

Recap of 11/20/22 message by Chris Sommerfield– Ephesians 5:22-33

1. Marriage is the foundation of society and the first institution created by God for the purpose of human flourishing. It shouldn't surprise us that there is a desire to experience love and have deep-meaningful relationships in every human heart. It also shouldn't surprise us that the enemy and structures of the world opposed to God try to twist and distort God's design for marriage. Even our own sin distorts how we view marriage and how we engage in our relationships. It is absolutely critical we as believers in Christ go to the scriptures to remind us of God's design for marriage and what makes a marriage flourish.
2. Everything is flipped on its head. The first century context the book of Ephesians was written had wrongful views regarding submission, headship, and love, just as the world today has wrongful views. Paul writes this letter to believers in Ephesus and in this passage, he continues the idea of spirit-filled living and what it looks like between a husband and a wife. He straitens out godly forms of submission, headship, and love and shows the counter-cultural nature of spirit-filled living opposed to worldly living in the household.
 - A) Submission - The world often views submission in a negative light, often associated with oppression, abuse, or coercion. In the first century it was thought by some Greek philosophers that women were intellectually defective, thus they were inferior in being to men and should be submissive due to their lesser nature. This is wrong. The word for "be subject" or "submit" in verse 22 is actually carried over from verse 21 where Paul exhorted all believers to submit to one another. It is in the middle voice which has the idea of free agency, in other words, voluntary submission. Willful submission. It is not coerced, or seen as negative, it is a beautiful action showing humility toward others. It also cannot be tied to a person's being because it is used in 1 Corinthians 15:28 in the context of Jesus Christ submitting to the Father. God the Son is not of lesser being than the Father. He certainly is not defective in intellect. No, this is a positional submission, a functional submission, one that is not based on ontology or being. When the text tells us that wives are to submit to their husbands as to the Lord, we see it is in service to Christ and it is based on God's ordained order with husbands being the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. The church's willful submission to Jesus Christ is a beautiful thing, and in no way negative.
 - B) Headship- The head of the first century world of Ephesus was Caesar. He was the Roman emperor, the head of Rome, and the Roman citizens were the body of Rome. At all times the body was to protect the head. Roman citizens were supposed to throw themselves in front of arrows to protect the emperor, their head. They were supposed to reach into fire to obtain anything he may need. In fact, the head was to be loved, not to show love. Paul turns this completely around when compares the husband's headship of their wives with Christ's headship of the church and commanding them to love their wives as Christ loves the church. Husbands are to nurture and cherish their wives. Christ's love for the church serves as a model for husbands loving their wives. Their love should be characterized by willful self-sacrifice. It is an initiating love: We love because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19) Paul Tripp describes this love as "willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or that the person being loved is deserving." Reciprocation nor deservedness are grounds for the love of the husband. God loves us first, before such love has a chance to be reciprocated, and we certainly are not deserving of His love. No, it is given because of who God is, not because of who we are.
3. We can experience flourishing marriages when we reflect on the divine model of Christ and the church. We must stop pointing fingers at our spouses, and instead reflect upon our own spiritual lives with God and how we may be not living spirit-filled lives.