



Week 2: The Meaning of Marriage

Opening

- Begin with a brief **welcome and prayer** to set the tone for the group time.
- **Introduce the theme:** God designed marriage to point to the gospel—mutual self-giving love flowing from our reverence for Christ. Whether single, dating, married, divorced, or widowed, we are all invited to see how Christ’s love shapes our relationships and community.
- What is one thing you love about your family?

Discussion Questions

CONNECT

- In relationships, listening is a big component. Would you consider yourself a good listener? Yes or no? What do you do when you’re caught not listening?
 - **Transition:** Healthy relationships—marriage or otherwise—don’t grow from getting our way, but from becoming more like Jesus together.

DISCOVER

Read Ephesians 5:22-33 together as a group

- **Gospel frame (v.21–27):** Where do you see Jesus’ pattern of self-giving love? How does v.21 (“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”) set the tone for all Christian relationships?
- **Wives and the Church (vv.22–24):** What does “as to the Lord” mean and not mean? Where can this be distorted? How does Acts 5:29 (“We must obey God rather than men”) provide a guardrail when urged into sin?
- **Husbands and Christ (vv.25–30):** What would it look like, this week, to love with Christ-like *agapē* that “nourishes and cherishes”?

- For those not married, how does this call shape the way we prepare for, or support, others in covenant relationships?
- **Creation design (v.31; Gen 2:24):** What is God's order (leave → hold fast → one flesh) and why is order wise for dating/engagement? How does cohabitation and sexual bonding before covenant cloud discernment? If single, what are the ways to pursue holiness and wisdom now?
- **Mystery and mission (v.32):** Paul says marriage "refers to Christ and the church." How should that reshape the story our marriages, friendships, or seasons of singleness are telling?

Leader Note – Sensitive Themes: Scripture never authorizes abuse or tyranny. "Submit in everything" does **not** mean following someone into sin or tolerating harm. If someone discloses abuse, pause the discussion, care well, and connect them with pastoral and professional support.

APPLY

- **Self-inventory:** Where am I choosing self over self-giving (time, tone, schedule, screens, sexuality, money, conflict style?)
 - Share with the group and discuss what repentance and surrender could look like in that area.

RESPOND

- **Practice prayer:** In pairs (or as married couples) or as a group, pray, "Father, teach us Christ's way of love. Help us submit to Your Word and to each other in love. Make our homes and friendships a signpost of Jesus' gospel."

GROUP PRAYER

Take time for prayer requests and celebrations and then spend time praying for these things specifically:

- **The Bride of Christ:** Thank God that He loves us and prepares us as His bride.
- **Marriages:** Pray for the marriages in our church and around us to be a signpost of the Gospel.
- **Sacrificial Love:** Ask the Spirit to make us people who gladly submit to God's instruction and practice self-sacrificing love in all relationships.

CLOSING

Leader send-off: "Because Jesus first loved us, we can go first in love this week—rejecting selfishness and choosing rhythms that nourish and cherish others."

Optional Leader Resources (from the sermon)

- Five clarifications about submission (not superiority, not disregarding, not abdicating responsibility for husbands, not demanded, not unconditional obedience).

- Husbands: take spiritual initiative—open the door, guard your schedule, prioritize prayer/Word, prefer with tenderness.
- Dating/engaged: God's order is protective wisdom; sexual bonding outside covenant clouds discernment.