

Ephesians 5:21-33 – God’s Blueprint for Marriage

A. Introduction

- Paul moves on to how Christians behave within the family (5:21-6:9).
- This flows out of his teaching on “Spirit-filled living” (5:18). It leads to fellowship (19), worship (19-20) and relationship (21).
- In the next section he speaks about spiritual warfare (6:10-20) – marriage is under attack – we need “*timeless truths for truth-less times*”.

B. The Meaning of Marriage – Genesis 1-3

- Genesis 1-3 explains the origin of the sexes and of marriage.
- **Genesis 1 – Men and women are equal**
 - ⇒ 1:26-28 – both men and women are image bearers – together they express the image of God – this was totally counter cultural.
 - ⇒ The Law, Jesus and the early church affirmed this equality.
- **Genesis 2 – Men and women are different**
 - ⇒ God creates man as a potter might form a pot (7).
 - ⇒ He then gives the man a mission to fulfil and a test to pass (15-17).
 - ⇒ The man needs a companion he can love and partner to enable him to fulfil the divine commission (18).
 - ⇒ This partner will be a “*help*” – not a demeaning role, but one often assumed by God (Psalm 121). This helper must be both similar (an image bearer) and different – the animals cannot do this (19-20).
 - ⇒ The creation of the woman leads to an expression of joy (21-23).
 - ⇒ These verses affirm the difference of the genders and the loving leadership of the man and glad affirmation of the woman.
- **Genesis 3 – Men and women are fallen**
 - ⇒ After the Fall everything, including marriage, being broken (3:16).
 - ⇒ The husband may become an abusive brute; the wife may become subservient or aggressive.
 - ⇒ This does not abolish marriage – but it makes it harder.

C. The Model of Marriage – Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31

- The blueprint given here is affirmed by Paul and Jesus (Mark 10:7-8).
- **Marriage is Public** – it is a legally binding and publically recognized covenant. It is the fundamental and defining human relationship.
- **Marriage is Permanent** – it is for life. The husband cleaves to his wife – they are bound or “super-glued” together.
- **Marriage is Physical** – the two become one flesh. Sexual intimacy is necessary to a healthy marriage. It is a wonderful and dangerous gift.

D. The Mystery of Marriage – Ephesians 5:32

- Marriage is a living parable of Christ’s love for the church.
- We find this throughout the Bible (Isaiah 54:4; Hosea 1-3; Psalm 45).
- **He loved her (25)** – He was betrothed to her in eternity.
- **He gave himself up for her (25)** – the dowry that Christ paid for His bride was His own life (1 John 3:16).
- **He sanctified her (26)** – she is set aside for a unique, exclusive and passionate relationship with Christ (Revelation 2:1-7).
- **He cleanses her (26)** – Brides took a symbolic bath before their wedding day. The church must strive for purity and holiness.
- **He will present her holy (27)** – When Jesus returns He will perfect and beautify His bride and they will spend eternity together (Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:6-9; 21:2,9).