

Study Guide  
RelationSHIFTS — Marriage (Navigating the Seasons)  
Pastor Eddie Turner

**Key Passage — Ephesians 5:21-33**

“And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God’s word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. And we are members of his body. As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”

Marriage is a binding relationship between man and woman, ordained by God, to help bring fulfillment, purpose, and the blessings of partnership into both of the partners’ lives.

**Read Ephesians 5:31-32**

**What is the purpose of marriage?**

Sometimes we can place unrealistic expectations on our spouse — expecting our spouse to fulfill needs that only God is able to fulfill.

Pastor Eddie shared a story about the early years of his marriage to Amanda — as they were beginning to navigate ministry in Algood, TN. During this time, Amanda came to the following conclusion:

*As she shares today in her words, “I didn’t realize it, but I was sitting my husband up for failure-he couldn’t meet all my needs, only the Lord is able to be everything I needed.”*

**Have you ever placed unrealistic expectations on your spouse?**

**Have you ever felt the weight of unrealistic expectations placed upon you by your spouse?**

**How can a couple avoid this pitfall and ensure their marriage remains in lasting health?**

Pastor Eddie made the following statement:

*“Couples whose first commitment is to the lordship of Jesus put fewer expectations upon their spouses to meet emotional needs that only God can meet.”*

As couples navigate marriage, couples must learn to navigate the seasons of their relationship to ensure a lasting, healthy marriage. Just like the seasons of nature bring certain expectations, the seasons of relationships should bring certain expectations.

**Have you ever considered the different relationship seasons as Pastor Eddie explained?**  
**Have you ever had to adjust your expectations based on the season of your marriage?**

### **1. Dating**

The dating season of relationships has to do with immediate gratification, rather than the deep fulfillment of a long-term commitment.

**How do expectations of the dating season differ from expectations of the marriage season?**  
**How important is dating once a relationship has shifted to the marriage season?**

A successful marriage should always expect and desire for the dating experiences and feelings, but one's commitment to the marriage should not be determined by the frequency of those feelings.

### **2. Leaving and Cleaving**

Part of shifting from the dating season to the marriage season is for man and woman to leave their parents and become husband and wife — uniting together as one.

#### **Read Ephesians 5:31**

**What type of “leaving” is being described here (physical or emotional)?**

**Is it more important for newlyweds to leave their parents physically (moving into their own home) or for newlyweds to leave their parents emotionally?**

Leaving parents (emotionally) in order for a husband and wife to become one is not only difficult for the children — it can be difficult for parents to let go as well.

#### **Read Matthew 6:24**

**What are some steps parents can take to ensure that their children have left emotionally and are joining their spouse in marriage?**

Pastor Eddie did not have time to discuss in detail the other seasons of relationships, but he did briefly explain several more seasons.

**Discuss the following seasons as you consider the RelationSHIFTS that they include:**

**3. Pooping and Peeing Season (Kids)**

**4. Empty Nest Season**

**5. Finishing Season**