



LESSON 12

I AM LOVED

1. SERMON NOTES

2. OPENING QUESTION

When you think of the word “submit” is it positive or negative? Why so?

3. BIG IDEA

Marriage is all about glorifying our Creator.

4. SCRIPTURE MEMORY

This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32

5. BIBLE CONVERSATION

The key theme we've been emphasizing in our study of the book of Ephesians is who you are in Christ. Your identity is received, not achieved. Your identity is not rooted in what you do or don't do, but in what Christ has done. The hard work of the Christian life is to rest fully in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Chapters 1-3 root us in our gospel identity. Chapters 4-6 call us to gospel activity.

Our gospel activity does not give us our gospel identity. Don't reverse the order in which Paul presents it. When we rest in our gospel identity (Ephesians 2:8-9), we are empowered to live out gospel activity (Ephesians 2:10). When we look past Jesus to something or someone else to empower us to live out our "gospel activity" we are endager of slipping into moralistic activity which leads to both self-righteousness and self-condemnation.

I want to turn to one of the most controversial passages in the entire Bible—Ephesians 5:22-24. This is every woman's favorite verse. This is the verse that every woman writes on a card and puts on her mirror to memorize. Women love this verse. You ready for it?

READ: Ephesians 5:21-24

I want to first recognize that many of you here this morning are not married. Please hang with me. This text is about marriage, but it is also all about Jesus and how He loves us.

First, Paul does two things with this text in describing the role of husband and wife:

1. Paul roots these roles in Creation (v. 31)

Paul quotes a verse from Genesis chapter 2: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." They are to sing this song of intimacy, glorifying their Creator. These roles were designed in Creation for worship. Genesis 2:18 tells us, "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'" Why was it not good for man to be alone? It wasn't because God was worried that without a wife, Adam would allow the Garden of Eden to become some messy frat house. No—it was because Adam could not fully reflect the image of God alone. Genesis 1:27 tells us, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female, He created them." What sets us apart from all of creation is that we were created to reflect the image of God. Theologians refer to this as the *imago Dei*. The purpose for which we were created was to worship our Creator. But we can't do this in isolation. God is three equal, distinct persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we love God and love each other, we are accurately reflecting the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead.

So it is in the garden that God, Adam's Creator Father, united the woman and the man together as one, so that their lives would be united in oneness and intimacy with each other, fully reflecting the glory of their Creator in how they loved and related to each other.

Now, I wish the Bible had ended here: Adam and Eve in the garden, happy, holy, and naked. But the story doesn't end there. In Genesis chapter 3, Satan, in the form of a serpent, deceives Adam and Eve, causing them to believe that God was holding out on them. They disobey their Creator by eating of the forbidden fruit. Instead of living for the glory of their Creator, they put themselves at the center. Sin and

death entered into creation, and conflict divided the man from his wife. Theologians refer to chapter 3 as the Fall of Man. Others call it frustration. God's created purposes for us were frustrated by man's rebellion. Romans 8:22-25 tells us that we all live under the weight of this frustration.

At the end of Genesis chapter 3, Adam and his wife were naked, vulnerable, and ashamed. They tried to cover their nakedness with leaves, but it was not sufficient. They still felt shame and condemnation. God, their heavenly Father, pursued them. He sacrificed an animal to cover their nakedness and shame. Blood had to be shed to cover their sins. This is the very first proclamation of the gospel. Adam names his wife Eve, the mother of all living things. This is his confession of faith. He put his hope in the seed of the woman who would come and crush the serpent under His heel (Genesis 3:15; Romans 16:20).

2. Paul roots these roles in the Gospel (v. 32)

Paul describes marriage in this way in verse 32: "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." So, marriage is like a metaphor, an image, or a picture that stands for the relationship between Christ and the church. That's the deepest meaning of marriage. It's meant to be a living picture of how Christ and the church relate to each other. So, what is at stake in marriage is not simply our fulfillment or happiness, but the gospel.

When the world looks at our marriages, it should help them understand the gospel. So, one thing becomes crystal clear in Ephesians 5: the roles of husband and wife in marriage are not arbitrarily assigned, and they are not reversible any more than the roles of Christ and the church are reversible. The roles of husband and wife are rooted in the distinctive roles of Christ and His church. The goal of the gospel is to recover what sin distorted in creation.

Now, let's talk about what Paul means by "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (v. 22). First, this verse is not saying that all women are supposed to submit to men. It is saying that wives are supposed to submit to their husbands. My wife will not submit to just any man. I defy any man to try to make her submit to him. My wife is Italian—a distant relative of Tony Soprano. Try to get her to submit to you, and they will never find your body. Why? Because you're not her husband.

Secondly, a woman is to submit to her husband in everything. Really? "Yeah, but you don't know my husband. He is three guys back on the evolutionary chart." C.S. Lewis describes marriage as a dance. Your role as helpmate is to help him, by God's grace, to lead you well in this dance called marriage. Men, you would do well to let your wife teach you to dance.

A man who wants his wife to submit to him in everything must be submitted to Christ in everything. A good leader is a man who is following behind Jesus. This provides great security for your wife when she knows that you are following Jesus.

Over the past 33 years of our marriage, God has asked me to take some huge leaps of faith. My wife has submitted to every one of my decisions to take a leap of faith. You want to know why? It's not because I can jump well. It's not because I am so smart. It's not because I am so wise. It's because I'm following Jesus.

Men, if you are going to lead and love your wife well, you must be submitted to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Martin Luther wrote, "When I have learned to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now."

Now, you are an evil man if you tell your wife to submit to you because Ephesians 5 tells her to, without reading what kind of husband your wife should be submitting to. So let's look at the kind of husband a wife should submit to. What kind of husband is Paul asking a wife to submit to? Paul writes in verse 25, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

- a. **Be Her Pursuer (v. 25):** A husband should actively pursue his wife in the same way Christ pursues the church. This involves initiating service, sacrifice, and spiritual leadership. The husband is called to lead in prayer, Bible study, and spiritual growth, ensuring that his actions reflect his devotion to Christ.
- b. **Be Her Presenter (v. 26-27):** Husbands are tasked with pointing their wives toward Christ, helping them grow in the gospel. This means modeling faith, repentance, and obedience, and nurturing their spiritual lives. The goal is for the wife to become more holy and beautiful through the husband's loving and spiritual leadership.
- c. **Be Her Provider (v. 28-30):** A husband must provide for and protect his wife, nourishing her both physically and spiritually. This responsibility is rooted in the biblical teaching that husbands should care for their wives as they do their own bodies, viewing them as one. Providing and cherishing her is an expression of true love, demonstrating commitment to her well-being in all aspects of life.

This brings up some tough questions:

Is my wife more like Christ because she is married to me, or is she like Christ in spite of me?

Has she shrunk from His likeness because of me?

Do I sanctify her or hold her back?

Is she a better woman because she is married to me? Is she a better friend? A better mother?

Then Paul, in verse 31, tells us how to get married: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." It is interesting that Paul would first tell us how to love and lead as husbands and then explain how to get married. I think the point here is that single men should start loving their future wives even before they meet them.

This brings us back to verse 32. Paul makes this remarkable statement about marriage: "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (v. 32). The most beautiful thing about this mystery is that Christ loved us before we were attractive (Romans 5:8). This is very different from the way we choose wives. Verse 25 says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her." Notice the order here—it's very important. He loved, and that love moved Him to give Himself. Verse 26 says the aim of the self-giving was to sanctify and cleanse, and verse 27 shows that the effect of that sanctifying is getting rid of spots and wrinkles, making the church beautiful with glory. So, love preceded beautification.

In other words, Christ did not choose His wife the way we do. He did not look for an attractive woman, an intelligent woman, or even a faithful woman. He chose an unlikely woman. And then He set out to make her attractive, wise, and faithful at the cost of His own life.

This is the beauty of the gospel: Jesus pursued us when we least deserved it. He pursued us at great cost to Himself. The truth is, we deserve love less than we could ever imagine, yet Jesus loves us more than we could ever dream. You are loved! Our only response to this kind of Savior is worship.

6. DIGGING DEEPER

- a. What does it mean that our gospel activity should be rooted in our gospel identity?
- b. What dangers are there in reversing the order between gospel identity and gospel activity?
- c. How does Paul root the roles of husband and wife in Creation (Ephesians 5:31)? Why is this significant?
- d. What does the passage from Genesis 2:18-24 tell us about God's design for marriage and the purpose of a husband and wife?
- e. How does the Fall (Genesis 3) distort the roles of husband and wife, and how does the gospel restore them?
- f. In what ways does Ephesians 5:32 describe marriage as a metaphor for Christ's relationship with the church? How does marriage reflect the gospel to the world?
- g. How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus pursued us when we least deserved and a great cost to himself?

7. MISSION

Have you ever wondered why God has you living in Fort Lauderdale? In Broward County? This is your mission field. It's where God has called you to make His name known. Over the next four weeks, I want to help you answer that call. It's called the Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion. God is calling you. Who's your one? Who is the one person God is calling you to share the Good News of the gospel with? Write their name down now.

- _____
- _____
- _____

Here are 3 simple steps of obedience to answer God's call to be on mission with Him:

- Intercede - Who is ONE person that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ?
- Invest - How can you invest in them relationally?
- Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

Don't say, "But God, you don't know my neighbor." Answer God's call. Join Him in this great redemptive mission of rescuing sinners so that they may know the riches of God's grace, mercy, and salvation.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRAYER

How can your group pray for you personally?

How can you pray for your group members?

Let this prayer from Ephesians 3:14-21 shape your prayers this week.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."