



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:18b-33

1. Marriage in Ephesians— for whom was it written?

- a. The exhortations of Eph. 5:22-33 apply:
 - a. Not to couples in general –non-believers, nor believer-unbeliever couples
 - b. To committed believers—married & perspective—both wife & husband
 - c. To couples participating in Christian community, characterized by “one another”—mutuality (Eph. 5:19, 21)
 - d. To couples who are being filled by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18)
 - e. To Christ-centered couples engaged with the triune God’s mission to secure a Bride for Christ (Eph. 5:25-27)
- b. Spirit-filled Believers; Spirit-filled Church; Spirit-filled Marriage: (Eph. 5:18-24)
 - a. “Paul...relates Spirit-filling also to the marriage relationship in Eph 5:21–24...The following instructions for wives & husbands... are directed to Spirit-filled believers, i.e., to committed Christians, rather than to those outside of Christ.” [A. Kostenberger, Marriage & Family in the NT, pp. 8-9]
 - b. “The picture of marriage...here is not of 2 needy people, unsure of their own value & purpose, finding their significance ...in each other’s arms. If you add two vacuums to each other, you only get a bigger & stronger vacuum, a giant sucking sound...Paul assumes...each spouse already has settled the big questions of life—why they’re made by God & who they are in Christ...[They know how to get ‘fuel’ to] ‘be filled with the Spirit’...If we look to our spouses to ‘fill up our [fuel] tanks’ [as] only God can...we’re demanding the impossible.” [Tim Keller, Meaning of Marriage, p. 52]

2. A Christ-Centered Literary Structure—the Chiasmus—what’s the Center?

- a. Of Eph. 5:22-33 roughly 2/3rds is focused on Christ & 1/3rd on wives/husbands (combined—13% wives; 21% husbands)
- b. “Ephesus...displays an adroit use of chiasmus to convey its message.” [John Beck, Shape of Biblical Language, p. 267]
- c. Chiasmus—Ancient Literary Device—We are reading a 1st-century Mid-East document!
 - a. Example #1 “The Sabbath for man was made; not man for the Sabbath.” (Mk. 2:27; Gk. word order)
 - a. A “The Sabbath

- a. B. for man
 - a. X. was made—"X" marks the center/focus
 - b. B' not man
- b. A' for the Sabbath."
- b. "Chiasmus...focus upon a thematic center or 'pivot' ...[e.g.] ABXB'A'. By revealing the conceptual center of the passage... chiasmus [are] indispensable for...understanding of the...message [of] the biblical writer." [John Beck, "Biblical Chiasmus Exploring Structure for Meaning," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, Vol. 17, #2, 1987, p.]
- c. "Chiasmus [e.g. ABXB'A'] involve...an overall structural balance revolving around the distinct central component of the overall unit [i.e., X in ABXB'A'], a recognition of chiastic structure leads the interpreter properly to appreciate the pivotal function & the emphatic importance of that central thought unit [i.e., X in ABXB'A']...Due to its central focus, chiasmus accentuates the main idea or theme the writer is concerned to convey to his readers...[The] chiastic structuring also encourages the interpreter to take special note of the corresponding thought units on the outer extremities of the overall discourse (A/A'), which also tend to be highlighted, albeit to a lesser degree than the pivotal central component (X)...The meaning of A is complemented by A', the meaning of B is complemented by B', & so on through the entire discourse." [Brad McCoy, *Chiasmus: Important Structural Device...in Biblical Literature*, CTS Journal, Vol. 9 (2003) p. 31]
- d. Example #1 Concerning the wife [Eph. 5:22-24]
 - A. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord;
 - B. For the husband is the wife's head, as Christ is head of the church;
 - X. (Central axis) Eph 5:23b, He is the Savior of the Body;
 - B' Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ;
 - A' So let the wives be [subject] to their own husbands in everything.
- e. Christ-centered: "He is the Body's Savior"
 - a. "Eph. 5:23-24 form a chiasmus with Eph. 5:23c as its central element—'he is the Savior of the body'...The chiasmus... emphasizes the Christ-o-centric [Christ-centered] nature of the relationship between husband and wife &...is imagined in a new way within the framework of the Cosmic Christ & the universal Church." [Lisa M. Belz, *Rhetoric of Gender in the Household of God: Eph. 5:21-33*, pp. 110, 101-102]
 - f. "Don't look at your spouse as your Savior"—Tim Keller
 - a. "What's needed is "Spirit-generated selflessness...It means taking your mind off yourself and realizing that in Christ your needs are going to be met...you don't look at your spouse as your Savior." [Tim Keller, *Marriage*, p. 66]
 - b. "Stop looking to false forms of salvation, to pseudo-saviors. If you are building your life on your career or your spouse ... & it [he/she] fails, there's no hope...Why?...Jesus is the only savior who, if you gain him will satisfy you &, if you fail him will [always] forgive you." [Tim Keller, *The Insider & the Outcast*, p.]
- g. Example #2—Concerning Husbands (Part 1)
 - a. Eph 5:25-28 Central Chiasmus
 - A. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church & gave Himself for her;
 - B. That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word;
 - X. (Axis) That He might present her to Himself a glorious church, without spot, wrinkle...
 - B' But that she should be holy and without blemish;
 - A' Husbands ought to love their wives as their bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.
 - b. Christ-centered Chiasmus
 - a. Eph. 5:22-33 has "a Chiastic pattern...Two admonitions directly addressed to the wives occur in the two extremes [as 'bookends,' 5:22; 33b]...To the question, 'How should husbands love their wives...? Paul...answer[s]: 'As Christ loved the church.'...The argument is based on Christ's relation to the church—a relationship which is fully [reflected] in the structure...[Note that] the word 'church' is found in the line [Eph. 5:27] which is the pivot [center] of the whole system." [Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, p.]
 - b. "The purpose of Christ's death for the church (5:25) is outlined in 3 [purpose] 'that' clauses (5:26-27) [BxB]"—A. Kuruvillea
 - c. "Washing of water by the Word is an ongoing process, as He reveals new truths...We are not only washed by the Bible ...the written word of God, [but also] by the 'rhema' (a spoken word of God...)." [Glen Carpenter, *Connections*, p.]
 - c. Example #3— Concerning Husbands (Part 2) Eph 5:28-33a
 - A Husbands ought to love their wives as their bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself;
 - B. No one hates his flesh, but nourishes & cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church;
 - C. Because we are members of His body;
 - X. (Central axis) "A man shall leave his father & mother and be joined to his wife,"
 - C' The two shall become one flesh;
 - B' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ & the church;
 - A' Nevertheless let each one of you [husbands] so love his own wife as himself. 3 Z' & the wife see that she respect her husband. [Eph. 5:33b—'Bookend' matching A/Z: Eph. 5:22a]
 - d. "Continual & consistent care is implied by Christ's 'nourishing & cherishing' of his bride/body, the church"—A. Kuruvillea
 - e. Christ's Love & Sacrifice—Personal & Corporate aspects (Eph. 5:25; Gal. 2:20)
 - a. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church & gave himself for her" (Eph. 5:25; cf. 5:2)
 - b. In Eph. 5:25 "the specific object of Christ's love is the church...This is the only time the NT specifically mentions Christ's love for the church. What's the evidence of his love?... 'He gave himself for her' The supreme test of Christ's love is that he gave himself for the church." [Harold H. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 749]

c. "I've been crucified with Christ, & I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

3. Implications: "Christ & Church" intersects with "Husband & Wife"

a. The Text's Two Levels: Christ & Church and Husband & Wife

- a. Eph. 5:21–33: "the passage moves back & forth between the two levels. The mutual self-giving love of husband & wife images the union of Christ & the Church." [Kevin A. McMahon, *Divine Promise & Human Freedom*, p. 115]
- b. "Eph. 5:21-33...offers a unifying vision of the marital relationship between husband & wife and between Christ & the Church ...[Here,] 'body,' [is used] on both the concrete level in regard to husband & wife and the metaphorical level with regard to Christ & the Church." [Benjamin A. Roberts, *Voice of the Bridegroom*, p.]

b. Our Dual Status—Human Spouses & Members of Christ's Body & Bride

- a. "While the text does say that every woman/wife should be in submission to her husband (5:22–24), every male/husband is also [to be] in subjection to his Heavenly Spouse [i.e., Christ]." [Joseph J. Spoelstra, *God's Love Story*, p.]
- b. In "exhorting husbands to love their wives, Paul...mentions Christ's love for the church...[which] should be practiced... by husbands toward their wives... Before anyone can practice this love, we must first receive this love from Christ. When a husband is moved by Christ's love, he can practice this love toward his wife. This is why a husband must have an intimate love relationship with Christ. In this respect, husbands are 'brides' and Christ is our bridegroom." [HQ Bible Study Team, "Two Will Become One (Eph 5:21-33)," *University Bible Fellowship*, 10/12/2012]

c. "We [both husbands & wives] are members of his body." (Eph. 5:30; cf. Gal 3:28)

- a. "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)
- b. In Eph. 5:30 believers are "described as 'members of the body' of Christ...[Thus] the author reminds husbands...that they themselves as members of Christ's body, are recipients of [Christ's] care. Yet...it is not only husbands who are 'members of his body.' Wives too, as believers are members of the body of Christ...The 'body' mentioned in Eph. 5:30 must include both husbands & wives. [This] serves to remind husbands & wives of [what] they have in common as 'members' of the body of Christ. This is an important point..." [Gregory W. Dawes, *Body in Question: Metaphor & Meaning*, p. 156]
- c. The "metaphorical use of soma [Gk. 'body'] in Eph. 5:25-32...is unitive in its (implicit) reference to wives & husbands... Soma ['body'] in 5:30 is a metaphor for the Church...[It] highlights what all Christians have in common... membership of the 'body of Christ.' Since there is no distinction...in this context between men & women...Eph. 5:30 contains an implicit reference to what wives & husbands, as believers, have in common. What does this mean? It means that...marriage partners are brought together, not only within the ['one flesh'] union of marriage, but also within the metaphorical body of Christ...This verse [5:30] cuts through the equations: Husband = Christ = Authority and Wife = Church = Subordination, making it clear that husbands stand alongside their wives [as members] in relation to Christ." [G. Dawes, *Body...*, p. 202]