

## PRAYER

## SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:31 *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”*

## ICEBREAKER

As a child, did you and your friends make pacts together? What pact did you keep the longest?

## THEME

Marriage, God’s way.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We began this week by doing a brief review of last week’s message. We learned last week that without the Holy Spirit we cannot experience marriage God’s way. We saw from Ephesians 5:18 that we need to keep on being filled with the Spirit so that according to verse 21 we can mutually submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. We saw that self-centeredness is the most foundational problem with every marriage and that we need to consider **OUR** selfishness as the main problem. We need the Holy Spirit’s power to enable us to have a servant’s heart. We know there is going to be friction in any marriage but having a servant’s heart helps absorb the friction in the relationship.

Here are three practical aspects of what this means from Pastor Tim Keller:

- The ability to hear criticism without being crushed.
- The ability to give criticism without crushing.
- The ability to forgive without residual anger.

**1. Spend some time discussing how difficult it is to hear criticism without being crushed and then try to give some examples of how to give criticism without crushing.**

Today we considered the question; “What makes a marriage a marriage?” We focused on Ephesians 5:31 noticing two aspects from the verse: leaving and uniting or cleaving.

**Marriage is Cleaving.** The word is ‘permanence’. To cleave means to never leave, to be bound. The word actually is a picture of glue—to be glued to. We learned that in God’s

heart marriage is not a contract but it is covenant. The essence of marriage is a covenant all wrapped up in the word 'cleave' meaning to bind. We saw that a covenant is a permanent, exclusive, public, legal and binding commitment to share all aspects of our lives together. John Piper said: "Staying married is not about staying in love. It's about keeping covenant."

Marriage is a permanent, exclusive, public, legal, binding commitment. Dr. Les Parrott describes commitment as "living the love you promised."

**2. *As you consider the marriage covenant and the quotes above from John Piper and Dr. Parrott, how can keeping covenant in a marriage provide the staying power to remain in marriage through good times and bad?***

We also spent some time looking at how the bible defines love. Biblical love is covenantal. It defines love not in terms of inside, but outside. Not in terms of me, but another. It measures love in how much I am willing to give another, not how much I want to receive. Biblical love is always expressed in how much you are willing to curb your choices as a way of meeting the needs of someone else. The essence of love is not a feeling, it's essentially an action. Love is primarily giving. Love is an action that leads to a feeling. The more you serve and the more you give, the more you love. The feelings of love follow the actions of love.

**3. *What do you think happens in a marriage when you determine to give to your spouse based on how they give to you?***

**4. *How should biblical love give?***

**Marriage is Leaving.** The word is 'priority'. Once you get married, the primary relationship in your life is your marriage. The primary person in your life is your spouse. We saw that we should be investing more time, energy, money, creativity and emotion in our spouse than in anyone else. We learned that when we leave our mother and father and cleave to our spouse, our marriage is a fresh start.

**5. *What happens in a marriage when another person (whether it's a friend, parent, or child) is put ahead of your spouse?***

**6. *What are some things you can do in your marriage to help each other keep your spouse the primary person in your life?***

## CLOSING

Marriage is leaving and cleaving. John Piper: "Staying married is not about staying in love. It's about keeping covenant."

## PRAYER