

RENEWED

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

"GOSPEL-CENTERED MARRIAGE (PART 2)"

JANUARY 11, 2026

SUMMARY

In this sermon on Ephesians 5:21–33, Pastor Jeff encouraged us to slow down to hear Paul's words within their original context and within the larger story of the gospel. Rather than approaching this passage through modern debates or assumptions, the sermon highlighted how Paul presents marriage as a reflection of Christ's self-giving love for the church—and how that love reshapes authority, submission, and belonging. Pastor Jeff highlighted the significance of Paul addressing wives directly, affirming them as morally responsible disciples whose lives are ordered first by their relationship to Christ. As we discuss this passage, we want to engage the biblical text itself, listening carefully to what Paul says, how he says it, and how the gospel of Jesus Christ renews marriage and all our relationships.

Ice Breaker (Choose One) - 5 minutes

- Whose marriages have you seen that you would describe as healthy, joyful, and life-giving? What made them that way?
- When you hear "gospel-centered marriage," what words or ideas come to mind?

Read the Text Together: Ephesians 5:21-33 - 10-15 minutes

Read Ephesians 5:21–33 aloud slowly (consider having more than one reader).

- What words, phrases, or images stood out to you as you heard the passage read?

DISCUSSION

Setting the Context

Paul is writing into a first-century patriarchal culture, not a modern debate. Pay attention to what Paul does before what we think it means.

- How does knowing the cultural context of Ephesians 5 affect how you hear this passage?
- Why do you think it matters that Paul addresses wives directly rather than only speaking to husbands about them?

Exploring the Main Themes



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.

Submission as a Christlike Response (vv. 21-22)

Pastor Jeff argued that submission flows from reverence for Christ, not from cultural expectations or personal worth.

- How does verse 21 shape the way we should read everything that follows?
- In what ways does this section challenge common misunderstandings of “submission”?
- How does Jesus’ submission to the Father help clarify what submission means—and what it does not mean?

Wives Addressed as Disciples (vv. 22-24)

Paul’s direct address to wives was highlighted as radically dignifying.

- Why is it significant that Paul speaks to wives rather than only about them?
- What does this passage assume about women’s spiritual maturity, agency, and faith?
- How does grounding submission “as to the Lord” protect women from misuse of authority?

Authority Reframed Through Christ (vv. 23-24)

Paul defines headship through Christ as Savior, not merely ruler.

- How does Christ’s role as Savior reshape our understanding of authority?
- What kinds of leadership does Paul clearly rule out by grounding headship in Christ?
- How does this gospel-shaped authority differ from how power is used in the world?

Love That Protects and Transforms (vv. 25-30)

The sermon emphasized that Paul places the heaviest weight on husbands, not wives.

- Why do you think Paul spends more time addressing husbands than wives?
- How does Christ’s sacrificial love set boundaries on what submission means?
- How does self-giving love create safety and flourishing in marriage?

Identity, Belonging, and the Mystery of Marriage (vv. 31–32)

Marriage is rooted in shared identity and points beyond itself to Christ and the church.

- What does “one flesh” communicate about belonging and shared life?
- Does seeing marriage as a “mystery” connected to Christ change how we approach it?
- Why does Paul insist that marriage ultimately points beyond itself?

Application & Reflection

For All of Us (Married, Single, Widowed)

- How does this passage challenge our assumptions about power, worth, or control in relationships?
- Where might the gospel be inviting you to trust Christ more deeply in your relationships?
- What would it look like for your life to reflect Christ’s self-giving love more clearly?

Pastor Jeff acknowledged that this passage has sometimes been misused.

- What truths from this passage would you want someone who has been hurt by misuse of “submission” to hear?

Closing Prayer

Invite group members to share brief prayer requests related to relationships, trust, healing, or growth in Christ.

Pray briefly using language from the passage:

- Thanksgiving for Christ’s love for the church
- Wisdom to live in reverence for Christ
- Grace to reflect the gospel in relationships



**PREPARE FOR
NEXT WEEK:**

Ephesians 6:1-4