

Living The Dream

Text: Ephesians 5:21-33

The Plain Truth

“God’s Dream for marriage is a couple moving
from _____ to _____.”

One Year Bible Reading

May 10: 1 Samuel 8:1-9:27, John 6:22-42, Psalm 106:32-48, Proverbs 14:34-35

May 11: 1 Samuel 10:1-11:15, John 6:43-71, Psalm 107:1-43, Proverbs 15:1-3

May 12: 1 Samuel 12:1-13:23, John 7:1-30, Psalm 108:1-13, Proverbs 15:4

May 13: 1 Samuel 14:1-52, John 7:31-53, Psalm 109:1-31, Proverbs 15:5-7

May 14: 1 Samuel 15:1-16:23, John 8:1-20, Psalm 110:1-7, Proverbs 15:8-10

May 15: 1 Samuel 17:1-18:4, John 8:21-30, Psalm 111:1-10, Proverbs 15:11

May 16: 1 Samuel 18:5-19:24, John 8:31-59, Psalm 112:1-10, Proverbs 15:12-14

May 9 & 10, 2015

Living the Dream

Life Group Lesson • Week of May 10

Marriage is beautiful. Marriage is difficult. In commitment at the deepest level two hearts merge into one forever, and nothing is the same. And though frail—as with all things we humans attempt—marriage between one man and one woman points to a greater love, the love Christ has for His bride, the church. Though the New Testament Church is not perfect, our bridegroom is. Ultimately it is through the Lord Jesus that all who believe upon His name will be made perfect—glorious, spotless, without blemish—and presented to Him in holy matrimony for all eternity (Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 21:2).

So why is it Christ has chosen the image of marriage to describe His love for us? The apostle Paul says the very idea that two people can be united into one “is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one” (Ephesians 5:32). The only way we who are sinful and selfish could ever reflect the pure love of Christ is if we allow our hearts to merge with His and become one. When we by faith accept His “proposal” to be in union, like a beautiful engagement ring, Christ gives us a seal of His love, the Holy Spirit. And through the power and indwelling work of His Holy Spirit our *me*-centered life becomes a *we*-centered life.

Read Ephesians 5:21-31

It is interesting that the opening verse of this passage—“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (v21)—is directly preceded by a call to have a grateful attitude: “And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v20). Since the Fall of man, we have all struggled with a *me*-centered attitude, and in our flesh we don’t seek God (Psalm 14:2-3). We don’t default to putting the needs of others before our own. But through the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can begin developing a heart of gratitude. Learning to be grateful unto God for “everything” will dramatically affect every relationship in our life, for the good!

1. Truly being grateful changes how a person views God, the world around them, and even difficult people. How have you seen this to be true in your own life?

How does giving “thanks for everything” free us to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”?

Submission is not an issue when we are in covenant with one another. Whether it is in covenant with my Lord (once I have accepted Jesus into my heart), in covenant with fellow believers, or in the covenant of Christian marriage with my spouse—it is easy to submit “out of reverence for Christ” when you trust the other person. Christ modeled this for us as He daily *and ultimately* submitted His will to the Father’s will.

2. God’s dream for marriage is realized as we move from *me* to *we*. With Christ’s example in mind, how are you beginning to see that trust between both parties is absolutely vital as we make the transition from *me* to *we*?

Where does forgiveness (a readiness to lay aside bitterness) play into this transition—moving from *me* to *we*?

Life is difficult enough without being at enmity with your spouse. God doesn’t want you to see yourselves as enemies, in opposition, or at-odds all of the time—but as partners, a team, and coworkers in His Kingdom. Learning to love, forgive, and walk in-step are worthy goals, and one day, not only will your children thank you for being a team, but countless others will as well. The church, which is the Bride of Christ, desperately needs to see marriage work and endure. Though marriage is difficult, being in covenant will perfect us overtime, as we lay down the *me* for *we*.

3. How has Christ loved the Church, according to Ephesians 5:25-30?

How has Christ’s example of selfless love affected your attitude toward another person in a difficult situation?

Again, marriage is difficult. Separation and divorce are difficult also. If you are divorced, or in a separation now, please know that you are not somehow beneath a person who is married. You can still applaud marriage and pray for the Lord to strengthen the marriages around you. You can joyfully honor God in your singleness by being true to your Lord, and lifting up the enduring metaphor of marriage as it points to Christ and His love for His Bride, the Church—and that includes you.

4. Hopefully this message/lesson—God’s Dream for Marriage—has helped you to see the bigger, more beautiful image of marriage as it relates to Christ and His Bride, the Church. Think about the difference the Bride of Christ (the Church) is making in your life. How does gathering for worship, serving, and being a part of a Life Group impact you on a day-to-day, week-to-week level?

Being in covenant—submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ—is a good thing. How has the Lord restored some of the broken places in your life through His Church?

How do you see yourself as an instrument of God’s love toward your spouse, or a brother or sister in Christ?

“As the Scriptures say, ‘A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.”
(Ephesians 5:31-32)