



NG Study Guide: Eph. 5:21-33 "Reflecting Jesus in Marriage" [1.21.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** *Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: The largest problems impacting marriage include: unreasonable expectations, inadequate spiritual and emotional preparation pre-marriage, and lack of meaningful spiritual and emotional support once married. God has made abundant resources available so that we can enjoy thriving marriages. These include the Bible, prayer, pastors, counselors, and godly examples. Yet, the most significant resource for a Christ-like marriage is the Holy Spirit. We simply cannot walk-worthy of Jesus without the Holy Spirit. In this section, we discover what a Spirit-filled life looks like in the context of marriage. It is a life that brings true contentment to a couple and glory to God. So, what does a Spirit-filled marriage look like?

Jesus followers are to be empowered and controlled by God's Spirit [5:18]. In this section, we discover what a Spirit-filled marriage looks like, and in the sections that follow we will contemplate a Spirit-filled family and work experience. Paul previously addressed the Spirit-filled life and singleness [4:1-5:21], and we don't want to disregard the importance of Christ-honoring singleness.

Unity + intimacy [31-32]

Marriage is to reflect the unity and intimacy of Jesus and His Church. God's plan was revealed early in the Creation account. God desires a husband and wife to become one [31, Gen. 2:24]. The ideal is spiritual, emotional, and physical intimacy. God's ideal is more than partnership or team, but oneness or unity.

Sin and its consequences are obstacles to unity with God, and unity between husband and wife. In the Garden of Eden there was intimacy, vulnerability, and innocence regarding evil. Immediately following Adam and Eve's sin there is a loss of intimacy, vulnerability, and innocence. Sin causes separation from God, and between husband and wife. In the Garden, there was blame-shifting rather than confession and repentance [Gen. 3]. Ever since there are broken-hearted and simply broken people. And our continued rebellion against God compounds the calamity.

Furthermore, as part of God's judgement of Adam and Eve's sin He declared that husbands and wives will have conflict over authority in their relationship [Gen. 3:16]. The struggle for power, authority, and control and the related abuses are obstacles to unity and intimacy. The feminist movement arose in response to abuses, and the recent mass exposure of sexual harassment in our culture and the #MeToo movement again reveals the abuses of power and control and gender issues. Our culture is undoubtedly looking for answers to these cultural issues, and the problems related specifically to marriage.

Jesus is the answer. Jesus came to redeem mankind and marriage [30-32, Lu 4:18]. God ordained marriage and loves marriage, and whatever God loves Satan seeks to destroy. You need to die to self to unite with Christ, and become one with your spouse. Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to His followers to empower you to live a Spirit-filled life and marriage, and to preserve unity [Eph. 4:3].

Mutual submission [21]:

Recognizing another person as an image bearer of God rather than objectifying a person as simply a means of erotic stimulation, or objectifying in any other way, is a beginning step to respect and submission. We are to submit to one another because of reverence for God. What does submit mean? The Greek *hupotasso* means to be ranked under, and had primary application to a military chain of command. Jesus' exemplifies submission when He denies Himself the rights and privileges of being God, and humbles Himself to do the will of God. His life is characterized by putting our needs before His own [Phil. 2:3-8]. The Holy Spirit produces a selfless love that allows us to put the needs of others before our own.

Wives encourage your husband to be your spiritual leader [22-24]

A wife is to submit to or honor her husbands because she is seeking to honor Jesus. The desire and willingness to yield is a work of the Holy Spirit in a wife's life. A wife is to submit to her husband not to men in general. The issue is not superiority since men and women are equal in Christ [Gal. 3:28]. A woman is to be a helpmate comparable to a man [Gen. 2:18]. There are four Hebrew words translated "helper" the one used in Genesis 2 is usually used to describe God delivering Israel. Thus, God does not see women as inferior. Jesus exalts women. In contrast, the Greco-Roman world viewed women simply as property.

A husband is head of the wife, and is called to be a spiritual leader to his wife (and family). As an ideal this would resemble the church being led by and submitted to Jesus [23-24]. Encouraging your husband to be your spiritual leader is one of the best things for Him, for you, and your marriage. How does the church honor Jesus? By praise, adoration, and yielding. A wife's affirmation for her husband may carry more weight than any other human being's words in his life. Consider how you as a wife affirm or encourage rather than discourage or criticize. Many men struggle at the role of being a spiritual leader. Guys often don't like to do what we find difficult or we don't feel good at. Most husbands want to be their wife's hero. Motivate him by letting him know *your* need for his spiritual leadership. He may be the head, but you can be the neck that turns the head.

Husbands love your wife as Christ loves His Church [25-33]

In the Greco-Roman world, a husband had no duty to a wife. In Christ, a husband has the highest duty imaginable. A husband can make it significantly easier for his wife to submit to his leadership by fulfilling his role. A husband is to love His wife as Jesus loves the church [25].

The Greek term *agape* is the highest form of love. It is pure, unconditional, and committed.

What does this Christ-like Spirit-filled love look like? First, it is sacrificial in that Christ gave Himself [25]. Jesus regularly gave Himself for others, and made the ultimate sacrifice of giving His life on the cross for us [Jn. 15:13]. Second, it is sanctified or set-apart [26]. The marriage relationship is to be set-apart as a special relationship. Husbands sanctify their marriage by the washing and cleansing of water by the words of Jesus [26, Jn. 15:3]. In contrast, Greeks and Romans would take a bride to a lake, river, or ocean as a ceremony to cleanse all pre-marital defilement. The Greco-Roman ceremony could do nothing to change the thinking about God, and one's identity in Christ. Thus, it was powerless to change the relationship with God and between husband and wife. On the other

hand, learning the word together, talking about the things of God, worshiping, being in a NG, and praying together empowered by the Holy Spirit help to set the relationship apart. Husbands also set the relationship apart by dwelling with their wife with understanding, honoring her, and treating her as precious [1 Pet.3:7]. Third, it is spotless [27]. As a follower of Jesus, you are seen by Him as spotless, holy, and perfect in your position before God [Song of Sol. 4:7]. As a groom gazes upon his bride on their wedding day, he sees her as perfect, no spots or blemishes. Husbands have a choice to focus on the spotless nature of his bride or the perceived spots. Fourth, a husband is to love his wife like he loves himself [28,29,33]. Since a husband and wife are to be one, a husband is called to love His wife as he loves himself [28]. Thus, a husband is called to nurture and cherish his wife as Jesus does the church, and avoid hurting her as he avoids hurting himself [29-30].

This type of love is supernatural and thus you need the Holy Spirit. And when you experience this type of Spirit-filled marriage you may not always be happy, but you will be content. And you will bring glory to God. God is waiting for you to ask [Lu. 11:9-13].

Study Guide Qs

Q1. What are some of the obstacles to unity and intimacy in marriage?

Q2. Why is submission in general, and in marriage, difficult?

Q3. What are some of the challenges of being single that married people should know? And what are some challenges of being married that singles should know?

Q4. How would you like to apply this lesson in your life?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. You can download a free book “Marriage” on our church site <http://calvarynexus.org/books-and-resources>.

The book provides a biblical framework for marriage: foundation, reconciliation, unity, intimacy, time and trust, finances, union threats, and leadership.

2. Calvary Nexus provides free biblical counseling to help you experience a thriving, Spirit-filled marriage. Information is available by contacting Pastor Roger (Roger@calvarynexus.org).

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Engage a married neighbor couple and ask them what advice they would give about marriage. Use the time to get to know their story as the conversation centers around their marriage experience.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing? If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.