

Marriage Ephesians 5:22-33

Marriage In the World Is...

- The end of _____ fun _____.

Chris rock, “You can be sad and lonely or bored and married.” The ball and chain. “Marriage is an institution, but who wants to live in an institution?” Only one sexual partner? Commitment? Have to check with someone before I make decisions? I don’t want to lose freedom! I want keep my options open...But just as often, and maybe even more often...

- Where we find our ____ fulfillment _____.

Because of the way love is portrayed in movies and music romance is seen as the key ingredient to a satisfying life. Alicia Keyes sings, “some people want diamond rings, some just want everything but everything means nothing. If I ain’t got you.” A romantic partner is someone who will make you feel treasured and valuable, they’ll take away your fears and insecurities, they’ll make you feel attractive and confident, they’ll give you hope and security for tomorrow. A committed romantic partner—a spouse—is the solution to my brokenness. If I only had a spouse, I would be whole and happy.

And while there’s certainly something to be said about the joy that spouses experience in one another, the idea that a spouse can satisfy your deepest cravings for joy and satisfaction and fix you brokenness is a lie and it’s a life that’s in large measure responsible for the 50% divorce rate—and that’s in the church. And so there is certainly a word here for us today. And let me just say, I know there are folks who want to be married who aren’t yet married—this is for you too. If you don’t understand God’s purpose for marriage, then how are you going to pick a good partner? If I said let’s go spelunking who would you take with you?

So, what is God’s design for marriage—two things I want us to see today—reflect and transform.

(Eph 5:22-25) So the first things we see here is that marriage is designed to reflect or represent something. Specifically, the marriage covenant between a man and his wife serves as a reflection of the covenant relationship between Christ and his church. And in this way marriage is really like a living visible parable that the world watches. Being united to a spouse now, is a picture of our being united to Christ in eternity.

And because of this we need to understand that marriage is temporary. God has designed for us to be united with Christ forever—not our spouse. When I did my first wedding I preached from a text that you have never heard at a wedding! That there is no marriage in heaven. Why would I do this? Because we need to keep marriage in an eternal perspective. Marriage will one day give way to what it represented all along. The parable doesn’t last forever. It’s the dress rehearsal not the play. Rebecca and I will not be united to one another as husband and wife in eternity because we will be united to Christ—the fulfillment of what our marriage pointed to all along. And when you know that, it changes how you approach marriage. And in a way the rest of this sermon is going to tease the implication of having a now marriage with a then marriage focus.

And before we move into what that looks like, I want to pause a speak to those who really really struggle with the idea that you won’t be married to your spouse in eternity—no sex in eternity. I have a friend named Joe who used to play with army men when he was a kid he became an army ranger. He doesn’t play with them any more because he’s now fully experiencing the reality they pointed to all along. I can assure

you there will be no lack or disappointment in heaven because being united to Christ will serve as the fulfillment of what your marriage pointed to all along.

“Noël, if we live another twenty years (till I am eighty-two and you are eighty), the marriage will be sixty years old. And judging from what I see in the Bible and my memory, it will have been a momentary marriage. But it has been so much more than momentary. It is a parable of permanence written from eternity about the greatest story that ever was. The parable is about Christ and his church. It has been a great honor to take this stage with you. What exalted roles we have been given to play! Someday I will take your hand, and stand on this stage, and make one last bow. The parable will be over, and the everlasting Reality will begin.” —Piper

Marriage is temporary reality made to reflect an everlasting reality. And it reflects that reality in two ways.

The marriage covenant reflects Christ love for the church in that it is unconditional. As Christ’s covenant with his church is unconditional so is our covenant with our spouses. What does unconditional mean? It means that what I give to you doesn’t depend on what you give to me. Ps. 89:28-34 **My steadfast love I will keep for him forever and my covenant will stand firm** ^[a] **for him I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips.** This devotion is not performance based—it’s based on covenant commitment. 2 Tim. 2:13. “if we are faithless he remains faithful...” that’s why Paul can say “For I am convinced...” Because his determination to bring you to himself is greater than your capacity to mess it up. And it’s this kind of love that marriage is supposed to image and reflect.

But we don’t get this. In our society marriage is a strategy for finding emotional and sexual fulfilment. I have a list of needs and we’re going to fulfill one another we’re going to be each other’s joy and satisfaction in life. People are asking of marriage something it was never designed to offer them and when one party can’t carry the weight of the other’s expectations and desires for joy and satisfaction, they chalk it up to irreconcilable differences and search for someone else.

This is performance-based feelings-based marriage. My love for you is only as good as your performance for me. My commitment to you is only as good as the happiness I experience with you. But it doesn’t work. Can you imagine if God said that? One of the reasons I have such a happy marriage is because my happiness in my marriage doesn’t determine whether or not I stay with my marriage. It’s not even compatibility that makes me think we’ll go the distance. If you’re dating I strongly encourage you to find someone who’s personality has some natural compatibility with your own but that compatibility and chemistry can’t serve as the foundation for your marriage. Why? Because people change. “That’s not the man or woman I married” duh! If it depends on them staying the 23 yo version of themselves good luck Chandler, “I’ve been married to twenty different women and they’ve all been my wife.”

Rebecca my love for you doesn’t depend on how much or how well you love me. It doesn’t depend on whether you’re a good wife. It doesn’t depend on how I feel about you or how happy you make me. The reality is that I stood up before God and my family and friends and promised to demonstrate and represent Christ’s unconditional covenant love for his people. And I will not leave you until Christ leaves his church. Because this right here is a parable and the world is watching. And his unconditional love deserves to be accurately represented.

Marriage reflects the unconditional nature of Christ's covenant with his church and number two it reflects the unique roles played by Christ and his church. Perhaps some of us are uncomfortable with language used here in vss. 22-25. Headship submission...And I know even as I say those words, maybe your mind goes to colonial tradition—man chops the wood women knit and wash dishes. Maybe your mind goes to chauvinism and the oppression of women—it's happened...and while I understand that, it's a gross distortion of God's design. But we're not talking about little house on the prairie Western patriarchy we're talking about God's good and wise design for how husband and wives relate to one another in marriage.

The picture here is that in the marriage relationship, God has given man and woman unique roles to play. And we should say upfront that the roles are not based competence but on design. Not based intelligence, not based on maturity, or leadership capability. The reality is there are plenty of women who by any worldly measure are much more qualified to lead and be the head of their home. So Paul is not making distinctions based on ability here but solely based on God's good design.

Just for the ladies...notice Paul talks to wives for 3 verses and then talks to husbands for 9. So notice upfront that husbands get the brunt of Paul's commands for marriage and the while the text calls women to submit to their husbands it calls husbands give up their lives for their wives in vs. 25. So I hope that disarms you upfront if this language of submission hits you the wrong way, like God just wants the man to have a happy life, I can assure you that he calls him to give his life if it mean you keeping yours.

So let's talk about this. The woman plays the role of the church in the marriage relationship and, like the church the wife submits joyfully and intelligently. Put both up there (woman joyful intelligent submission and sacrificial servant leadership).

When it comes to marriage women are called to submit to *their husbands* not any man in general but to their husbands. In the first marriage between Adam and Eve what we see is that God explicitly gives Eve to Adam as a "helper fit for him." (Gen 2:18) Now we may be tempted to think about this role devalues the woman like she's a maid or something...but it's not true and we know that because throughout the OT you know who else is called helper? God (Ps. 30:10;54:4, 121) Furthermore, we know intuitively that simply because someone else has a leadership role it doesn't make them more valuable. Steve Kerr is the coach of Golden State Warriors Golden State: Steve Kerr 5 mil Steph Curry (34.68). The guy who sits on the bench is much more valuable than the guy who told him to sit there. Lastly we could just say that God say that the fact that man needs a helper points out a lack in man—he simply can't do what God has called him to do apart from the help of the woman.

Now this idea that God has called the man to do is crucial piece. God gave Adam an assignment he gave him a rule and a few commands and he's tasked—your husband is tasked—with doing that job. So very simply when it comes to submission—God has given him a job description are you helping him do that. Like there's going to be a conversation between your husband and God that you're not going to be a part of and just like god came to Adam first even though eve sinned first, your husband is going to have to give an account—did you do what I told you? "Did you put her interests over yours? Did you pray with her? Did you affirm her when she displayed godliness? Did you gently confront her when she was in sin? Did you make sure she and your children were involved in the life of local church? Did you provide financially for her? Did you raise your children to treasure Christ above all things?" Here's the picture of submission ladies: Are you doing whatever you can to make sure that conversation goes well? That's all. Are you helping him do what God has called him to do? **Counterexample.**

Do you have a posture that is joyfully and intelligently inclined to affirm and follow your husbands initiatives to lead you and your home towards Christ?

Notice too that when we talk about submission, we're talking about issues that carry spiritual significance. The wife's submission reflects the church's submission to Christ. Any other use of this pattern is an abuse. The Bible says nothing about having to submit to your husband's restaurant preferences or what temperature to keep the house at. There's not the slightest idea that you have to do everything your husband wants. Now certainly you want to consider your husbands personal preferences, but that's in a different category. It's not submission... So let me just give an example. Hey honey I feel like we need to worship as a family and have devotions (Yes). Hey I feel like we need to find room in the budget to help the underprivileged. (Yes) Hey we're getting marble countertops instead of granite because I like them better. (No) So ladies I'd want to ask you are you displaying the church's submission to Christ in your marriage by doing everything you can to affirm and follow your husbands initiatives to move your home towards Christ? Are you doing what you can to make sure that conversion goes well? Are you difficult to lead? Maybe he's not leading, you can help him!

Let's talk about husbands **Eph. 5:25-33** We said men "selfless servant leadership." And let me go ahead and get it out there up front... headship in marriage if I could summarize it in just one word is responsibility—to die to yourself; to cultivate and protect your wife and family for God's glory. Which means this right up front, headship doesn't come with any perks. Like headship doesn't mean you get to hold the remote and set the thermostat and get your way. It doesn't mean you get your preferences, it means you're the first to sacrifice your preferences for the joy and flourishing of the women God has put under your care. **Rom. 15:2-3** "Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. 3 For Christ did not please himself, but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on me." Headship is a call to die to yourself take initiative in leading your family toward Christ. And when I say die to yourself I mean literally if it comes to that. You're wife is not called to sacrifice her life for you but you are called to sacrifice your life for her.

You don't even have to read the bible to know this. People get upset when it comes to talk about roles like there are no unique responsibilities. Imagine the glass breaks downstairs—we're 50/50 in this thing. You're called to lay down your lives for your wife and use your strengths and gifts and passions to see Christ fully formed in to her... now the husbands role here really dovetails into the second purpose for marriage and that is holiness—transformation. And the husband is primarily responsible for those initiatives and we'll come back to that in a second...but

Marriage is one of God's holiness development initiatives. Look at vss. 26-27. One of god's primary purposes in marriage is sanctification. Now he's talking directly to husbands but wives help to spiritually form their husbands as well. **1 Peter. 3:2** "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, when they see your respectful and pure conduct." So this marriage thing is a mechanism designed by God to make each other more like Christ." **BOWL**

Marriage is one of the ways that God polishes you until you shine. It's where he puts two sinners in the same cage and they have to learn to live with each other. Marriage is a school for learning Patience, sacrifice, forgiveness, grace, encouragement. By the way isn't always comfortable and it's certainly not easy. Getting married is easy having a healthy godly marriage is difficult—it takes effort. Like if you're just coasting, it's probably going downhill. That's why if you're single in here and you're wanting to be married, you need to know that God did not design marriage for your immediate happiness but your eternal holiness.

God has not designed a spouse to be the solution to all of your brokenness and your ultimate joy and satisfaction in this life and if you go into marriage with that mentality, you'll crush them with your expectations and when that whole sanctification thing kicks in you'll throw your hands up and say this isn't the fairy tale I signed up for and it's not—it's way better than that.

I love Keller here... "Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, "I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!'" this is what marriage is all about and men when it comes to fueling this vision for marriage it starts with you.

As a husband God has given you a job and it's to prepare your wife for another husband. Your primary job in your marriage is to cultivate godliness and spiritual life in your wife. Now this doesn't mean being some navy seal Christian super hero (or even more mature!) It means a few things. It means putting her second only to God. She comes before work, she comes before children—and that much goes both ways. You say well surely my kids should come first before my spouse, nope.

You look at vs. 31-32. You are in a one flesh union with your spouse not with your children. You are not in an unconditional covenant with your children. Your children are designed by God to leave you, your spouse is not. This is one of the ways you image the gospel to your children. **KATIE MERCER** You love your kids best when you put your wife first. So husbands in order to lead and sanctify your wife she needs to take priority...

It means taking initiative to doing ordinary Christian things with your wife (and also kids). What does initiate mean—it means "let's". Initiative to do the ordinary means of grace. Prayer? Bible Reading? Worship? Community? Can you make a commitment to do that? Because listen there may be some women here this just rubs the wrong way, but I'd be willing to bet that the vast majority of them wish their husbands would step up and do this. Because when a husband is sacrificing his preferences and comfort when he's making a consistent effort to stay updated on his wife's heart and what's God doing in her life, when he's doing everything he can to see Christ formed in her there's no woman who doesn't want to be loved like that no woman who wants to be subject to that kind of servant leadership. O God for husbands who lead and wives who help and affirm!

And so can we just end with something from verse 33 "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Now notice Paul changes the language here—he knows something about how men and women are designed. Husbands are we guilty of abdicating with work God has given us? Are we coming home and serving and doing the work of pastoring in the home or are we hitting couch and playing games? Or being overbearing and insisting on our own way? Wives are you respecting your husbands? Are you manipulating and controlling to get what we want? Are you difficult to lead? When your husband shows spiritual initiative are you quick to affirm and support it?

And I want to invite you to do this...ask this question—how can I serve you better? Read a book.