

LifeWay Family Bible Series for May 9: Marriage should mirror the love of Christ_50304

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Marriage should mirror the love of Christ

1 Corinthians 7:1-9; Ephesians 5:18-33

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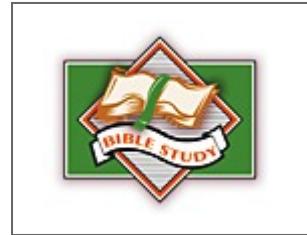
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A cartoon a number of years ago pictured the Apostle Paul walking under a banner that said, “Paul ... Welcome to Corinth!” The men of the church were in the foreground ready to greet him. In the distance was a group of women waving signs that read, “Paul is unfair to women!” and “Paul is a chauvinist!” Paul was walking toward the women saying, “I see you got my letter!”

I have done hundreds of weddings, and all of them included some readings from Paul, especially 1 Corinthians 13 or Ephesians 5. I have yet to have a couple read that portion of Scripture contained in this week's lesson that says, “If they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Corinthians 7:9). Brides and grooms

generally search for nobler scriptural support in their decision to marry. There are better passages with which to gladden the hearts of their parents on that blessed day.

What is the biblical ideal for husbands and wives? This week's text shines a light on what God envisioned for a Christian marriage. 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 and Ephesians 5:18-33 (I have added verses 18-21 to the text printed in the Family Bible Study quarterlies) express Paul's theology of the home.



The home is to be a place where responsibilities are shared. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul set the context for this discussion in terms of "marital duties."

The church must speak up today for a biblical theology of sex. We dare not leave this aspect of education to the school alone, much less to the opportunistic lowbrow humor of prime time sitcoms. Why did God create us as sexual beings? What is his purpose in giving us the gift of sex? The biblical answer includes procreation, communication (intimacy) and pleasure. When Paul speaks of mutual duty in marriage, we must not limit this to the act of sex alone. We must include the responsibilities for children, communication and joy within the home.

The home is a place where submission is volunteered. I do not think you can interpret Ephesians 5:22 apart from the context that includes verses 18-21. Most translations have included an imperative in verse 22. "Wives, submit to your husbands." There is no verb stated in verse 22. It is implied from verse 21. In verse 21, it is not an imperative verb. It is a participle. The imperative is found in verse 18. It says, "Be filled with the Spirit." That

is the command. What follows is a series of participles; “speaking to one another,” “singing and making music in your hearts,” “always giving thanks to God” and “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Verses 22-33 flesh out how this mutual submission would work in various relationships. It is an encyclopedia of how Spirit-filled people live in relationship with each other. Can you think of a better place than the home to learn how to live together?

The submission required in this text is mutual, voluntary and beneficial to all involved. No one in the Christian life is given dictatorial status over others. Lordship is a crown that never sits easily on a human head.

Jesus said: “You are not to be like that (Gentiles who Lord it over others). Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:26). The Christian ethic is not to work your way to the top of the authority chart. It is to work your way to the bottom.

If it was good enough for Jesus, it is not too much to ask the same of husbands and wives. This submission flows voluntarily out of a Spirit-filled life in the same way that speaking, singing and thanksgiving flow from a life controlled by the Spirit. Verses 22-33 indicate wonderful benefits to all involved.

The home is a place where Christ is revealed. It is to our shame that we have argued over Paul's meaning of the word “submit” while neglecting the example of submission clearly given. Christ is our example.

Everything we do is “as to the Lord.” What does this mean? Our homes should be places where Christ is revealed through our relationships. Husband, if someone should ask you, “How much does Christ love the church?” you should be able to say, “Come with me to my home, and see how I love my wife and serve her, and you will see how Christ loves the

church." Wife, if someone should ask you, "How much does the church love Christ?" you should be able to say, "Come with me to my home and see the way I love and honor my husband and you will see the way the church is in love with Jesus."

May our homes become places that reveal the true character of what it means to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

Questions for discussion

- ◆ What do you believe to be the most important component in growing a healthy, joyful marriage?
- ◆ Why is submission such an explosive topic for some people? How would you explain the meaning of this word in Ephesians 5:22?

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