

Meaning Filled Marriage

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[0 : 0 0] Good evening. Evening. I've got one evening. Thanks, Johnny. Nice to see you out here this evening with us. As Graham said, my name's Andy, and I'm one of the ministers down at Nidra Community Church. I think I've spoken here a few times. It's a privilege to be back with you here this evening. And as you said, we're talking about marriage, and there are quite a few passages that talk about this important subject, but we're going to just hone in on Ephesians chapter 5. So if you want to turn with me there, I'm going to read that, and it's going to be important that you just have that open in front of you, because I'm going to pretty much be preaching through that text. So Ephesians chapter 5, and we're on verses 22 to the end of the chapter. All right, let's read this, and I'll pray, and then we'll get stuck in. So, this is God's word to us. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Amen? Let's pray.

Father God, we thank you for that wonderful bit of scripture we just read, that tells of Christ's love for his bride, the church. And we just pray as we come to this text, that you'd help me to honour the Lord Jesus. And I pray for each one of us, that you'd help us to hear from your words.

And not just be hearers, but be doers as well. We desperately need your spirit to take these words, and then put them in our hearts. We pray you do that this evening. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

So I was speaking to someone a few weeks ago, and he said this to me. He said, you know what, Andy? Marriage is one of the hardest things I've ever done since becoming a Christian.

Marriage is one of the hardest things I've ever done since becoming a Christian. And for those of us who are maybe married this evening, I don't know if you can relate to that comment. Marriage can be difficult, can't it? Because in marriage, what happens is that it brings two sinners together from different backgrounds, with different ways of doing things, and puts them in a relationship for life. No wonder the Apostle Paul calls marriage a mystery. A mystery.

[3 : 3 1] So what is this marriage thing all about? Why did God create it? What's this thing all about? What's the point? Well, if you just look back at our text, Paul gives us the reason for marriage at the end of our text in verses 31 and 32. Let me say them again. He says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the church. So marriage means two things here. Firstly, marriage is a lifelong union between one man and between one woman. So in this passage, Paul points back to the account in Genesis 2 that we got read earlier. In Genesis 2, we see God taking Eve out of Adam because it was not good for man to be alone.

And when Adam sees Eve, he basically jumps out of his skin with excitement, doesn't he? He says this, at last, I found someone whose bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. And then God says this, a man shall leave his parents and then hold fast to his wife. And the language here is that of leaving and cleaving. A man leaves his family unit and is united with his wife through the act of sex to make a new family unit. And Genesis 2 points to the fact that sex is for marriage and marriage is

for life. Now in our culture these days, that's been thrown out a little bit, hasn't it? People say this to me all the time, particularly in Nidri. Marriage, why do I need that? Why can't I just live my partner? Isn't marriage just a piece of paper at the end of the day and that's it? I love them.

What more do I need than that? But Paul is showing us here that God created marriage in the very beginning. It was the foundation to the very first society. The Bible actually begins with marriage right at the beginning and it actually ends with marriage as well. So what the Bible is telling us is that marriage is important to God. It's not something that we can let go. It's not just a cultural thing. It's not an old-fashioned institution that doesn't matter anymore. Marriage is deeper than that piece of paper. It's the foundation for society. It's the safest place to raise children.

It safeguards sex. It gives security to husband and wife. I mean, think about the heartbreak that is caused by breakups, by broken relationships, the emotional distress that is caused by distress. Maybe some of us have felt that in our lives. Marriage was created not to be like that. It was created to be a union.

It was created for life. So first, it's that union between man and woman. Secondly, Paul says there's a deeper spiritual reality going on here. Paul says that the marriage relationship paints a picture of Christ and the church. What does he mean by that? Well, he says Christ laid down his life for the church's bride. And in the same way, our marriage relationship should reflect that relationship that Christ has with his church. To reflect that sacrificial love. It should reflect that profound love that Christ has for us. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says this, or writes this, how many of us have realized that we are always to think of the married state in terms of the doctrine of the atonement. It does not belong to ethics, but we must consider marriage in terms of the doctrine of the atonement. In other words, what we say is marriage is deep. It points to something.

[7 : 31] It points to Christ dying on the cross. It teaches us about the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And when we think about it, I take that step back. That can help us in our marriage, can't it?

I mean, a lot of people these days get into marriage because they found that perfect person. And they're going to live happily ever after. They say things like, I found the one. I found my soulmate. And this lasts until they get married and she finds his toenails in the bed.

Or he finds that her hair has blocked the drain once again. And then suddenly, it's out the window. Marriage is rosy until we find out the other person is selfish and impatient and unloving. And it's not the perfect person, the perfect match. In a word, we find out when we get married that the other person is a big fat sinner. And at the engagement period, there's actually been a little bit of a sham. But this spiritual picture of Jesus dying on the cross helps us, doesn't it, this evening? It helps us to remember that Christ died for sinners, of which my spouse is going to be one of them. We are married to a fellow sinner, not Mr. or Mrs. Perfect.

But it also reminds us that a godly marriage does not take place by us looking at one another. A godly marriage is built as we look upon Christ. A godly marriage is built as we look upon Christ, particularly dying on the cross.

[9 : 12] I mean, his death, remember, shows us his gracious and his sacrificial love towards sinners like us. And so what do we do when our husband or wife frustrates us, which happens, doesn't it, from time to time? We do what Christ has done for us, don't we?

We forgive as Christ has forgiven us. We love as Christ has loved us. We are patient as Christ has been patient with us.

We remember that Christ humbled himself unto death on a cross, and so we need to put away pride and humbly serve one another. Basically, empowered by the Spirit of God, two Christians together see the love of Christ and mimic that in their relationships.

Let me make a little side point. Maybe some of you of us are single this evening, maybe looking to get married in the future. And I always say this to my people back in Nidra, because we've got quite a few single lads and ladies, I always say, marriage will not complete you.

Don't think marriage is going to sort out all your problems, because it isn't. In fact, all that happens in marriage is that you find out how sinful you are. You realise how selfish you are.

[10 : 34] Marriage is like a little bit of a picture that points out your faults and your needs of Jesus Christ. I remember my first year anniversary with my wife.

We were away in Greece, and we were away with my family, but we went away for dinner. Me and my wife went to a lovely evening in the hills, candlelit dinner, lovely food, and then my wife turns around to me and says, Andy, I need to tell you something.

Looks into my eyes. You've been very selfish recently. Happy anniversary. And that's true, isn't it? In marriage, you find out how selfish and sinful you are.

So how are two sinners brought together going to last? How are we going to get through the ups and downs of life? How are we going to get through the different personality quirks and stresses of life?

It's the gospel. It's the gospel. It's the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need him, don't we? To build healthy, godly marriages.

[11 : 43] So the meaning of marriage is that mysterious union between man and woman. That points to Lord Jesus' death on the cross. So how do we reflect Christ in the church and our relationships? What does a godly marriage look like?

Well, Paul gives us two commands in that text if you remember. Firstly, it says wives need to submit. And secondly, he says husbands need to love.

Let me say at this point that these commands are not just for husbands and wives but for the whole church. Again, if we're single and thinking I need to switch off right now, don't do it.

We are all called to submit. We are all called to love. So although I'm going to apply these specifically to Christians who are married this evening, wherever life, wherever we're at in life, these commands apply to us.

So firstly, wives submit. Look at verse 22. Again, just so you can see I'm not making it up. It says wives submit to your own husbands as to the Lord.

[12 : 53] So this is probably one of the most controversial commands probably in the Bible these days. People think this is backwards. People think this is old fashioned. There's actually quite a lot of hate towards this command because we live in a generation where women have been liberated from this kind of stuff.

People look at this command and think it's been misused over the years and so we're past that submitting malarkey. We're going to throw that one out. That's just a cultural thing. But let me make this clear this evening.

This command should never be used to oppress women. That's not what it's there for. This command should actually allow wives to flourish under the loving headship of their husbands.

And the problem here isn't the command. The problem is the abuse of the command over many years.

I mean no wife would be questioning this command if men led their wives as they were supposed to. No wife would be complaining if her husband was selfless, patient, gentle, sensitive, always looking for her best and loving her well.

[14 : 06] There wouldn't be any question about it would there? But the problem is that as men we can be a muppet a lot of the time. We're self-centered.

We're lazy. We're impatient. We're proud. Sometimes we're bulls like bulls in a china shop a lot of the time. But either way this command is here and we cannot escape it.

And we cannot even just say it's not for our time anymore because Paul roots this again in creation to prove his point. He says that in his original design Adam was created to be head of his wife.

Adam was created first and he was created to have authority over Eve. He was supposed to lead her and he was supposed to care for her as God had cared and led him.

So what does submission look like? Well let me start with what it doesn't mean. Submission doesn't mean that a wife is less than a husband.

[15 : 13] It doesn't mean that she is a second class citizen. Again the Genesis account says man and woman were created equally in the image of God but they were given different roles.

submission also doesn't mean that wives are some sort of slaves to their husbands. She's not some sort of doormat that is supposed to be chained to the kitchen sink.

Headship does not mean dictatorship. We're not in North Korea. It's not do whatever the supreme leader says and I have no say. That's not what submission and headship should look like.

Submission in the Bible is a voluntary act of love. It's a voluntary act of love. So think about in the Trinity.

What does the son do? The son submits to the father. This does not mean that he is less God. This does not mean he's a doormat.

[16 : 17] But he chooses to submit to the father. Why? Because he loves him. It's his role to submit as a son. Even though he is totally 100% equal with God.

And actually when wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord, they honour the Lord Jesus. They honour the Lord Jesus.

And in fact when wives submit to their husbands they mirror the action of God the son. They are acting in a very Christ-like manner.

So for those of us who are wives this evening, the question is, are we submitting with a good attitude? Are we encouraging our husband's leadership?

Or are we always trying to undermine him? Do we honour our husbands as our spiritual heads? Are we constantly moaning and nagging him?

[17 : 23] You see submission again is all about attitudes. Doing it joyfully, doing it freely, doing it because we love our husbands.

And remember I'm not saying this is easy. Remember it wasn't easy for Jesus Christ to go to the cross and submit to the Father and yet he did it. So as wives we are called to do that even if it is painful at times.

Others have some of us this evening who are wiser thinking well I want to submit to my husband but he is a lazy jab of the huts. What am I to do?

Do I still need to submit? Well if you are a wife in that situation and you need to pray for your husband and you need to gently encourage your husband do not push him away by nagging him it's going to get you nowhere but pray for him gently encourage him and know we men are going to mess up I can guarantee you that for 100% but that doesn't change the command of submission and those of us who are husbands let me remind us that when we lead well our wives should flourish as husbands we need to think of our wives as flowers that need to be nurtured and taken care of you see if our wives are wilting and not flourishing then we are not leading well are we we need to repent ask the

Lord's forgiveness and work on our headship once again so in a godly marriage wives submit secondly husbands are called to love their wives and this is a deep deep love once again that we are called to just look at verses 25 to 28 again let me read them again husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the words so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish in the same ways husbands should love their wives as their own bodies he who loves his wife loves himself so in this passage we see Christ's love once again the fact that he gave up his life for his church the fact that he sanctifies her the fact that he cleanses her the fact that he presents her spotless before the throne of

[20 : 13] God and in the same way that Christ loves his church we husbands are called to love our wives in the same way so let's look at some of those things firstly we're supposed to love our wives with a sacrificial love a sacrificial love I mean think about Christ once again he left the joys of heaven to come to the poverty of this earth and what did he do while he was here well although he was king of the universe a mighty king he came as a lowly servant didn't he and served his disciples and then he died the most agonizing death on the cross for undeserving sinners like you and me and that is the kind of love that is called for in our marriages as husbands we are called to put our wives needs above our own we're called to die to our desires our wishes our wants for the sake of our wives but this again won't be easy because we are naturally selfish we are naturally bent inwards we naturally want what we want but joy is found when we put one another first isn't it that's where real joy is found

Alistair Begg writes this the greatest joy we will experience in marriage is found when we learn to put our partner first when we value the happiness of our spouse over our own happiness we will begin to understand the meaning of true sacrificial love and that's what we're called to as husbands this evening we're called to put our partner's happiness our wives happiness above our own we're called to selfless love as opposed to selfishness at the end of the day headship is about service Jesus said this to disciples squabbling for power but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all for even the son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many and that should be our cool husbands we serve we don't domineer but we serve our wives so we have that sacrificial love secondly we're called to sacrificially and lovingly lead our wives spiritually we're called to lovingly lead our wives spiritually you see if you notice in that text

Christ doesn't just leave us on our own when we're saved does he what does he do he gently sanctifies cleanses and presents us spotless before the throne of God he is constantly changing us by his spirit as believers this evening and he does that patiently doesn't he he's so patient with us he does that gently but he doesn't let slip go at the same time and in the same way as husbands this evening we're called to gently and sensitively lead our wives and this is important because as husbands we are going to be called to account on how we have led our wives spiritually when Eve sinned who did God call upon it wasn't Eve he went straight to Adam and as husbands this evening we will be judged more strictly on that day so the question is are we leading our wives spiritually this evening as husbands and my guess is some of us are not some of us are quite lazy we'd rather watch sport all day than focus and point our wives to the

Lord Jesus Christ we have a hard day at work and then we come home and we laze upon the TV all evening instead of serving our family but as husbands we are called to lead the family unit spiritually by reading the Bible through prayer and holding our wives to account here's a question to ask yourselves this evening if you're a husband is my wife more like Christ because she's married to me is my wife more like Christ because she's married to me is my wife flourishing under my headship or is she wilting too often we're like balls in a china shop dishing out advice without sensitively listening to our wives and now I am too often we're ready to rebuke and yet we do it with a self righteous attitude too often we are lazy and we do not point our wives to the Lord

Jesus Christ and we need to repent of these attitudes don't we this evening we need to repent and seek to lead as Christ has called us to so as husbands we have a great responsibility don't we this evening a great one I don't know about you but every time I read these commands in fact I've been preparing this week it's been kicking me left and right because we fall so far short don't we and so what I need to do and what you need to do is constantly confess our lack of love for our wives to Christ and ask him that he might help us because we cannot do it by ourselves if we're going to remember anything this evening remember this Christ showed his love for each one of us by dying for us not while we were perfect not while we were good not while we were righteous but when we were in sin Graham read this out earlier this is love not that we love

[26 : 23] God we were his enemies but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins just think about Jesus Christ he loved his disciples even though they were annoying they were frustrating at times he loved his disciples even though one betrayed him he still washed Judas' feet in John 13 he loved even though all his disciples abandoned him at his greatest time of need as he died on the cross and he loved us even when we were his enemies not his friends and in the same way this evening we are called to love one another and this is for all people isn't it whether you're single or whether you are married listen husbands our wives will annoy us at times our wives will nag us at times and that will be frustrating listen wives our husbands will do stupid things will say things at the wrong time will be insensitive but we are called to love one another like Christ has loved us and what that means is that we love people we don't deserve it that's the love that we need for one another we start with the fact that marriage is difficult it is a joy of course as well we've been married six years and I love marriage but it is difficult isn't it my task isn't made any easier by looking at those commands isn't it submission and love especially when you have a look at them and see how difficult they are we're going to mess up we're going to dishonor one another but here's the hope we have the gospel do not flee to one another this evening but flee to Christ for help if anything all these commands do is help us to cling to the

Lord Jesus more and more because he is our strength he is our hope he is our portion this evening and as we run to the Lord Jesus Christ and see the great love that he has had for us as sinners it will help us to have compassion and love for each other in our marriages and also in this church as well we confess our sin regularly we look to Christ and love one another well amen let me pray for us father God we thank you for the great joy and privilege marriage is but we know when we look at our relationships that marriage is difficult as well and I just pray that you might empower each one of the couples here to love one another as Christ has loved them help wives to submit with a joyful attitude as Christ submitted to the father I pray that husbands would lay down their lives for their wives

Lord forgive us for our sin we confess that we have not lived up to the standards that you've called us in scripture and yet we flee to Christ thank you that there is forgiveness there thank you that there is rest there I just pray that this church at Bruntsfield would continue to be built up in Christ and that they would reflect his bride more and more and that you would present them spotless and

without fault before you on that glorious day when Christ finally meets his bride the church forever in Jesus name we pray amen before we sing I'll hand back to Graham a couple of questions apparently you have a bit of Q&A; well you're not asking me questions but I'm going to give you a couple of questions to go away and think about so a couple of questions should you think about what does it mean for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and then second question in what ways can I love my spouse better and are there any sins that I need to confess if you want to go dangerous then you ask your husband and wife that question me and my wife do this once a quarter we ask each other is there anything that I've done to harm you in the last few months particularly is there anything

I can improve on any sins that you see in my life that can be a painful conversation but a fruitful one as well so you can either ask it to yourself or ask your husband and wife cool hand up to Graham or thenchat m director of ■ ch come read com