

Ephesians 5.21-33 – sermon 2024 (CSB) – God’s Purpose for Marriage

- Today we’re looking at God’s purpose for marriage
- And the different gender roles within marriage

Controversial

- And that makes what we’re talking about fairly controversial – b/c
- This is not the kind of stuff that you’ll hear taught in our wider culture for couple of big reasons
- 1. The world’s purpose for marriage is different to God’s purpose for marriage
- 2. The world’s definition of marriage is different to God’s definition of marriage
- 3. The world’s view on gender is different to God’s view of gender
- 4. The world’s view of gender roles within marriage is different to God’s.
- So what the bible teaches is fairly **counter-cultural** – which means
- Some of us might struggle to hear what God is saying – b/c
- i) we’ve grown up w all these other ideas about marriage/ gender / what means to be hus /wife
- ii) we’ve been taught things in other churches that are different to what you’ll hear today
- iii) we’ve had some bad experiences in our own marriages or seen marriages that have abused this teaching in some way
- So some of us might find this challenging
- But hang in there – and do your best to hear what the bible actually says – b/c

This is God’s good word to us

- He’s graciously revealed His purpose for marriage to us; and
- He’s spelled out the roles of husbands and wives for our good and His glory.
- And I promise – if you understand His purpose, and embrace the roles –
- it will revolutionize your marriage (or your view of it) for the better

Relevant

- And if you’re not married, you might be wondering how it’s going to be relevant.
- a) you know someone who’s married –
- and you need to know how to encourage them to live with Jesus as Lord.
- b) you might get married one day
- and you need to know what you’re getting yourself into.

Flight Plan

- So - Before we get into the different ROLES of husbands and wives
- We’re going to start by looking at GOD’S PURPOSE for marriage
- Because you can only understand the roles IN marriage,
- when you understand the purpose OF marriage.

1. What is God’s PURPOSE for marriage? (v31-33)

31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Marriage is a profound mystery

- to be honest – I feel a bit inadequate to be able to communicate to you the significance of what’s being said here – but we’re told that
- **God created marriage**
- in v31 Paul quotes from Gen 2:24 – reminding us that– marriage was God’s idea from the beginning
- And that marriage is between one man, and one woman, for life.
- And then he says ³²This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church //
- The mystery isn’t just that 2 become one flesh (although that’s a beautiful mystery)
- The mystery is that the purpose of marriage is to point to Jesus and His rel w the Church. //
- So – before J’s death and res – God’s ultimate purpose for marriage was not known,
- But now the mystery has been revealed.

Apply

Is that what you think the purpose of marriage is?

- to reflect the sacrificial love Jesus has for His Bride – the church;
- and to reflect His churches loving and respectful submission to his leadership.

Most people have other goals for their marriage –

- I want to get married to be happy / companionship / sex / children
- And that shapes the way they act as husbands and wives.
- But marriage is not ultimately about us / having our needs met
- It's about Jesus – and making sure the way we're relating points others to Him / reflects Him.
- So we need to let God's purpose for marriage -- shape our roles as husband and wife
- so that our marriages reflect the gospel
- And the Husband's role= sacrificially love his wife-in a way that reflects J's sacrif love for Bride
- The Wife's role = humbly submit to her husband - in a way that reflects the church's humble and respectful submission to Jesus' leadership
- So that's our starting point.
- Marriage is God's idea. He defines what it is. He defines what's it's FOR.
- And He defines how we are to function as husbands and wives.
- And this is a profound mystery that totally revolutionizes our marriages

Reversing the Curse

- And the other big thing to point out is that
- **the commands given to husbands and wives are meant to reverse the curse**
- In Genesis 2 – God's original design for marriage was that the husband would lead and the wife would help
- But in Gen 3 – Adam and Eve sinned - and sin corrupted their natures
- And part of the curse was that their desires and relationships would now be tainted by sin
- 3:16 – God says to Eve: “Your desire will be for your husband, yet he will rule over you”.
- So part of the curse is that there are now gender wars
- wives will now be inclined to rebel against their husbands position of leadership; and
- husbands will now be inclined to treat their wives harshly
- So in Eph 5 - the command to the wife to submit and to respect her husband is aimed at reversing the effects of the curse
- And the command to the husband to love and sacrifice and care for his wife is aimed at reversing the curse – where he is tempted to dominate her.
- And we see the effects of the curse in our world today.
- Wives who belittle and disrespect and manipulate their husbands
- Husbands who abuse their wives. DV is out of control.
- Divorce rates are huge.
- And what marriages need are a total re-orientation away from “it's all about ME” to “It's all about Jesus and the Church – and ME fulfilling my role in relating to my partner according to God's good design for marriage.
- So these commands are for our good – and they're designed to reverse the curse.

WIVES (v22-24,33)

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. ... 33 To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.

Wives are to freely submit themselves to their own husband, as part of their submission to the Lord (by supporting, respecting and following him)

Let's break it down:

1. Wives are to Submit (v22) "Wives, submit to your husbands"

- There it is - the S word – "submit"
- And it's important to see that this is not just something that wives are called to do
- This is something all xns are called to do in various relationships (v21)
- And it's about recognizing a position of leadership/authority in certain relationships
- The bible talks about lots of these
- eg children to parents / citizens to govt / church members to elders

And submission something we all do in different relationships

- At home (to parents); at school (to teachers); at work (to the boss); at sport (to coach or ref).
- And here – wives are being called to submit in their marriages.

And I know that heaps of people in our culture find this VERY offensive.

- How dare we say that a woman should "should submit to her husband's leadership"
- That's just old school
- That's just the church trying to impose an outdated 1st Century patriarchal culture on ours.

Well, notice WHY wives are called to submit. 3 reasons

i) This is about honouring Jesus as Lord (v22)

"Wives, submit to your husbands **as to the Lord**"

- Submission in marriage is ultimately about submitting to Jesus as Lord.
- It's out of out of reverence for Him / it's because Jesus has asked us to do it
- So in the context of marriage – this is what godly, spirit-filled wives do.
- So it's about honouring Jesus as Lord.

ii) This is about honouring the order that God has established within marriage (v23)

"because the husband is the head of the wife"

- And the background to all of this is Genesis Ch 1-2 (which Paul quotes further down in v31)
- And I wish we had time to go into it – but basically
- When God created marriage – he created it with order.

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said,

"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."

- So God gave Eve to Adam as a suitable "helper".
- And if you've ever seen what happens to blokes without a helper – it's not good!
- Before I got married (which wasn't until after I was 30) – I had my bbq in my kitchen.
- Men need help! We need a companion who complements us
- **And the term "helper" is not demeaning.**
- In the OT God describes Himself as our Helper. (e.g. Ps 10:14, 118:6-7)
- So when it says the husband is the head, and the woman is the helper
- **Not saying - "lesser" / "inferior"**

1. Both male and female are made in the image of God – so

- **They're equal** in dignity, value, worth, ability to reflect God's character and purpose

2. But they're also **Different** - male and female / 2 different genders

- And we're designed to complement each other.
- And not just socially, emotionally, biologically or sexually
- But also in our ability to reflect the character of God –
- It takes both male and female to express the image and nature of God

Think about this: Jesus, the Son of God – submitted to God the Father

- “not my will but yours”
- Even though he is Equal with the Father in his God-ness
- Jesus humbly submitted himself to his Father’s will,
- Does that make Jesus lesser? No we love him all the more for it. Our salvation depended on it

So Submitting is not a dirty word - Submitting is being like Jesus.

And even though our culture might not value it–

- be very slow to believe that our culture knows how marriage works best
- There are so many dysfunctional marriages / where there’s a constant power struggle
- With huge divorce rates / and lots of dissatisfaction

iii). Submission is about displaying the Relationship the Church has with Jesus (v23b-24a)

23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands

- So wives submitting to husbands is meant to follow the pattern of the ordered relationship between Christ and his church – and to display something of the beauty and humility of that

2. Wives are to Freely submit themselves (v22)

“Wives, submit to your husbands

- This is really important to see.
- This command is given to the wife, and not to the husband.
- The husband is never told to make the wife submit to him
- Wives are being addressed here are free, intelligent, responsible people
- So their submission is to be something they freely give –
- And it’s never to be something forced upon her or demanded from her by her husband

3. To her own husband (v22)

“Wives, submit to **your** husbands

- This is not a command for all women to submit to all men
- So the command here is very narrow – it’s to submit to their own husbands – not to men in general.

4. “in everything”?

24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. ...

- Does “everything” really mean everything? No! Not absolutely everything!
- There are some exceptions

1. Sin

- if husband asks you to do something sinful / go against God’s moral commands – don’t submit
- b/c your husband’s headship doesn’t trump Jesus’ authority. (Acts 5:29)

2. Work

- if the wife is the husband’s boss - in that rel/role – she has positional authority -
- and the husband should submit to his wife.

3. Domestic Violence?

- Domestic Violence is a huge issue in our society, and sadly the church is not immune.
- Does submitting mean putting up with being abused? Or beaten?
- No. You don’t need to stay in an abusive or dangerous situation.
- Get away if you need to / get safe / and get **help** – for you + kids – **and for your husband**
- b/c you’re not just called to submit to him – you’re also called to be his helper.
- And moving out – or reporting him to the police - might be the thing that
- makes him face his issues and get some help
- So please speak to one of the staff tonight if you’re in that situation so we can help you.
- And our goal will be to see your marriage grow and work – not to destroy it.
- Or visit www.1800respect.org.au.

So what does it look like??

V33 –“ To sum up... the wife is to **respect** her husband”

- And we're not given any more specifics – so you'll need to work it out in your marriage

Suggestions

1. Respect him as the Head of your family

- Allow him to lead. Encourage him to lead.
- Support him when he takes initiative – esp in giving direction to family
- Affirm him where he's doing well.
- And resist the temptation to “take control”

2. Respect him in Decision Making

- Submitting doesn't mean being SILENT
- it's good to discuss and debate things – you can express your opinions/ raise issues / give input / you've got wisdom to share
- But do it respectfully and humbly without being argumentative or demanding
- And after you've discussed it and tried to work it thru,
- If a call has to be made, and you can't agree –
- let your husband take responsibility for making the decision – and then embrace it

3. Respect him with your Speech

- Don't talk to him disrespectfully – don't be demeaning / demanding / abusive
- Don't talk about him disrespectfully to your friends
- Don't criticize him in public / or mock him or tear him down

4. Disciplining kids

- Don't undermine him to your kids by saying yes when he;s no, or no when he's said yes
- Work it out / discuss later

5. Finances

- Have you worked out a budget and agreed to it?
- Stick to it. Don't overspend on the things / don't hide the expenses

6. Help him thrive at work

- if both of you are juggling careers – and it's not possible to manage both –
- would you be willing to say to your husband: “I'm happy to scale back to see you thrive”

7. Take on his name

- When you get married – take his surname as a sign of respect / acknowledging him as head of your family

8. Help him grow Spiritually

- You are his helper. You are God's prime tool for sharpening your husband
- And he need lots of help to be a godly husband
- So pray for him to step up and lead well. Encourage him.
- And be prepared to address his sin, selfishness, and poor leadership.
- But do this with gentleness and respect

Conc / Apply

- So wives – out of reverence for Jesus - you are being called to
- respect your husbands and to lovingly submit to his leadership –
- JUST LIKE the church respects Jesus and lovingly submits to his leadership
- Because that reflects God's ultimate purpose for your marriage
- And honours the roles he has established.

Link to next bit:

- And if you think that's a tough assignment, the guys get it even tougher.
- Wives are called to submit. Husbands are called to love their wives to death.

HUSBANDS v23.25-33

Husbands are to lead and love their wives, like Christ leads and loves the Church (by providing direction, sacrificing for her good and providing for her needs)

1. Lead! (v23)

- In the marriage relationship, the husband is to lead

V23

22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, 23 because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church....

- So God has given husbands the role of head / which is a position of leadership
- And that leadership is to be exercised humbly, and for the good of the wife
- Like Jesus exercises His headship – humbly – and for the good of his Bride – the church
- So husbands, lead your wives.

What does this mean?

i) Owning the responsibility

- Start seeing yourself as the head and own the fact that God will hold you accountable for how you exercise your leadership

ii) Taking the Initiative - be the one who most often says “let's” //

- Set the spiritual direction – and say
- let's get to church and make that a priority /
- let's read the Bible / let's pray about this /
- let's read the book on marriage / let's listen to the podcast on parenting
- Take responsibility for helping your wife grow in holiness
- Encourage her in her giftedness - support her in her ministry and give her time and opportunity to express her gifts
- And honour her role as your **helper** - and ask her to help you grow in godliness
- Ask her how you could be a better husband - And listen to what she says!

FREE SHOT FRIDAYS

iii) Take responsibility for the state of your marriage

- if your marriage is struggling – do something positive about it
- take the initiative and be the one who says “let's talk about this” / let's work at it /
- let's get some help
- stop avoiding the issues / have the chat /
- be the one who makes the first move to resolve it. Apologise first.

2. Love!

- The husbands role is to love and care for his wife
- And we're given 2 examples of what that looks like

a) Husbands are to SACRIFICE for their wives like Jesus sacrificed for the church (his bride/body) (v25-27)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. 27 He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless.

- This is such a big call! The bar could not be higher
- How can I possibly love my wife like J loved church?
- 1. His love was unique – died to atone for sin. I can't do that / not called to. I'm not the Saviour
- 2. But I am called to love her sacrificially – with same purpose = help present her holy and blameless – by pointing her to Jesus and helping her grow in godliness.
- So that's the pattern we're given to follow
- Husbands are to sacrifice for the good of their wives like J sacrificed for the good of the church
- And this means that headship in no way gives husbands a licence to be selfish, or to dominate their wives, or treat them harshly.

- Instead we're called to love our wives so much that we give ourselves to them; that we lay down our lives for our wives – and sacrifice for them, for their good
- Like Jesus did for His Bride – the church
- **So husbands, sacrifice for your wives.**

What might this look like? this might mean things like –

- coming home earlier from work - so that you can help with the kids; or
- taking a bigger load of the household chores
- freeing her up so she can have some good time to herself (like a weekend away w/o the kids).
- spending time doing things with her that she likes to do
- when it comes to decision making – ask for your wife's input!
- She's probably much wiser than you on a whole bunch of issues.
- So discuss, listen well, and aim for consensus.
- And when decisions have to get made- make sure you're putting her needs and preferences before your own.
- saying "no" to the promotion at work (if it means less time and energy for your marriage)
- finding a different job if your current job is having a negative impact on your marriage
- (even if that means getting paid less; and not being able to afford the kind of house you'd like to live in / or the kind of holidays or hobbies - so that you can be a better husband: more present with more energy for their relationship;

//

- The 2nd example we're given of how a husband is to love and care for his wife =

b) Husbands are to PROVIDE AND CARE for their wives like they do for their own bodies (v28-31)

28 In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of his body. 31 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.

- We're called to love our wives as much as we love our own bodies – b/c
- When we get married – we become one flesh with them
- So we should provide + care for them just as naturally as we provide + care for our own bodies
- Which means we need to make sure they're looked after - got food / water / clothes / shelter / protection
- That they're safe and secure and looked after – as best we can – providing for them and caring for them and not neglecting them or treating them harshly
- Like Jesus does for His Body – the church. (4:15–16; Col 2:19).
- **So husbands, provide and care for your wives**

What might this look like? this might mean things like –

- trying to earn enough money to provide for her needs
- being generous to her with the household budget
- giving her Quality Time – and hearing what her needs are
- And if you're a Christian (no matter how hard your wife is to love)
- there is never an excuse to be harsh with your wife – at all.
- there is no excuse for being a bully - for forcing your wife to do anything,
- there's no excuse for putting her down / speak rudely or abusively;
- taking your anger out on her / physical violence
- You are to sacrifice for her. Not make her sacrifice for you.

Apply

So husbands, God is asking us today: "Will you act like my Son in your marriage?"

- Will you take the initiative and LEAD her - in a way that's GOOD for HER –
- Will you LOVE her by sacrificing for her; providing for her and caring for her?

Conc/App

- Well - there you go
- That's God's good purpose for marriage and gender roles within marriage

If you are married

- Will you trust God with your marriage?
- **Husbands** - do you feel the weight of what's being asked of wives?
- **Wives** - do you feel the weight of what's being asked of husbands?
Pray for your spouse.
- And give yourself wholly to working out how to live out your part to the best of your ability
- so your marriage can reflect God's purpose - and point others to Jesus

if you're not married

- This is what your married friends have gotten themselves into! pray! encourage!
- And think twice about asking someone to marry you – b/c this is what you'd be getting into!

And if you're feeling the pain of not being married – remember 2 things:

1. Marriage is not the Saviour that you need. Jesus is.

- (Many people struggle in their marriages more than you struggle in your singleness)
- Jesus was single – he knows what it's like

2. Marriage = temp (til death do we part)

- there will be no marriage in heaven
- like lots of things in the OT – shadows and types–
- One day – it will be fulfilled – Jesus and His Bride
- And you will be there - beautifully dressed before God, @ wedding feast of the Lamb.
- Are you ready for that?

QnA 5pm!