesn't lead us to toward those things and neither should a husband lead his wife into something involving sin.
 5. Notice that in all of these things, neither Paul nor Peter says that wives ought to only follow their husbands if they are perfect or without flaws. If a woman is willing only to follow a perfect man then that's just too bad because the only perfect man is in heaven sitting at the right hand of God. Wives must be patient with their husbands and follow them as they strive to lead them in the way of the Lord.
- B. respects her husband for his responsibilities. **(v.33)**
1. Paul finishes up this section about the marital relationship by stating that wives must make sure to respect their husbands. As was mentioned, this responsibility of the wife goes hand in hand with the husbands responsibility to love his wife. Often, the failure of one spouse in their responsibilities leads a failure of the other spouse in theirs. This isn't something that is acceptable, but it is just the facts about how marriages often work.
 2. Sadly, our mindset is often like this..."I will be sure to do what I am supposed to do...as long as my spouse does their part." Here's the problem...Paul's last statements in **v.33** does not give any qualifiers. Thus, no matter what, the husband is to do his job and the wife hers.
 3. So when when it comes to the wives responsibility to respect her husband, she is to do this even if her husband makes mistakes. She is to respect him even if in his imperfections. She is to respect him for his responsibilities.
 4. Every wife has the responsibly to respect her husband for the responsibilities that have been laid upon his shoulders as the leader of the marriage and family. God laid upon the husband the responsibility to do everything with the best interests of his family in mind, and in the end the husband will be judged for the decisions he made for his family. This is a heavy burden and a wife that respects her husband and supports him will go a long way in helping him with these responsibilities.
 5. Wives play just as vital of a role in the marital relationship. Her failure to play her role will be just as detrimental to the marriage as the husbands. Each spouse must give everything they have to fulfill the roles and responsible that God has given them to do.

III.A Christ centered marriage seeks to imitate the relationship between Christ and His Church.

- A. This is the point that Paul is making in this text.
1. I believe that Paul is laying out things that everyone should already know as an illustration for the church. These Christians should know how the marital relationship should work and then he says that Christ relationship with the church works in much the same way. **(v.32)** This would make sense with the Letter to the Ephesians being known as "Paul's Great Essay on the Church."
 2. The husband leads and loves his wife as Christ leads and loves the church, and then the wife is to follow and respect her husband as the Church is to follow and respect Christ as its head.
 3. When each fulfill their roles, the relationship flourishes and Christ is glorified.
- B. As Christians, every aspect of our life should be focused on Christ and His will for us.
1. We seek to build our marriages in a way that should last because we enter into marriage with the goal of it being for life. We don't enter into marriage with the mindset that many in our society have that "we'll just get a divorce if things don't work out."
 2. This means that we accept the roles that Jesus has designated for us. Husbands will lead and love and wives will follow and respect. God knows best and if he says this is best for our marriages then we ought to humble ourselves and do as our Lord has instructed for us to do.
 3. If we will follow God's design for marriage then we are putting ourselves in the best position for our marriages to be successful and last.

Nowhere in the Bible does God say that marriage is easy, but He has given us instructions that can help us to have marriages that last and bless us as God originally designed for them to do. Marriage, much like discipleship, requires humility on our part and may God help us to humble ourselves to accept the roles that He expects of us. May we fulfill our roles and glorify God through our marriages, and may others be blessed by our godly examples.