



# THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

## EPHESIANS 5:22-33

### The Gospel-Centered Marriage

Pastor Anthony Ferguson

Many of you might be aware of the linen shroud of Turin. This burial linen cloth preserves an exact imprint of the person clothed in this cloth. Many believe that this is the burial linen cloth of Jesus. If this assumption is right, that means we have a picture of Jesus' body and face on this cloth. Now if you believed this to be Jesus' linen cloth, how would you treat it? You would likely not treat it lightly. You would not use it as a rag to wash your car or to clean up a spilled drink. Rather, you would treat it with the utmost honor. You would protect it and guard it, perhaps even with your life. You would do this because of what the picture represents. It represents our savior.



Now, let's pretend that God not only left us his divinely inspired word but let's imagine that he also gave us a divinely inspired movie. In this movie, we could see with our eyes Jesus putting an ear back on a guy; we could see him duplicate bread and fish to feed thousands. If we possessed this video, how would you treat it? You would likely have it saved on countless hard drives, countless flash drives, and countless computers. You would research every possible way to protect this video. We would do this because of what the video represents.

Church family, we do have a picture of Jesus Christ. God has given to us a picture of how Jesus relates to the church and it is not a cloth nor is it a video, it is marriage. Therefore, church family, since marriage is a picture of how Christ relates to the church we must uphold marriage with the utmost value. We must protect it and guard it. Husbands, we must be quick to lay down our lives for our wives, and wives, you must take special care to cultivate a heart that delights in following your husband for the glory of God because marriage is a picture of how Christ and the church relate to one another.

This is the main idea of Ephesians 5:22-33. Paul explains to us in these verses that marriage is a picture of the gospel. My hope, then, is that as we learn more about the design of marriage, our affections would be stirred for our great God so that we live on mission in our marriages.



## CONTEXT OF EPHESIANS

Now we need to remember the context of Ephesians 5:22-33. The wider context is Ephesians 4-6 which is a discussion of how the gospel transforms us. In particular, we learned in Ephesians 5:15 that the gospel transforms us so that we walk in wisdom. Paul then encourages Christian husbands and wives to be wise in their marriage.

Let's investigate in detail the nature of a gospel transformed marriage.

## GOSPEL-CENTERED MARRIAGE (EPHESIANS 5:22-33)

“*22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*”

Marriage consists of a husband and a wife who are equal in dignity but who distinct roles. This is evident in Genesis 1-2. There, we learn that both Adam and Eve share the same identity – they are made in the image of God, and they share the same vocation – they are to spread the glory of God over the planet. This mission cannot be accomplished alone. Adam needs Eve and Eve needs Adam. Thus, a husband is not independent of his wife nor is a wife independent from her husband. The mission depends on both. God’s description of Eve in Genesis 2:18 as “a helper fit for him” also indicates their equality. Adam names Eve woman, and this too indicates their equality since the word “woman” is the same word as “man” in Hebrew; the only difference is that the word "woman" has an extra letter attached to the end - a suffix. Adam and Eve are, thus, equal in dignity.

Adam and Eve are equal in dignity but not the same. Adam is Eve’s leader, and Eve is Adam’s helper. Notice, for example, that Adam names Eve. Notice also that God approaches Adam after he and Eve sinned against God. Adam and Eve have different roles in accomplishing God’s mission.

The idea here is that marriage is defined by equality amid God-glorifying diversity. This reality is glorious because it pictures the God-head. In God, there is



diversity, three persons, and yet there is unity; God exists as one being, one God. Moreover, when we look at the God-head, we see that each person has a diverse role to play in creation and in new creation. Paul has made this point several times in Ephesians including last week in Ephesians 5:18-21. Thus, the paradigm of equality amid God-glorifying diversity is both biblical and godly. These words are good for us so let's receive them with joy! They picture an incredible reality.

## THE GOSPEL-CENTERED WIFE (EPHESIANS 5:22-24)

Every wife is the helper of her husband and is, thus, called to submit to her husband. Submission in marriage is the joyful and willful heart inclination that leads a wife to put herself under the authority of her husband. Submission is first a heart issue, church family, that leads second to submissive acts.

Submission is a glorious thing because it pictures how the church relates to Christ; this is not male privilege; it is not slavery; it is not giving up your mind, opinions, or beliefs. This is partnering with your husband in your unique role to spread the glory of God over the planet.

Now, Paul calls a wife is to submit to her husband “as to the Lord” (22). Paul, then, gives the reason for this in verses 23-24, and the reason is incredible. Here is his



main idea – the marriage relationship is a picture of Christ’s relationship to the Church. Again, marriage is a God-ordained picture that points beyond itself to the incredible reality of the gospel!

Wives, the part you play in this drama is the church. Notice what Paul says in verse 23. A husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He further states in verse 24 that as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands. The point is this: God designed the role of wife to proclaim to the universe how the church relates to Christ. Listen, when we come together to sing to God, read his word, hear his word preached, take communion, and witness Baptist, the world sees that the church submits to Christ, but what about those other 6 days and 23 hours of the week. What picture does the world have that the church submits to Christ? Your marriages! This is God's design for every wife.



## THE GOSPEL-CENTERED HUSBAND (EPHESIANS 5:25-33)

Husbands, we are called to love our wives like Christ loved the church (25). This love is not merely feelings, but as we already discussed in Ephesians 5:2, love is a commitment to give ourselves for the good of others – in this context, a husband for this wife.



This commitment is not just for a moment but is permanent. Notice how Paul describes the purpose of Christ's love for the church. In verses 26 the purpose is to sanctify us and in verse 27 the purpose is to present us before his presence holy and without blemish. These verses indicate to us that Christ's love led to an incredible act in history – the cross, it leads to his ongoing sanctifying work on us, and finally cause every ounce of sin within us to be vaped out of existence. Christ's love is a permanent commitment to us. This is how husbands should love our wives.

Paul then appeals to the reality that every person naturally loves, nourishes, and cherishes their own life (28-30). This fact should motivate husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the church since just as the church is the body of Christ, so husbands and wives are one flesh. This image – one-flesh – speaks to the incredible intimacy that a husband and wife experience together. When a pastor says at a wedding ceremony, “I pronounce you husband and wife,” a miracle happens. Two separate individuals become one new entity – one new organism. And the purpose of this transformation is to proclaim a greater reality – the reality that the church is in fact the body of Christ. By being married, you proclaim to the universe that Christ is intimately close to his people, so close that he comes to our rescue when we must need him.

Husbands, wives, model your marriage after this reality!



## MOTIVATION TO A GOSPEL-CENTERED MARRIAGE

Church family, the glory of God spreading in the delightful praise of all onlookers should motivate wives, to submit to your husbands, and husbands to love your wife. Imagine with me two realities. 1) Let's imagine two children who see a dad who forsakes his role as picturing Christ to his children and a mom who has forsaken her role of submitting to her husband. Even if these parents take their children to church, teach them about Jesus, and even read the Bible to them, these parents have engaged in an epic contradiction. Listen up, the picture this marriage is picturing is anti-Christ, and it could be the means whereby Satan damns those children. Here is what I mean. Children can see such an awful picture of the gospel in the way a husband and wife treat one another that they say, "I want nothing to do with God." Of course, ultimately that child is responsible for their own rejection of Christ but could, you, husband live with yourself if your love of self-caused your child/grandchild to despise Christ? Wife, could you live with yourself if your desire to lead your family caused your children to adopt a paradigm that said, "If I do not like what Christ says, I just do not need to obey." Wives, children who adopt that mentally go to hell!

2) Now, let's imagine another situation. Two children see a dad who is constantly striving to lay down his life for

his wife and a wife who joyfully desires to follow her husband. Also, they take their children to church, talk to them about Jesus, and read the Bible with them. When sin transpires, forgiveness is asked for and grace is given! These children see a gospel-centered marriage. Listen up, these children are not only hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ, but they are also seeing it. What if the marriage convinced the children that Jesus is indeed Lord. How do they know? They might respond, “Because I see daddy serve mommy even when he is exhausted and I see mommy joyfully submit to daddy’s leadership even when she disagrees.” Husbands, children who see you love your wife like this see Christ. Wives, children who see you embody this submission see first-hand that Christ is worthy of being Lord. Let’s evangelize onlookers – children, neighbors, and the nations – with our marriages.



## MOTIVATION TO A GOSPEL-CENTERED MARRIAGE

Church family, whether or not you are married or not, this sermon is for you. If you are married, embrace with joy your role in this God-glorifying drama for the sake of the evangelization of the nations. If you are not married, pray for the marriages in this church. Pray that they would embrace these truths with joy. My hope is that many commitments would be made anew today. That husbands across this church would commit to loving their wives like



Christ loved the church, that many wives would be embracing with joy their role of following their husbands, and that the rest of our church would be committing themselves to pray for the marriages represented here.

Non-Christian friends, you may have seen awful marriages in your past. Perhaps you concluded that the gospel is false because you saw evil perpetuated by your parents against one another. Now that this is not how Christ treats his people. Christ gives himself continually for the good of his people. He did this on the cross; he does this every day as he sanctifies us, and he will do this one day when he glorified us with him for eternity. Christ desires to overwhelm you with his kindness right now. He desires to make you right with the world, to be your peace, and your hope. Would you come to Jesus today by turning from your sin and trusting that Jesus died for you? If this is you, please reach out to us. Call us, email us, or talk with us so that we might begin to disciple you.

## LET'S PRAY

God, help us to know the reality of marriage and help us to love the reality of marriage. Help us by your grace to evangelize the world as we model the gospel to all onlookers. Give us grace in this task. In Jesus' name, we pray, amen.