

Bible Study Series: Man & Woman and God

2. Married

1. How is leadership and submission understood in our society?

2. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. What does this model mean for 1) the husband, 2) the wife and 3) the relationship?

1) Husband has the responsibility to lead his wife, for her benefit and their relationship. And he is to love his wife self sacrificially for her benefit (as Christ loves the church).

2) Wife willingly and voluntarily submits/gives herself over to trust the husband's lead, seek to support him and respect him in the role

3) The relationship will be strengthened, harmonious and reflect God's desire for marriage, and honour him in their relationship.

3. What is the setting of these verses? (**Read 4:17, 20-24, 5:15-20**) How does this help us to understand them?

The setting is about how God's people live and what they are – the chosen holy and dearly loved people of God. As a result of Christ's work for them, they've 'taken off' the old self and 'put on' the new – and so now in response to him they are to 'put off' the things belonging to the old self and to 'put on' the things of the new. How wives and husbands behave towards each other is part of this – their response to what Jesus has done for them. This puts the command to submit and love in a very high, spiritual setting, not to be taken lightly or simply rejected. so 5:21 "out of reverence for Christ".

4. Read 1 Pet 3:1-7. What does this passage add to our understanding of the marriage relationship?

1 Peter shows that submission is God's will for all wives, not only for Christians, and that husbands are to take special care for his wife understanding that she is the 'weaker' in the partnership, that is, that she has the 'weaker' role of following his lead, ie 'don't be "harsh" in exercising your leadership.

5. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. How does this passage differ to how sex is mostly portrayed in our culture?

Give to each other what is owed to them in the context of marriage. The passages pushes each person to think about what they can give to the other person, rather than what they can get out of the relationship. The passage is specifically talking about sexual intimacy, but can also extend to strengthening each other in spiritual growth (v5).

6. If you had a Christian friend confide in you that they try to avoid sex in their marriage, what might you say to them?

Sex between a husband and wife helps to guard against sexual temptation, (though it's not a guaranteed safeguard!). It enhances and expresses the oneness established in marriage. It is important to acknowledge that the normal situation is for a married couple to share in regular sexual intimacy, this passage points out that abstinence is abnormal and to be only for a short time.

7. **Read Hebrews 13:4.** What might this mean in practice in our church?

We support and encourage all marriages in our church. We don't make foolish or coarse jokes that denigrate marriage or even sex in general. Sexual purity should be a priority for all, and sexual intimacy reserved for marriage.

8. Human marriage points to a greater relationship in Christ and the Church. Read Revelation 21:1-4. What are the implications of this for human marriages?

Human marriages are not the 'ultimate' relationship for men and women. This takes the pressure off any married person expecting their spouse or marriage to be the 'fulfilment' of their life & being. It also takes the pressure of unmarried people who might think they are 'incomplete'.