



EPHESIANS 5:21–33

“GOSPEL-CENTERED MARRIAGE (PART 1)”

JANUARY 4, 2026

OPENING

Ice Breaker (Choose One) – 5–10 minutes

- When you hear Ephesians 5 mentioned in conversations about marriage, what emotions or expectations usually come to mind?
- What makes discussions of marriage passages in Scripture feel either hopeful or difficult?

Read the Text Together: Ephesians 5:21–33 – 5 minutes

This passage has often been read through cultural lenses rather than gospel lenses. We want to listen carefully to what Paul is actually saying—and why.

Read **Ephesians 5:21–33** aloud. Notice repeated words, images, or ideas.

If possible, use two readers: one reads vv. 21–24; another reads vv. 25–33

SUMMARY

Paul’s teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5 must be read within the larger context of walking wisely and being filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:15–21). This passage is not a weapon to control others but a vision for gospel-shaped relationships among believers.

In a culture where husbands were expected to rule for their own benefit, Paul radically reframes headship by tying it directly to Christ’s saving, self-giving love for the church. Christ’s headship is not about authority for personal advantage but about sacrificial love for the good of his body. At the literary center of the passage, Paul emphasizes this truth:

“Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28).

Marriage, according to Paul, is meant to display the mystery of Christ’s faithful love for his church. When husbands and wives live out sacrificial love and mutual devotion, their marriage becomes a living testimony of the gospel to the watching world.

It should be clear that this passage never justifies abuse, coercion, or harm. Christ’s love protects, gives life, and seeks the good of the other. If anyone is experiencing abuse, submission is not what Scripture calls them to — and they should seek help and safety.

DISCUSSION

Observation Questions

- What commands or instructions are given in verse 21, and how does that verse shape everything that follows?
- How often does Paul refer to **Christ and the church** in this passage?
- What actions are husbands explicitly commanded to do in verses 25–30?
- What repeated images does Paul use to describe the relationship between Christ and the church (e.g., body, savior, love, care)?
- Which verse seems to function as the center or emphasis of the passage? Why might Paul place it there?



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: Please feel empowered to use only the questions that are helpful for the context of your group.

Interpretation & Theological Reflection

- How does Paul define “headship” by connecting it directly to Christ as Savior (v. 23)?
- In what ways does Christ’s love for the church challenge common ideas of leadership, authority, or power?
- Why do you think Paul spends significantly more time instructing husbands than wives in this passage?
- How does Paul’s use of Genesis 2 (vv. 31–32) deepen the meaning of marriage beyond companionship or romance?
- What does it mean that marriage points to a “profound mystery” about Christ and the church?

Application Questions

For Everyone (Married or Single)

- What does this passage teach us about what Christlike love looks like in any relationship?
- How does this text challenge selfishness or entitlement in the way we relate to others?
- In what ways does your view of marriage (or singleness) need to be reshaped by the gospel?

For Those Who Are Married

- How does sacrificial love show up in ordinary, everyday moments—not just dramatic ones?
- Are there ways you are tempted to measure your faithfulness by what you receive rather than what you give?
- How might your marriage more clearly reflect Christ's love to others?

For Singles

- How does this passage affirm the value of self-giving love apart from marriage?
- What does it teach about the kind of character and Christlikeness that matters most in relationships?

Closing Prayer

Pray along these lines:

- Thanking Christ for his self-giving love for the church.
- Confessing ways we resist sacrificial love.
- Asking the Spirit to shape our relationships—marriages, families, friendships—into reflections of the gospel.
- Praying that the church's life together would make Christ visible to the world.

Optional Take-Home Reflection

Reread Ephesians 5:21–33 during the week and reflect on this question:

- Where is Christ inviting me to love more like him—by giving myself for the good of others?



**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Ephesians 5:21–33