



Date: October 8, 2017 “Marriage - The Nature of the Union”

Scripture: Ephesians 5; Genesis 2:24

Engage with God in Family: Marriage & Ephesians 5

This week begins a series on the family. Regardless of whether you are married or not, you came from some sort of family structure. If you’re not married and even if you have no intentions of ever marrying, it will still benefit you to study God’s design for the family, not only because families surround you, but ultimately because God designed marriage based on his redemptive model – which is essential to everyone.

With Adam & Eve, in the Garden of Eden, God created marriage. They both equally carried the image of God in them and were equal in being/status and yet complementary in roles/functions. Together they reflect/image God to the world through their relationship.

This equality of being (or *ontology*) and difference in function/role is rooted in the Trinity itself. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all equally God and yet each performs different roles/functions within the godhead on earth, especially as it relates to the redemption of man.¹ The equality and differences in the godhead provide a model of the equality and differences within the marriage relationship.

But, beginning with the first marriage between Adam and Eve, all marriages fall short of God’s ideal because each person sins. In Ephesians 5 Paul lays out for us what the marriage relationship is to look like by describing the role the husband and wife have in relation to each other. In particular it builds upon what has already been said in Ephesians 1-3 (God’s redemptive plan for the ages) and chapters 4-5 which detail what a grace-oriented, love-driven, spirit-filled church would look like. Here then at the end of chapter five, Paul dives even deeper from the church to the home getting into the specifics of what would these principles look like between a husband wife rooting his teaching in the eternal plan of God (Ephesians 1-3) to redeem the fallen Creation through Jesus who saves his bride by washing her, cleansing her from all sin, uniting himself to her and sanctifying her. This redemptive model preceded marriage and is the foundation for it.

¹ See Ephesians 1:3-14 for the clearest explanation of the different roles each person of the trinity fulfills in redemption. Also note that this plan of redemption was devised before creation (eternity past).



Examining the text:

- To what lengths did Christ go to show His love for His body/bride the Church?
- What is mysterious about the Christ/Church and husband/wife relationship?
- What does Christ's headship over the church mean?²
- How does Christ's headship over the church exemplify the husband's role in the marriage relationship?
- How does the language of "helper" in Gen. 2:18 help us understand God's created intention for the wife in relationship to her husband?³
- **LG Leader:** What additional observations do you have of the text that can help us more clearly understand it? What is something that stood out to you in the message? What applications do you see? Are there ways in which you can specifically apply these verses to the individual situations your group members are facing?

General applications:

- What does a husband's love for his wife look like in the marriage relationship?
- What does the wife's submission look like in the marriage relationship? Can it be expressed differently in different cultures throughout history?
- How do the ideas of submission and love complement each other?
- The husband's charge to love his wife as Christ does the Church seems to carry with it a greater responsibility/weight. Discuss how this might be so.
- What current cultural trends seek to destroy and subvert God's design for marriage as an institution and the roles of each partner within it?
- Why would Satan so desperately want to do everything he can to destroy and undermine marriage?
- How can our marriages image God (Eph 5:1-2) and the gospel (Eph 5:26-27)?
- How can our marriages be a witness to the world?

² Colossians 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

³ For Gen. 2:18 the ESV Study Bible says the following in describing Eve as a helper to Adam, "In order to find the man a **helper fit for him**, God brings to him all the livestock, birds, and beasts of the field. None of these, however, proves to be "fit for" the man. "Helper" (Hb. *'ezer*) is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in "the helped." The term does not imply that the helper is either stronger or weaker than the one helped. "Fit for him" or "matching him" (cf. ESV footnote) is not the same as "like him": a wife is not her husband's clone but complements him.



Actions items for the week:

To the married, what is one area to pray for and work on in your marriage in order to better reflect God's ideal for it?

Both to the married and unmarried – what is one way that you yourself can contribute to the marriage of another? Please think about it and share it with your group, then commit to following through with it during this series on family (3 weeks) and then share with your experience with your group. How did it go? Where did you sense God leading you? What barriers were there to making it happen? Where did God show himself? What impact did it have both on you and the recipient (Think of this like a mini-mission trip; pray, plan, go, report back, celebrate, change, grow).