

**THE BIG IDEA:** Satan uses marriage in his SHAME plan, but God uses it in His GAME plan.

### The Take-Off

23 years ago today, I was a nervous wreck.

I was hours from marrying the love of my life, and I was excited, afraid, thankful and overwhelmed.

And that was without really even understanding what a BIG DEAL marriage actually is!

I was more nervous about what it would be like to live with someone else - what could I and could I not still do, say, or allow to escape from my body after eating certain foods!

Now, 23 years later I have a greater appreciation for the wisdom of God in how He sees marriage and the grace of God in how we live that out.

So this morning is going to be a little different, and I'm pumped about it!

Wendy is joining me, and we just want to try to dig in a bit on Ephesians 5 and what Paul wrote their about marriage.

You've got note sheets, but we really want to make this as much an informal conversation as we can.

Trust me, after living with me for 23 years, Wendy has A LOT OF WISDOM to share! But let me just sort of set the table first and let you know where we'll be going.

It's easy to check out on a day like this if you aren't married or thinking about getting married. it's even easier to check out if you've failed in marriage, and that describes a lot of people, doesn't it?

Here's the truth about marriage in our country according to the latest stats: we're getting married later and we're getting married less. The divorce rate has dropped slightly (in the 40-50% range now), but that could be because cohabitation is up 17x what it was just 50 years ago even though couples that live together are 46% MORE LIKELY to end up divorced.

Of those who don't divorce, the percentage of married couples who would say they are "very happy" as decreased steadily over the last 4 decades.

It's not a stretch to say that we aren't good at marriage, and that's exactly what Satan wants. He wants to be able to use our failures against us, and that's why it's so important to hear from God about His plan in this section of Ephesians.

In fact, God's plan makes a huge difference in marriage: active, conservative Christian couples are 35% LESS LIKELY to divorce than other couples.

Let me give you the Big Idea and then we'll see what Paul (the real one) has to say to 3 distinct sets of people.

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### **1. Something for everyone**

- a. No matter where you fall on the marriage spectrum - single, divorced, happily or bitterly - verse 21 is for you
- b. All of us are called to submit to each other
- c. Not because we want to, or it's fun, but because we're IN CHRIST
- d. There's that phrase again - but as we're learning in Ephesians - it changes everything
- e. Keep your finger here and turn back about a quarter of an inch to Mark 10:42-45
- f. Jesus says something to His disciples here that revolutionized their relationships with each other, and we need to get this before we move on
- g. Jesus told them how the world sees relationships - all based on power and what we can get - and then told them 4 words that rocked their worldview
- h. "NOT SO WITH YOU" - verse 43
- i. If we are Christ followers, we can't approach marriage with an Oprah mindset or a Dr. Phil mindset
- j. We have to approach it from a Jesus mindset, and His mindset is one of a servant
- k. Serving makes us great, serving gives us honor, and serving puts us in a position to see the lost get found
- l. We'll talk more about submission in a minute, but for now, think about this statement: we think of submission as a concept of POWER but God sees it as a concept of POSITION.
- m. God's game plan in marriage is that we're on the same team, but we play different positions, and submission is how we can make sure we're moving the same direction
- n. Not so with you - let's stop thinking the way most people do, and see what God has to say to ladies and men

## 2. Something for the ladies

- a. There's no way around concept of submission in verses 22-24, so we probably need to try and get a good feel for what submission ISN'T as well as what it IS
- b. Here's what submission ISN'T:
  - [Picture of outhouse]
  - It isn't about being abused
  - It isn't about being silenced
  - It doesn't mean being less able (Galatians 3:28)
  - It doesn't mean that you get to boss my wife around because you're a man
    - that won't make you godly, that will make you a jerk
    - heck, even I don't have the right to boss my wife around!
- c. Again, so much of this misunderstanding about submission is from a POWER mindset, not a POSITION mindset
- d. So, what IS submission?
  - It's like Jesus (Luke 22:42)
  - It's beautiful (1 Peter 3:5-6)
  - It's about trust, not fear (1 Peter 3:6)
- e. Finally, who do wives submit to?
  - Jesus first (v. 22)
  - Their own husbands (v. 22)
- f. What if their husband is a jerk? Submit to Jesus, and one day he may not be.
- g. What if their husband is amazing? Submit to Jesus, because some days he won't be.

## 3. Something for the men

- a. First, please understand something: verse 23 says the husband is the head
- b. This isn't an option: you're a good one or a bad one, but you're the head of your home
- c. And here's something sobering for the husbands to consider: God gave the wives 3 verses, but the husbands got 9. Hmmmm.
- d. The wives had one word - submit - and the husbands have one word - love
- e. Men, we're told to do 2 things:
  - be loved by Jesus, and
  - love like Jesus
- f. You can't do the second without the first
- g. So how does Jesus love his bride (which we're a part of)?
  - He's a giver (v. 25)
  - He's a cleanser (v. 26)
  - He's a beautifier (v. 27)
  - He's a provider (v. 29)
- h. In a word, He's a servant
- i. And look what happens when men love women like that?
  - They become chick magnets to the right chick (v. 31)
  - They find themselves on the giving end of agape love and the receiving end of respect (v. 32)
- j. Why is that? Because even though wives are commanded to submit to the head, it's ALWAYS EASIER to submit to a bowed head

### The Landing

And here's the end result: no one loses.

The wife submits as a servant to a servant who serves her lovingly because he loves Jesus who is a giver and not a taker. No one is ever empty, no one is abused, and the lost see that and wonder what book we read because all they know about marriage is shame.

And we say we read the Bible, because it's the play book for a game plan that includes marriage.

And everyone wins, because Genesis 50:20 becomes a reality: what the devil meant for harm, God used for good.

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