

PRAYER

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:31-32 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." ³²This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church.

ICEBREAKER

Do you have a special item you like to put out on display for others to see like a trophy, special award, family heirloom, etc.? What is it and what makes it special?

THEME

Marriage, God's Way.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As we began our study this week on marriage we were challenged not to let the world's declining view of marriage rub off on us but to put the bar back where God set it. We learned that along the way there are two major truths we must take hold of.

The first one we have already emphasized and that is: There is no way we can experience marriage, God's way without Ephesians 5:18. We must keep on being filled with the Spirit. We need the Spirit's filling because of our self-centeredness and because God created us as two different kinds of human beings.

The second one we looked at today and that is: Everything we say about marriage points to something higher, greater and more eternal. Ephesians 5:32 says, "*This is a profound mystery but I am talking about Christ and the church.*" God designed marriage to model Christ and the church. One of God's great purposes for marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display. John Piper put it this way: "Marriage is designed by God to display his glory in a way no other event or institution does."

1. As you reflect on the second purpose and the quote from John Piper, does it impact your view of marriage? How so?

We spent the rest of our time focusing on these two thoughts:

- Marriage is **designed** by God.
- To **display** his glory.

Marriage is designed by God. Marriage was God's design at creation (Matthew 19:4-5). Marriage is God's invention so ANY COUPLE who enters it comes under his authority, whether they know it or not. We also learned that God spoke the design of marriage into existence and it is God who joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union.

2. *Since God designed marriage and joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union, what impact should that have on our view of the permanence of marriage?*

To Display His glory. God created and designed marriage for a greater purpose. Remember from last week we learned that marriage is more than a contract. Marriage, God's way is covenantal. A covenant is a permanent, exclusive, public, legal, binding commitment to share all aspects of our lives together. Our marriages are to be patterned after God's covenantal relationship to the church and then to put on display God's covenantal relationship to the church. We are to PATTERN our marriages after Christ and the Church and as we do, we put Christ and the Church on display.

One example we looked at is that in a marriage relationship there are two ways we can feel no shame. The first is by being perfect (not going to happen). The second is while I am imperfect I have no fear of being disapproved by my spouse. It's based on the gracious nature of covenantal love from my spouse. They know our faults, weaknesses and insecurities and yet we can feel safe. They experience all our imperfections but we have no fear of shame because we know they aren't going to condemn us. That is the pattern of Christ.

3. *Spend some time reflecting on the gracious nature of covenantal love and what that encompasses. What impact would we make on those around us if we displayed this type of love in our relationships?*

PRAYER