

## A Spirit-Filled Marriage

Eph. 5:22-33

Series "Ephesians"

Jarrett Stephens

The title of the message today is: **A Spirit-Filled Marriage**

This November will mark twenty-three years since Debbie and I stood at the alter and committed our lives to one another. I remember it like it was yesterday. I was 23 years old. Debbie was 20 (cough)...you know I've got more sense than that!

Here's a black and white pic of us on that day!

We were young...in love...and had NO IDEA what we were getting ourselves into. Can any of you married couples identify with me?

Twenty-three years later, we're not that young anymore. We are still in love (most days!) ...and we still don't know what we got ourselves into! Anyone out there identify with me? Ha!

**illus. Cats and Dogs** - I came across this, this week and thought you'd like it. It's an article entitled *Why Women are like Cats and Men are like Dogs*: First, how women are like cats:

1. They usually do what they want.
2. They rarely listen to you.
3. They're totally unpredictable.
4. They whine when they are not happy.
5. When you want to play, they want to be alone.
6. When you want to be alone, they want to play.
7. They expect you to cater to their every whim.
8. They're moody.
9. They can drive you nuts and cost you an arm and a leg.
10. They leave hair everywhere.

Now, how men are like dogs:

1. They lie around all day, sprawled on the most comfortable piece of furniture in the house.
2. They can hear a package of food opening half a block away, but they can't hear you when you're in the same room.
3. They growl when they are not happy.
4. When you want to play, they want to play.
5. When you want to be alone, they want to play.
6. They are great at begging.
7. They will love you forever you will just feed them.
8. They leave their toys everywhere.
9. They do disgusting things with their mouths and then try to give you a kiss.
10. They can look dumb and lovable all at the same time.

Marriage! God's greatest gift to his children, yet so many don't enjoy the gift and some even want to give it back!

I read a message preached by one pastor this week on marriage and he called his sermon "The Window". He went on to explain how marriage is like flies on a window. Those who are outside want in and those who are inside want out! Ha!

One guy said, "Marriage is like a hot bath...once you become accustomed to it, it's not so hot!"

Now, these jokes are funny, but making light of marriage and what it means to be married is not a laughing matter. God's plan for marriage was NEVER meant for it to become a punch-line!

Marriage...when done God's way, can be one of the greatest sources of peace and joy and fulfillment in one's life. When it's NOT done God's way, it can be one of the greatest sources of grief and frustration and heartache that one can experience in life.

The passage we are looking at today in our study in the book of Ephesians tells us how to do marriage God's way.

Now, before we get into the series of verses that we are going to be looking in depth at today, let's set the context and remember where we have been.

We're in the practical part of Ephesians (ch. 4-6), and we've been learning how what:

- We believe effects the way we behave...
- We've gone from indicatives to imperatives...
- We've moved from our position in the heavenlies to our practice here on earth...

And what Paul writes about marriage here in Eph. 5:22-33, it flows right on the heels of (v. 15-21).

This is actually where I want to start our reading today because a proper understanding of marriage in (v. 22-33) can only happen in understanding the bigger picture of what Paul has already been writing them up to this point. Look with me at:

**Eph. 5:15-21 – “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup> And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup> giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”**

So, big picture (if you missed last week's message, go back and listen to it) – we're told to imitate God (4:1) and we do this by walking in love, walking in light, and walking in wisdom. That's what we covered last week!

Now, part of walking in wisdom is (v. 18) – not being drunk with wine, but being filled with the Spirit. And THIS “being filled with the Holy Spirit” ...it is THE key to a lasting marriage that will bring you joy and that will honor Jesus – it's the Spirit-filled marriage!

Without being “filled with the Spirit” (v. 18), couples of a ZERO chance of implementing what God commands from a husband and wife in what we are about to read in (v. 22-33).

So, very quickly...and this is just by way of introduction, let's talk about what it means to be “filled with the Holy Spirit”. Allow me to give just a couple of insights here.

First of all, we are given and filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation!

It's important to know that the Holy Spirit of God NEVER leaves us as followers of Jesus. When we are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us, and he seals us (Eph. 1:13) for the day of redemption!

This is why we teach the eternal security of the believer – that IF you are saved, you are always saved, and the Holy Spirit is in you bearing witness that you indeed are a child of God.

See, while it's true the Holy Spirit will NEVER leave a believer, it's also true that the Holy Spirit's witness and influence can be diminished in our life. This is why Paul commands, "be filled with...keep on being filled with the Spirit".

In the original language in which this is written, it's in the present imperative – it means be continuously filled...repeatedly filled...it could be read "keep on being filled with the Spirit".

The command is to be dominated by the Holy Spirit of God. Like someone who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol, we as believers are to be under the influence and control of the Holy Spirit.

It is possible because of sin to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God" (Eph. 4:30) and it is also possible because of sin to "quench the Holy Spirit of God" (1 Thess. 5:19).

This is why the command is again, "to be continuously filled with the Spirit" because we as sinners continuously leak! And what we see is, when we are dominated...filled...under the influence of the Holy Spirit...it affects everything!

- It affects our speech (v. 19a - addressing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...God's word is in our heart)
- It affects our attitude (v. 19b-20 – song in our heart, "making melody to the Lord with our heart...giving thanks always and for everything...this is our attitude)
- It (being filled with the Spirit) affects our relationships – (v. 21 – submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.)

And it's in THIS context, Paul begins to speak about marriage!

Listen: you may be here today...and I've counseled couples through the years...we see this in our ReEngage classes as well as our Merge classes we offer here. People come in and they have issues that have come up in their relationship that need to be resolved...it's causing a problem in their marriage.

I call them "above the surface" issues. You know what I'm talking about? Above the surface issues may be:

- Finances – someone is spending too much or in a frivolous manner...not being responsible – it's an above the surface issue...
- Intimacy - maybe it's a porn addiction or emotionally not being there for the other and it's negatively affecting intimacy within the marriage...
- Brokenness in the family – I've seen this before where relationships from your past (perhaps with an absentee dad or a too involved mom or a relationship from the past) can play into negatively effecting your marriage...
- Communication – just not happening...you're on two different planets it seems...

Listen to me...these are all "above the surface" issues...and they are all important...they need to be dealt with FOR SURE!

But listen: "above the surface" issues will never be resolved...they can't be fix, UNTIL the "below the surface" issue is dealt with.

And being saved and "being filled with the Spirit" are THE below the surface issues. Only after you have been saved and "filled with the Spirit" THEN and only then can you effectively deal with what's happening above the surface.

THIS is why Paul's argument flows like it does...he's dealing with what's below the surface – “be continuously filled with the Spirit”.

We take care of this (and it's something only we can do in cooperation with the Holy Spirit) ONLY THEN will what is required of us...what's commanded of us in (v. 22-33) begin to make sense AND be possible to be obeyed.

Let's look at it...we'll start with the requirement for the ladies first because that's who Paul addresses first! And as we look at this:

**Ephesians 5:22-24 – “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (Happy Mother's Day, ladies! We'll talk this out...I will tell you this though, by the time we're done talking to the men in the second half of this message, you will be thinking, “this is the GREATEST Mother's Day message ever!” Ha!) For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”**

The big word here...the major responsibility and command given to the wife and must be obeyed in order to have a “spirit-filled marriage” is the word: **SUBMISSION**

Sounds on the surface so archaic, doesn't it? Out of touch! “Submit.” Sounds like it should be followed by “churn your own butter!” or “gird up your loins”. Sounds so old just saying the word, but we can't let that bother us!

When you think about it, a lot of what we teach in the Bible and live by as Christians sounds archaic in our culture:

- Marriage between one man and one woman for a lifetime – sounds archaic!
- Giving 10% of our income or more to the work of Christ – sounds like advice from another time!
- Prioritize purity. Honor authority. Prize integrity – sounds more and more archaic by the day!

Submission falls in the same category! Sounds old and out of touch so before we go any further, we need to clarify what biblical submission IS and what it is NOT.

Here is a working definition:

**Submission is making the choice to put yourself under others.**

Again, the context: A life filled with the Spirit of God will see believers (v. 21) “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”. And this submitting continues into the marriage relationship.

The word “submit” comes from two Greek words: One meaning “under” and the other “to place in order”. So, out them together and you have “to place in order, under”.

This is a choice that is made when you come together in marriage...willingly and voluntarily. Wives, it's made from your own volition and out of obedience to God to place yourself under the leadership of your husband.

The point of a wife submitting to her husband is NOT one of inferiority and suppression! Notice, it doesn't say ALL women are to submit to ALL men. This command is ALL about the God-ordained order and functionality within the home, and Paul gives his reasoning for this in:

**Ephesians 5:23 – “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its savior.”**

I always like to recall what **Adrian Rogers** from Bellevue Baptist in Memphis would say when teaching this verse: **“Anything with no head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak.”**

Submission is about order. God is a God of order. And think about who it is that brings the chaos and disorder in the home? It's the same person who brought it in the Garden of Eden - Satan.

This is his play...it hasn't changed over time! What he did in Genesis 3, he still does today.

**Illus. Last week** – If you missed last week, you have to go back and listen to it. We talked about how representing God...imitating God (4:1) was the original design of man in the Garden.

And so, what's the first thing Satan targets? It's God's prized creation, man! If man was the prized creation, what was the first...i.e. the prized institution? Marriage!

So, notice, the Enemy's play...again, it hasn't changed since creation in the Garden. Man is to represent God, let's distort it. Marriage is the first institution God creates (BEFORE Israel...BEFORE government...BEFORE the Church...) so what does Satan want to do? Distort it! Destroy it!

Listen, I'm going to come back to this at the end because Paul does...but your marriage it is to point people to God!

Your marriage has a MUCH bigger purpose than just saddling up next to someone and doing life with them for years to come – no, it's a picture of Christ and the Church TO the world.

So, it just makes sense that Satan's goal is to bring chaos and decay to man and then to the marriage. It's what he did in the Garden, and it's what he wants to continue to do to this day!

And this is his process for bringing chaos and decay in the marriage:

**Distort => Devalue => Dishonor**

He begins by distorting God's truth – Remember the question in the Garden – Did God really say? Satan wants to put a question mark where God has put a period – specifically as it relates to around God's Word - that's distortion!

- Did God really say submit?
- What does that word really mean anyway? That was a different time...as different culture...
- He gets us all hung up on the word submission, instead of the heart and idea behind it!

If he can get us to distort God's truth about marriage and our roles in the marriage, it will lead to a devaluing of God's design for the marriage. We won't value what God values.

So, Satan gets us to distort God's truth...it leads to a devaluing of God's design and that inevitably leads to dishonoring God in the marriage which ALWAYS leads to chaos – always.

Any kickback to this idea of submission in a marriage is the result of Satan planting seeds of distortion! And listen, he's done a fabulous job as it relates to this subject because we have all heard or seen the distortion!

We've heard submission being communicated as inferiority or weakness. “Submit?! Only if you want to get taken advantage of...only if you don't want your needs met” – that's what the world says, and that's a distortion of God's Word.

- We may have different roles and functions within the marriage (different doesn't mean inferior or less than), and Scripture records over and over again the equal worth, value and dignity of women.

Some of us have seen submission being held over someone we know or love. It's NOT a choice being made, it's being forced upon an individual, motivated by fear – even sometimes involving emotional, verbal or even physical abuse.

That's distortion! Again"

**Distort => Devalue => Dishonor**

Submission is not to be held over someone's head to be domineered over – and BTW, someone "dominated" by the Spirit will NEVER live to "dominate" someone else.

I shouldn't even have to say this, but I do because of a distortion of what submission means. If your husband is telling you to do something that is contrary to God's Word or if he is putting you or your children in harm's way, you don't submit to that...you get out and you get help! You heard it here!

As the former, long-time pastor of Westminster Chapel in London D. Martyn Lloyd Jones said, "this verse is specifically addressed to the women...that means it's her verse, not yours, men!

Which means you shouldn't quote it at your wife - it's hers to obey, not yours to demand!

Again, this is a choice she makes, and no woman can make this choice and obey this command unless she is first filled with the Holy Spirit.

Paul gives an illustration of what this submission should look like:

**Ephesians 5:24 – "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."**

The illustration Paul gives regarding how wives are to submit to their husbands is one of the Church submitting to Christ. And how does the bride of Christ or perhaps I need to say how SHOULD the bride of Christ submit to its groom?

- **Submit willingly** (not under compulsion or a heavy hand but because we are supremely loved) ...
- **Submit joyfully** (knowing that Christ knows all and has our best interest at heart) ...
- **Submit fully** (entrusting ourselves completely to God as we come under his leadership knowing he is for us and our good) ...

THIS is biblical submission, and it's commanded in marriage, but it will only happen if ladies, you are FULL of the Holy Spirit.

Now, to the men. Are you ready? The command for you that and cannot and will not be obeyed unless you are (v. 18) filled with the Spirit is: **LOVE**

If submission is defined as "making the choice to put yourself under others". Here is how love should be defined:

**Love is making the choice to put others above yourself.**

Wives, submit to your husband (make the choice to put yourself under your husband) and husband, love your wife (make the choice to put your wife above yourself).

This is a choice we make, men. LOVE is choosing to place and put our wife – her needs...her desires...above our own! Let's just walk through the passage and see how Paul describes this love we should have for our wife:

## 1. Sacrificial love

**Ephesians 5:25 – “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”**

“Gave himself up” – we saw this in (5:2) – when commanded to imitate God and walk in love. What's the FIRST example Paul gives to illustrating what walking in love looks like? He points to Jesus “giving himself up”!

**Eph. 5:2a – “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us...”**

Talk about dealing with “above the surface” issues. If we were to look to the cross and model the love of Jesus in going to the cross, MANY above the surface issues would be immediately resolved!

I love the question **Tony Evans** poses: **“When your wife looks at you, does she see a cross? When God calls husbands to give themselves up for their wives, He is not simply talking about being willing to die. Sacrificing for our wives involves being willing to nail our desires and our agenda to the cross, to love our wives and meet their needs.”**

The essence of the Christian walk is “death to self” ...and this should be the motto of every husband trying to love his wife in a God-honoring way!

This leads me to a second description of the type of love we should have for our wives. It should be a:

## 2. Selfless love

**Ephesians 5:28-30– “In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.”** (underline those words “nourish and cherish”)

Men, ask yourself this question: Is your love for your wife a nourishing love? Let the Holy Spirit grade your paper!

**Illus. Spring is here** - Flowers in your yard...they need nourishment to live! Takes time...takes care...takes concern!

Men, ask yourself this question: is your love for your wife a cherishing love? Let the Holy Spirit grade your paper!

You know what “cherishing” something means...come on! You cherish your golf game! You cherish your time with your buds! You cherish that car that is like a baby to you! You cherish that green egg, that Traeger.”

We know what it means to cherish something...the Bible tells us here to cherish our wives...prize our wives...the Hebrew picture of this is a bird sitting on her nest! Protecting...providing...this is a selfless love!

**Illus. Study this week** – You know, Paul references the first marriage in the Bible in (v. 31). It's interesting, this was highlighted in my study this week. The original sin happened when Eve took the fruit.

But, go back to the Garden. Who was the command given to, to NOT eat the fruit? It was given to Adam! Now, he evidently told her what God had said because she quotes that she's not to eat when the serpent comes to tempt her.

However, she eats and gives it to her husband who is right there with her...Adam was right there when Eve sinned against the Lord in the temptation brought about by the serpent.

The point? Perhaps the original sin wasn't Eve taking the fruit, but Adam not nourishing, cherishing – i.e. PROTECTING his wife!

In other words, in the Garden, Even didn't submit and Adam didn't love and because of this, it's ALL out of whack!

Praise God, the “second Adam” the Lord Jesus protected us in the Garden – he withstood the temptation, went to the cross and in love stood between us in the evil one. He gave himself up! It was sacrificial...it was selfless...and I've never met a couple that when the man exhibited these traits, they had a bad marriage.

Thirdly, we should exhibit toward our wives...we want to imitate God in our marriage, we should have a:

### 3. Sustaining love

**Ephesians 5:31-33** – “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 am saying that 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.”

I love that phrase “hold fast” ...the NIV uses the phrase “be united” ...the KJV “joined unto”.

**Illus. Sky Ranch Camp** – I made sure; I was clipped in...it gave me security!

One of a woman's greatest needs is to feel to secure. Not just in a protection kind of way, but in a permanence kind of way...that even if we fall, you are “joined unto” ...you're not going anywhere!

**Illus. Weddings** – “two becoming one” – cemented together! Men, we are to love with a sustaining love. The “two become one” ...and that “two” there is very important!

It takes two people who are Spirit-filled to make a marriage work. The woman must be filled with...dominated by the Holy Spirit...then and only then can she take God at his word, to submit and make the choice to put herself under her husband.

And only after being filled with the Spirit and ONLY then can a man take God at his word, to love and make the choice to put his wife above himself.

Do this, and you'll have a “Spirit-Filled” marriage, and I wish I had more time for this, but I don't – you will show the world a picture of the mystery that is Christ and his Church (v. 32).

Men, the greatest gift you could give your wife this Mother's Day is the giving of yourself, just as Christ gave himself for the Church.

And children, the greatest gift you could give your mom (Next week: Eph. 6:1-2 – “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother...” You can do this if you are spirit-filled. We'll cover this next week, so moms and dads bring the kids, and they'll get theirs!

Would you pray with me?

*Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.*



