

Special Guest: Paul Lester
Ephesians 5:22-33

Pastor Joel Dover

A Walk in Harmony

Making Marriages Strong: Instructions for Husbands and Wives

Opening Prayer & Introduction:

This week we had the wonderful privilege of hearing from Pastor Paul Lester who led our church marriage retreat at Shocco Springs Alabama on Friday and Saturday. Paul is an Assistant Pastor at Calvary Chapel in Modesto California, where he serves alongside Pastor Damian Kyle. Paul has been in the ministry for over 40 years and has served the Calvary Chapel movement as a Pastor, Church Planter, Bible College Teacher, and CCA Council Member. Paul and his wife Cindy did an amazing job instructing us on practical Biblical ways to strengthen our marriages. On Sunday morning, Pastor Paul delivered a message about walking in Harmony from Ephesians 5. It was a wonderful challenge for husbands and wives to think about their roles in marriage from a Biblical perspective.

An Important Pastoral Note: As we discuss this topic, let's be intentional to honor others with our words. We're all still works in progress...even husbands and wives. Be careful to always speak of your spouse with honor and respect, and never to criticize them to others.

Ice Breaker Question: Is there a married couple in your life that stands out as a model to you of what a Christian marriage should look like? Share one thing you appreciate about them, (or about your own marriage if comfortable). What makes their relationship stand out?

Key Scripture: Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Discussion Questions:

1. The sermon emphasized that submission has biblical limits - we owe total submission only to God. Why is this important to understand? Can you think of examples where this distinction matters?
2. The pastor defined submission as "recognizing that God has placed your husband as the spiritual leader in the home and responding to that leadership by following him faithfully without usurping or undermining his authority." What makes this difficult? What makes it easier?
3. Discuss the difference between respecting your husband as a person versus respecting his position. How can you show respect even when you disagree?

4. Paul commands husbands to love their wives using "agape" - the sacrificial, divine kind of love. What does dying daily to yourself look like in practical terms in your marriage?
5. The sermon mentioned three ways to love your wife: sacrificially, symbiotically, and symbolically. Which of these three is most challenging for you and why?
6. For singles: How can understanding biblical marriage principles prepare you for future marriage or help you minister to married couples? For widows/widowers: How can your experience in marriage be used to encourage and instruct younger couples?

Practical Applications:

1. Wives: Identify one area where you can better support your husband's leadership. Pray for him daily this week regarding a specific decision or responsibility he's carrying.
2. Husbands: Choose one of the three ways to love (sacrificial, symbiotic, symbolic) and implement one concrete action this week. Examples:
 - Sacrificial: Do a household task your wife normally does without being asked
 - Symbiotic: Invest equal resources in her interests as you do in yours
 - Symbolic: Publicly honor your wife in front of your children or friends
3. Pray for one married couple you know, asking God to strengthen their unity.
4. Read through Ephesians 5:22-33 and journal about what kind of spouse you want to become.
5. If your marriage is struggling, reach out to your pastor or a trusted Christian mentor this week for help.

Key Takeaways:

- **Marriage reflects Christ and the Church** - A godly marriage is a living testimony of the gospel
- **Wives are called to submission and respect** - Submission means following your husband's spiritual leadership; respect honors his God-given position
- **Husbands are called to sacrificial love** - Love your wife as Christ loved the church - sacrificially, symbiotically, and symbolically
- **Harmony requires intentionality** - Both partners must actively work to build and maintain unity
- **Satan targets marriages** - The enemy seeks to destroy what reflects Christ's love

Closing Prayer:

If you are married, pray that God would strengthen your relationship with your spouse. One of our core values at CCN is building strong families. Cooperate with God in looking to your marriage covenant with skill. Pastor Paul said, we should become the world's leading experts in our spouses. If you are not married, pray for ways to put these principles into practice, or to invest in others from your experience.