

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/24/91
Ephesians 5:31-33 "The Marks of a Great Marriage"

Intro: Have you noticed something? There has been an increased, growing interest in the family in recent years.

eg--Ports Times this week, "Americans Emphasizing Family"

eg--Ports Times this week, "Magic, AIDS, and the Sexual Revolution"

People are starting to realize that there's more to life than 70 hour work weeks, big salaries, and escalating up the ladder of success.

Observation: We're seeing this here at WBC. Have you noticed the resurged interest of parents between the ages of 25 and 45 to find a church? And not just any church. They want a church that offers something. What? "I want a to find a church that offers something for my children." Something for their children.

Note: At WBC we want to offer quality, Scriptural, relevant ministries for young people. And we also want to show Moms and Dads that we have something for them too!

Present Series: "God's Design for Family Relationships" Eph 5:22-6:4

Two weeks ago: "How to be a Wife that Pleases God"

Last week: "Straight Talk to Husbands"

Q: Men, did you communicate 20 min/day with your wife?

This Morning: Challenge--V 33 "Let everyone of you so. . ."

I want to tell you right up front where we're going. This is week #3 on the husband/wife relationship. The final verse tells us ALL to do something. At the close of this message, I'm going to give all of us the opportunity to respond to God's Word. We want to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only." Here are the responses:

1. Personal Response--We'll give you the opportunity to talk with the Lord and tell Him today, "I want to be the kind of husband/wife You want me to be. Today I confess my failures and accept Your forgiveness in Christ. And today I commit myself to pleasing You in my home."

2. Public Response

a. Some will want to come forward to say, "Today I am publicly confirming my love for and commitment to the spouse the Lord has given me. Please pray for me."

b. Some will be honest enough to admit, "I've not been pleasing Christ in my family relationships. Things have not been right with my spouse, or my children. But today I am acknowledging that I want to please Christ. And I need help."

c. Tell your spouse before you leave today, "I love you. By God's help I will treat you as I've learned I should from God's Word."

Illust: Little boy asked what the Bible says about people getting married

Illust: 3 categories of a marriage: Honeymoon, one year later, 10 years later

Q: What are the marks of a great marriage? God tells us in Eph 5.

Background for our Study:

Key: Christian homes ought to be different.

Why? Two reasons.

1. Because of the Christian's Identity.

- a. We have resources (Eph 1-3).
- b. We have responsibilities (Eph 4-6).

2. Because of the Christian's Influence.

Eph 5:18 "Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit"

What are the marks of a Spirit-filled Christian?

- a. Proper Praise (19)
- b. Proper Perspective (20)
- c. Proper Personal Relationships (21)

Eph 5:21 "Submitting yourselves to o.a."

Q: What are the marks of a great marriage?

Proposition: According to Ephesians 5:31-33, there are 3 truths God wants all of us to know about marriage.

I. Marriage involves a Design (31).

Step #1 Leaving

Step #2 Cleaving

Step #3 Oneness

II. Marriage involves a Display (32).

III. Marriage involves Duty (33).

A. The Duty of the Husband

B. The Duty of the Wife

I. Marriage involves a Design (31).

"For this cause"

Why is marriage so sacred? Paul quotes Gen 2:24 to show us. In fact, these words appear 5 times in the Bible (Gen 2:24; Mt 19:5; Mk 10:7-8; I Cor 6:16; Eph 5:31). Marriage is sacred because marriage is God's design. God instituted marriage at Creation. Marriage is not a social convenience that society created and society can choose to discard. That's what we're told in our culture today. But listen. Marriage is God's Design.

You say, "Well what is God's design in marriage?" Let's turn to Genesis and see. In Gen 2:24 God tells us 3 things that ought to happen when marriage occurs.

Gen 2--God designed marriage in Creation

2:7 God created Adam out of dust

2:15 God instructed Adam to work

But notice. Life was to be more than work for Adam. In fact his life was deficient. What was missing?

2:18 "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a help fit for him."

So God provided a person to complement the man. A counterpart. A partner.

How did God do it?

1. Put Adam to sleep (21)
2. Performed surgery--took a rib (21)
3. Fashioned the woman (22)
4. Brought the woman to the man (22)--God brought her!

note: First arranged marriage!

What did Adam say when he first saw the woman?

1. Words of Amazement

Notice Adam's first words, "This is now" (KJV). The Hebrew word is much stronger. Here's how the RSV translates, "At last!" Adam was stunned. In fact he was so impacted by what he saw that guess what came out of his mouth? Poetry! V 23 is the first poem in the Bible (a Hebrew poetic couplet)

2. Words of Appreciation

Adam acknowledged the woman's origin ("bone of my bones"). And the woman's identity ("she shall be called Woman. . .").

Adam appreciated this one God created for him. His life had been incomplete without her (and remember, this is prior to the fall in Gen 3). As he beheld the woman, he realized this person was his God-designed counterpart. She was to be his partner. She would be more valuable to him than anything else in life. Because God had designed them for each other.

You may object, "Well that was just Adam and Eve. How do you know that marriage is still God's design?"

Good question! Look at the next verse. It is God's commentary on what just happened.

2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave . . . cleave. . . one flesh."

There's our verse in Eph 5:31. Let's return there.

This verse tells us that acc to God's design, marriage involves 3 steps:

Step #1 Marriage involves Leaving.

V 31 "For this cause shall a man LEAVE. . ."

Lots of marriages struggle, especially in the early years, because of a failure to follow step 1.

"leave" = "to leave behind; abandon; get away from"

Listen. When 2 people say "I do," something dramatic happens. They must "leave." What does that mean practically? Who do you leave?

V 31 "his father and mother"

Notice how specific God is here. Not just "parents" but "father and mother". This is basic to the foundation of a strong marriage.

When you "leave" it means your loyalties change. Your priorities change.

Some couples never develop real intimacy because of a breakdown when it comes to "leaving". Leaving involves the breaking of several ties:

--Emotional ties
--Financial ties
--Geographical ties (It may be possible for new couples to live with their parents. In an Israelite marriage, at times a wife would leave her home and live with or near her husband's parents. It may be possible. But it sure puts a strain on the marriage)

Marriage involves leaving.

Q: When you face a major decision, do you consult your spouse?

I know people who don't. In fact, I know those that go directly to Dad and Mom to see what they have to say, without even talking to their God-given spouse.

By God's design, marriage involves leaving.

Step #2 Marriage involves Cleaving.

V 31 "and shall be joined to his wife"

"joined" = trans "cleave" in Gen 2:24; "be glued to"

See: Jesus' words in Mk 10:7-9

Illust:

Step #3 Marriage involves Oneness.

V 31 "and they two shall be one flesh"

This is great! Do you realize what happens when a man and a woman covenant themselves together before God. Legally and positionally, they experience a radical identity change. They become a brand new unit. They used to be 2 separate individuals. But in that moment, they become one.

Challenge: What becomes yours positionally on your wedding day, must be lived out practically the rest of your married life. You are One flesh. Now you need to learn to function as one flesh.

Q: Do you know why divorce is so disastrous? Divorce is man's decision to tear apart what God has fused together.

Illust:

Tragedy: Many couples, even Christian, who are One flesh, live in two distant worlds. Some couples here today live under the same roof yet are miles apart. No oneness. Perhaps that's you.

My Prayer: That you would experience Oneness in your marriage--spiritual, emotional, mental, physical oneness. And it can be yours! How do I know? It's God's design!

Challenge: Take practical steps to get into your partner's world.

--Make it a priority to talk together (and listen!)

--Make it a priority to do things your spouse enjoys (husbands, go shopping with your wife; wives, show an interest in his hobby)

Q: "Why work so hard at developing oneness in marriage?"

Tran: Because marriage is God's design. Secondly. . .

II. Marriage involves a Display (32).

V 32 "This is a great mystery. . ."

Q: What is the great mystery about which Paul is talking?

A: He tells us, "I speak concerning Christ and the church."

What's the mystery? This. The mystery is the difference Jesus Christ makes in our relationships in the church. Followers of Christ have the capacity to enjoy meaningful and fulfilling relationships. Those without Christ don't.

It's a mystery how 2 people who were born in sin, with self-centered natures, can exist in harmony. In fact, it's impossible. But in Christ this "mystery" can become a reality!

The first time Paul used the word "mystery" in Ephesians was to show how Christ had removed the barrier of ethnic hostility between Jews and Gentiles. How did He do it? He made them One!

1:9-10; 2:14

3:3, 6

This is a mystery--Jews and Gentiles lived with bitter animosity for centuries. But in the church of Jesus Christ, those barriers are torn down. Former enemies become one.

And so it is in marriage. Jesus Christ can transform 2 self-centered marriage partners and bring them together, and fill their relationship with great love and joy!

You may ask, "Well how then is marriage a Display? What does it display?"

Illust: When your unsaved neighbor slams the door of his house after having a yelling match with his wife, and walks outside, and sees you and you partner working together in the front yard, laughing, talking, enjoying each other, do you know what he is seeing? He is observing in living color a display of Jesus Christ. Your marriage can be a vivid and beautiful display of Christ's love in action.

Q: I'm asked, "What evangelistic program do you use at WBC?"

Right here is one of the most effective. And it's not really a "program" at all. A Christian home that follows God's blueprint is like a magnet that tugs at the steel hearts of lost people. When they see love in our homes, and think about the hate and alienation in their own, they're forced to ask, "What do you have that I don't? What makes your home so different? What makes you so different?"

The answer is clear. Jesus makes us different. He can do the same for you!

Illust:

Tran: Marriage involves a Design, a Display, and thirdly. . .

III. Marriage involves Duty (33).

V 33 is powerful. In this one verse, Paul sums up everything he has just said to about God's blueprint for the marriage relationship. It boils down to this. Duty.

Notice there is balance in this duty. Paul gives us the ideal in v 33.

A. The Duty of the Husband

V 33 "Let everyone of you in particular so love his wife"

What is the duty of the husband? "Love his wife"

Love = agape love

1. Love your wife as Christ loved the Church (25)
2. Love your wife as you love your own body (28)

Men, do you know what that means? We can never love our wives too much!

When there's a breakdown in our marriage, it's our responsibility to take the initiative.

Illust:

Note the personal application--"Let every one of you!"

Every one! This is NOT optional. Paul doesn't say, "Well this may work for some couples but not others."

Problem: That's not what we usually hear. Even from friends who call themselves "Christians." "If your spouse doesn't meet YOUR NEEDS, look elsewhere! You have a right to have your needs met!"

No. When you became a Christian, you gave all your rights to Jesus Christ.

Illust:

Q: Men, what is our duty? Love. Have you been?

What does God expect of the wives?

B. The Duty of the Wife

V 33 "and the wife, see that she reverence her husband"

"reverence" = greek word "phobia" = fear, revere, give reverence to, respect, honor

I find it interesting that this verse does not command the wife to "love" her husband. But to "respect" him.

Q: Does the NT ever command the wife to "love" her husband?

Col 3:18 "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands."

I Pt 3:1 "Wives be in subjection to your own husbands. . ."

Tit 2:4 ". . . teach the young women to love their husbands. . . children"

Note: lit. "to be husband-lovers" (Philos, not agape used)

Illust: Sarah--I Pt 3:5-6 ". . . Even as Sarah obeyed Abe"

Ladies, what does God expect of you? Be like Sarah.

Q: What is the #1 thing a man needs from his wife?

A: Respect--to know that she's behind him, that she supports him, that she believes in him.

Wives, does your husband know that you support him, that you're behind him? Or is it your aim to do your own thing, live your own life?

Conclusion:

The final verse tells us ALL to do something. We've seen today that marriage involves 3 things--a Design, a Display, and Duty. Here are the responses:

1. Personal Response--We'll give you the opportunity to talk with the Lord and tell Him today, "I want to be the kind of husband/wife You want me to be. Today I confess my failures and accept Your forgiveness in Christ. And today I commit myself to pleasing You in my home."

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a. Some need to come forward to say, "Today I am publicly confirming my love for and commitment to the spouse the Lord has given me. Please pray for me."

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