

Small Group Guide: Biblical Marriage - Ephesians 5:18-33

Key Scripture

Ephesians 5:18-33 (Focus on verses 22-33)

Main Themes

1. The Foundation: Spirit-Filled Living

- Being filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 18)
- Living with gratitude (v. 20)
- Mutual submission (v. 21)

2. God's Design for Wives

- Submission as voluntary yielding, not slavery
- Trusting God through your husband's leadership
- Encouraging and honoring your husband

3. God's Design for Husbands

- Agape love - sacrificial, unconditional, action-oriented
- Servant leadership modeled after Christ
- Nourishing and cherishing your wife

4. The Mystery: Christ and the Church

- Marriage reflects Jesus' relationship with the church
- Complementary, not competitive roles
- Dependence-based, not independence-based relationship

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **Why did Pastor Jerry start at verse 18 instead of verse 22?** How do verses 18-21 provide important context for understanding biblical marriage?

2. **What does "submission" actually mean in the biblical context?** How is this different from our culture's understanding of the word?
3. **How did Jesus model submission in Philippians 2:5-8?** What does this teach us about the nature of biblical submission?

Personal Reflection

4. **For Everyone:** The sermon emphasized that "Satan's greatest desire is that your marriage will fail." How have you seen spiritual warfare affect marriages? What safeguards can couples put in place?
5. **For Wives:** What fears or concerns do you have about submitting to your husband's leadership? How does trusting God help address these concerns?
6. **For Husbands:** Pastor Jerry said, "The reason many wives don't follow through in submission is because we don't lead by seeking after God first." How can husbands become better spiritual leaders in their homes?
7. **The sermon mentioned that "agape love is not based on emotion or how we feel."** Why is this important? How does this differ from how our culture defines love?

Going Deeper

8. **Read Song of Solomon 4:9-11.** How does the beloved's pursuit and admiration of his wife challenge modern attitudes toward marriage? How can husbands cultivate this kind of focused affection?
9. **The pastor said, "Our wives should be the only woman for us... our standard of beauty."** In a culture saturated with images and temptation, how can Christian men protect their hearts and eyes?
10. **Verse 28 says husbands should love their wives "as their own bodies."** What does this look like practically? How does caring for your wife as part of your own body change your perspective?

- 11. What does it mean that wives should "respect" their husbands (v. 33)?** How is this different from love? Why is respect particularly important to men?

Application

- 12. The sermon emphasized that perfection isn't the goal - transformation is.** How does this truth relieve pressure in marriage? How can couples give each other grace while still pursuing growth?
- 13. Pastor Jerry mentioned the importance of communication: "Let's step back. Let's talk about it."** What practical communication tools can help couples discuss difficult issues without anger or reaction?
- 14. For those who are single:** How can these principles prepare you for future marriage? What character qualities should you be developing now?

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Biblical marriage requires the Holy Spirit's power** - We cannot love sacrificially or submit joyfully in our own strength.
- ✓ **Submission is mutual** - Both spouses submit to each other out of reverence for Christ, though in different ways.
- ✓ **Husbands are called to the higher standard** - Loving like Christ (9 verses) vs. wives submitting (3 verses).
- ✓ **Marriage is complementary, not competitive** - God designed husbands and wives to work together like a duet, not a duel.
- ✓ **Jesus is the model** - He loved the church sacrificially, served humbly, forgave freely, and never gave up.
- ✓ **Your spouse should be your treasure** - Wives are to be cherished; husbands are to be honored.
- ✓ **Marriage reflects the Gospel** - The relationship between husband and wife mirrors Christ and the church.

Practical Applications

For Husbands This Week:

1. **Ask your wife:** "What is one thing I can do this week that would make you feel loved and valued?"
2. **Lead spiritually:** Initiate prayer together at least once this week. Read Scripture together.
3. **Discover her love language:** If you haven't read "The Five Love Languages" by Gary Chapman, commit to reading it together.
4. **Speak life:** Give at least one genuine, specific compliment daily. Tell her why she's beautiful to you.
5. **Serve sacrificially:** Do something she normally does without being asked and without expecting recognition.

For Wives This Week:

1. **Pray for your husband:** Pray over him more than you correct him. Ask God to help him become the man God's called him to be.
2. **Express respect:** Tell your husband something you respect or admire about him.
3. **Encourage his leadership:** In one area where you normally take charge, step back and let him lead.
4. **Build him up publicly:** Say something positive about your husband to others (in front of him or when he's not around).
5. **Trust God with decisions:** When disagreements arise, after discussion, trust God to work through your husband's final decision.

For All Couples:

1. **Date night:** Schedule uninterrupted time together this week - no phones, no kids, just conversation.
2. **Forgive quickly:** If there's an unresolved issue, address it humbly and seek reconciliation.
3. **Read together:** Read Ephesians 5:18-33 together and discuss what stood out to each of you.
4. **Identify the enemy:** When conflict arises, remember Satan is after your marriage. Pray together against spiritual attacks.
5. **Celebrate your marriage:** Write down 3-5 things you're grateful for about your spouse and share them.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 5:25 - "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her."

Closing Reflection

Pastor Jerry reminded us: **"Anyone can quit in a marriage and walk out. But if you do, you will never be stronger."**

The goal isn't perfection - it's transformation through the power of the Holy Spirit. Biblical marriage is hard work, but it's worth it because it reflects the beautiful relationship between Christ and His church.

Final Question: What is one specific action step you will take this week to strengthen your marriage (or prepare for future marriage)?

