

Ephesians 5:22-33

EPHESIANS SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Marriage That Displays the Gospel

Big Idea

Christian marriage is designed to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church. Husbands and wives fulfill complementary roles that together display the beauty of the gospel to the world.

Main Theme

Marriage is more than companionship or personal fulfillment—it is a living picture of Christ's sacrificial love for His redeemed people.

Opening Icebreaker

What are some qualities that make any healthy relationship thrive?

Transition: Marriage is one of God's greatest gifts, but according to Paul, it is also one of God's clearest illustrations of the gospel.

Discussion Questions

1. Before discussing husbands and wives, why is verse 21 ("submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ") so important?

Leader Notes: Verse 21 introduces the entire household section.

Every Christian is called to humility and servant-heartedness.

The specific roles in marriage flow out of mutual devotion to Christ.

2. What does biblical submission mean—and what does it not mean? (vv.22–24)

Leader Notes: Submission is:

- Voluntary
- Joyful
- Rooted in trust
- Given to Christ through honoring one's husband

Submission is not:

- Inferiority
- Silence
- Abuse
- Blind obedience to sin

Emphasize dignity, equality in value, and different God-given roles.

3. What is the husband's primary responsibility according to verses 25–30?

Leader Notes: Paul spends significantly more time addressing husbands.

The command is not primarily to lead but to love sacrificially.

Christ's love is:

- Selfless
- Sacrificial
- Sanctifying
- Steadfast

4. Why is Christ's love for the church the model for husbands rather than cultural expectations of masculinity?

Leader Notes: Biblical leadership looks radically different from worldly leadership.

Jesus leads by serving, sacrificing, and laying down His life.

5. How does this passage challenge common cultural views of marriage?

Leader Notes: Culture often emphasizes:

- Personal happiness
- Self-expression
- Individual rights

Paul emphasizes:

- Covenant
- Sacrifice
- Holiness
- Gospel witness

6. What does Paul mean when he says Christ is sanctifying His church (vv.26–27)?

Leader Notes: Jesus is actively making His people holy.

Marriage should contribute to one another's spiritual growth rather than simply personal comfort.

7. How can husbands and wives encourage one another's spiritual growth?

Leader Notes:Examples:

- Praying together
- Reading Scripture
- Worshiping together
- Encouraging obedience
- Speaking truth with grace

8. Why does Paul quote Genesis 2:24 in verse 31?

Leader Notes:Marriage has always pointed beyond itself.

From creation onward, God's design anticipated Christ and the church.

9. What is the "mystery" Paul refers to in verse 32?

Leader Notes:The mystery is that marriage ultimately points to Christ and His bride.

Marriage is temporary.

The gospel relationship it represents is eternal.

10. Whether married or single, what does this passage teach every Christian about Jesus?

Leader Notes:Focus on Christ:

- He pursues us.
- He sacrifices for us.
- He cleanses us.
- He cherishes us.
- He remains faithful to us.

This passage is ultimately about Jesus before it is about marriage.

11. If you are married, what is one practical way you can better reflect Christ in your marriage this week? If you are single, how can you encourage or strengthen a marriage around you?

Leader Notes:Help everyone participate.

Singles have an important role in supporting healthy marriages within the church.

12. How can our church better display the beauty of Christ-centered marriages to the watching world?

Leader Notes: Discuss:

- Mentoring younger couples
- Hospitality
- Supporting struggling marriages
- Celebrating faithfulness
- Modeling repentance and forgiveness

Digging Deeper

Read verses 25–33 again.

List everything Christ does for His church.

How should that shape the way believers think about marriage—and about Jesus?

Leader Notes: This exercise keeps Christ at the center of the discussion rather than reducing the passage to a debate about gender roles.

Gospel Connection

Every Christian marriage is intended to tell a story:

- Christ pursued His bride.
- Christ sacrificed Himself for His bride.
- Christ cleanses His bride.
- Christ remains faithful to His bride.
- Christ will one day present His bride in glory.

Whether married or single, every believer finds their deepest identity not in marital status but in belonging to Jesus Christ.

Prayer Focus

Pray for:

- Husbands to love sacrificially
- Wives to flourish in Christ
- Singles to find deep identity and purpose in Christ
- Healing for struggling marriages
- Strong gospel-centered homes
- The church to reflect Christ's love to the world

Closing Challenge

This week, meditate on one way Christ has loved His church and intentionally reflect that same kind of love in one of your closest relationships. Remember: the goal is not merely to have a better marriage or healthier relationships, but to make the gospel visible through the way we love one another.