


Ephesians

God's Design for Marriage
Ephesians 5:21-33

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?
...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Read Ephesians 5:21-33 aloud. Then, keeping your Bible open...

What words do you see repeated in these verses? Mark each occurrence.
What do you think is the significance of these emphasized words?

What are all the commands (imperatives) in this passage?

What are the indicatives (statements of fact) which undergird each command?

What purpose statements do you see? ("So that...")

Summarize Paul's marriage instructions in three to five sentences.

Why is it good for **all** believers, regardless of sex or status, to practice submission?

Paul refers to a "mystery" in v. 32. Considering v. 29-32, what do you think is the mystery?

Thomas Adams (1583-1652)—deemed "the Shakespeare of Puritans"—once observed:
"As in creation God made two from one, so again by marriage He made one from two."
What light does this observation shed on the "mystery of marriage"?

Are you making it **easy** for your spouse to fulfill his/her role? What can you do to make it **even easier**?

Sermon Summary

Today we are going to be talking about Christian marriage. I want to remind you that the institution of marriage is God's idea. He invented it. He oversaw and blessed the first marriage. He knows for whom marriage is designed and he knows how it best works. The problem is that our culture has its own ideas about marriage, and we want to be liked. We want to be accepted. We don't like to be criticized. We don't like being the target of our culture's wrath. But increasingly today as our culture drifts farther from a Biblical world view, we are characterized as being uninformed, mean spirited, bigoted and intolerant. No one likes to be viewed in that light. But when it comes to marriage there are only two views. God's view and everyone else's. God's view is right and everyone else's is wrong. It's that simple. The Bible calls for submission as a general principle (v. 21). To "submit" means "to place oneself under someone else"; it involves relinquishing our rights. After commanding us to allow the Holy Spirit to control us (v. 18), Paul gives us three applications of the principle of submission: marriage, parenting, and the workplace.

Many people today, including Christians, bristle at the concept of submission in marriage. It is seen as repressive and patriarchal. The concept of authority and submission finds its foundation in the Trinity. This is not a man-made concept. In the Trinity, the Son is subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit is subordinate to both the Father and the Son. Yet at the same time the Scriptures are clear that the Son, the Spirit and the Father are co-eternal, co-essential, and equal in power and dignity. So right from the start we must affirm the Biblical understanding that submission has nothing to do with inferiority. It has rather to do with differing roles and responsibilities that people of equal dignity and worth employ. Wives are no more inferior to their husbands than the Son is to the Father.

God has ordered the universe with structures of authority and submission everywhere; authority and submission relationships are natural and necessary to maintain order. God has authority over man (James 4:5); mankind has authority over nature (Genesis 1:28); husbands have authority over their wives (Ephesians 5:22); parents over their children (Ephesians 6:1); governments over those they govern (1 Peter 2:13-14); employers over employees (1 Peter 2:18) and church leaders over those they lead (1 Peter 5:2). A good synonym for the word "submit" would be the word "support." A wife submits to her husband when she voluntarily organizes herself to help him best lead the family. He is the pilot and she is the co-pilot. Imagine a three legged race involving a husband and wife. They have to work together to succeed. So it is in marriage. Submission is essential to achieve harmony and oneness in marriage. All people, being made in God's image, have equal dignity. But we have different God-appointed roles.

The attitude which undergirds biblical submission is this: "as to the Lord." We submit to people in order to please God and to glorify Him. It is a God thing, not a husband thing. A wife who properly submits to her husband is also submitting to God because it is God who commands submission. We can also say that a wife who refuses to submit to her husband is also refusing to submit to her Lord. And that is a serious thing. We submit because God commands it—it's a Lordship issue—and because it's the proper response to a husband's headship. The Bible has a lot to say about headship (1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). Embedded in the concepts of submission and headship is the concept of authority. Authority comes from God and must never be used selfishly and it must always be exercised for the benefit of others.

Throughout Ephesians 5 Paul is careful to lay down the reciprocal duties of those involved-- whether we are talking about husbands and wives; parents and children; or masters and slaves. In each context He says, "Leading looks like this, and submitting looks like this." It is all carefully laid out, so that there is no abuse of power. Now, we all know that those in authority do sometimes abuse their authority, but such abuse is never sanctioned by God. That is not Spirit-controlled leadership, it is something else entirely. In many ways it's demonic. Paul draws a parallel between Jesus' relationship to his church and a husband's relationship to his wife (v. 23). And just as the church is to submit to Christ in everything, so wives ought to submit to their husbands in everything (v. 24). I know what you are thinking, "In everything?! I'm not sure I can go there!" I am going to qualify that statement in a moment but yes, I think God wants wives to follow their husband's lead whether she understands it, or agrees with it or not. My wife is wiser than me in many areas, and so I defer to her judgment a lot. A wise husband will listen carefully to the concerns and opinions of his wife. But in the end, God has given the husband the role of headship, and the wife should ultimately submit to his decision. Admittedly, this may not always lead to a wise result, but it is the process that God has ordained for marriage. You can't have two heads

in a marriage. As someone has said, “Two heads makes a monster!” Ladies, your ultimate allegiance is to God himself. That means that if your husband asks you to do something that you **know** God forbids, you **must** disobey your husband and obey God. Wives are to submit to their husbands right up to the point where obedience to human authority would involve disobedience to God.

If the word which characterizes the wife’s duty is ‘submit’, the word characterizing the husband’s is ‘love’. We’re talking sacrificial actions towards our wives. This sets an incredibly high standard. Husbands are to love our wives **just as** Christ loved the church (v. 25)! Five verbs reveal the manner in which Jesus loved the church: He loved her, gave himself up for her, sanctifies her, cleanses her, and presents her to himself. Jesus' love was a self-sacrificing love designed to bring the best out of the church. His love was designed to help the church become all that God intends for her to become. Jesus exercised his loving headship for the benefit of his bride, not for his own benefit. Every action and decision was with the church's wellbeing in mind. So men—do you use the authority God has granted you in a manner that is causing your wife and your family to flourish in a way that honors God and his purposes for your family?

We must admit that the Bible calls wives to submit to husbands who do not always love them like Jesus, and I admit, that’s hard. That is a difficult responsibility that can only be carried in the fullness of the Spirit. But the responsibility given to husbands is truly terrifying. We are called to love our wives with the same sacrificial love with which Christ loved the church. Would a woman be afraid to submit herself to a man who loved her as much as Jesus loved the church? Would a woman fight and kick and scream against the leadership of a man who was willing to give his very lifeblood to save her life?

Husbands—we cannot say, “I’ll love my wife as Christ loved the church **when** she starts submitting to me.” Christ loved a church that was not submissive to him. Christ died for a church that was in rebellion against him. Wives—we cannot say, “I will subject myself to my husband **when** he starts loving me.” That won’t work either. Ladies, God has given you the responsibility to submit to your husband up until the point that his authority comes into conflict with God’s authority. When we enter into marriage we must never again think in terms of “I,” but in terms of “we.” The husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the church will no more do anything to harm her than he would to harm his own flesh. His desire is to nourish and cherish her just as he nourishes and cherishes his own body—because that is how Christ also does the church. To cherish one another means to hold one another in the highest esteem and to place an infinite value on one another. The husband loves his wife with unlimited caring.

Then, we get an interesting twist in v. 33. Husbands are still commanded to love, but for wives, respect appears to be substituted for submission. Perhaps Paul’s point is that there is a relationship between submission and respect. On the one hand, by submitting to her husband she is showing him the respect that his God-given position of headship deserves. Guys, the only way we can love that way is to allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. We must die to self and submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit’s leading in our lives. And ladies, the only way you can consistently demonstrate respect and submission to your husband is also by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill and control you.



Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any topic.
Let's use it to learn more about biblical marriage...*

Monday—How to know if you are **designed by God** for marriage: 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 7-9, 28, 32-39

Tuesday—How to know if you are **ready** to "leave and cleave": Proverbs 22:24, 29; 10:4

Wednesday—Cautions on whom **not** to marry: Proverbs 31:30; Judges 14:1-2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

Thursday—How does deeply knowing **God's** love help me love my spouse? 1 John 4:19-20

Friday—What does biblical love **do** (and **not** do)? 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Saturday—How can I **protect** my marriage? Hebrews 3:12-13 & 10:23-25; Proverbs 5-7

Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]