

Choosing a Mate

By John D. Wilsey

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Ephesians 5:24 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What metaphor does Paul use to describe the essence of marriage?

Assignment Two

Read Ephesians 5:27. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is the chief responsibility of a husband according to this passage?

Assignment Three

Read Ephesians 5:32. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What word does Paul use to describe the nature of marriage? Why does he use that word?

Scripture to Memorize

Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Ephesians 5:31

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand the roles of wives and husbands in a marriage relationship and how a marriage relationship is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

You strongly believe the Lord is calling you to be married and you are praying about finding the right person to marry, but you aren't sure about all that marriage is, or at least you're afraid you "don't know what you don't know." How would you discover more about what marriage is and, thus, how to choose a mate?

Read Ephesians 5:22–33 out loud.

Studying the Passage

The first six verses of this passage give practical instructions concerning how husbands and wives are to relate to each other. Studying these verses will help you understand what role you will play as a husband or a wife, what your responsibilities are, and what blessings you will enjoy. Before you begin choosing a spouse, it is important for you to know what your lifelong choice will mean both on a day-to-day basis and in a spiritual sense.

Verse 22. Wives, submit. Wives are instructed to submit to their husbands. This does not mean women are inferior to men. Nor does it mean men are free to abuse their position of leadership. Scripture means the wife recognizes that God has placed the husband in the leadership role in the relationship. Wives joyfully and graciously submit to their husbands' leadership with love and thanksgiving. They do this in the same way the church submits herself to Christ's leadership.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What metaphor does Paul use to describe the essence of marriage?

Discussion Question

What does submission to Christ mean? Do we submit joyfully and thankfully, doing so in love and trust? Why would the Holy Spirit inspire Paul to use the submission of the church to Christ as a model for wives?

On Your Own

Examine your own faithfulness in submitting to Christ's lordship. When choosing a spouse, no matter if you are male or female, all disciples must be in submission to the perfect will of Jesus. In what areas of your life do you struggle regarding submission to Christ? In the space below, list any that come to mind.

Studying the Passage

Verses 25. Husbands, love your wives. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way Christ loves the church. They also are to lead in the relationship with understanding and godly wisdom that is informed by the Scriptures. Their love is to be self-sacrificial, just as Christ's love to the church was self-sacrificial.

This kind of love does more than make the wife feel good. It is the kind of love that draws her

closer to Christ and makes her more like Him.

Verse 27. she might be holy. While married to her husband, the wife should be in preparation for being in Christ's presence. It is the husband's role to be used of God in her sanctification.

Verse 28. love their wives as their own bodies. This kind of love is both self-interested and self-sacrificial. Husbands are to love their wives just as they love themselves, reflecting the Greatest Commandment.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: What is the chief responsibility of a husband according to Ephesians 5:27?

Discussion Question

The role of a wife and a husband is serious and significant. Are you preparing yourself for your role? What practical things can you do now to get ready?

Studying the Passage

Verses 30. because we are members of His body. Marriage is a reflection of the mystical union between believers and Christ Himself. That is the central reason marriage must always be a lifetime union between one man and one woman.

Verse 31. two shall become one flesh. As Christians enter into a spiritual union with Christ, so a wife and a husband enter a physical and spiritual union with each other. Marriage between a husband and a wife is a picture of the relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ.

Verse 32. This mystery is profound. The union between a wife and a husband is a mystery. The union between Christ and believer and the union between husband and wife cannot be fully comprehended without God's Word. God's standards are not arbitrary. Rather, they are based on who He is and what He has done.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: In Ephesians 5:32, what word does Paul use to describe the nature of marriage? Why does he use that word?

Discussion Question

Why is marriage so important? Why does it have eternal significance? Why do marriage roles matter?

On Your Own

In the space below, write what kind of person you should be looking for, if God leads you toward marriage. What kind of person ought you to be?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Marriage is not primarily a social, financial, procreative or practical institution. Marriage has a deep theological foundation. The Bible teaches this consistently. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the church.

Marriage is one of the first gifts God gave to humankind. He gave this gift before the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.

Your conversion was the most important decision you will ever make. The second most important decision may well be your decision to choose a mate and enter marriage. That decision will impact almost every element of your life and being. Your adoration of Christ, your transformation into His image, and your joining Him on a lifetime of kingdom adventures will all be enhanced or thwarted by the person you marry. In other words, marriage is more than a lifelong prom date.

Pray and ask God for wisdom (see James 1:5–8) as you prepare yourself spiritually, mentally and physically in your search for a spouse. Trust God to go before you and be with you. Obey Him by following His written Word. He will be faithful to you as you entrust your search for a spouse to Him.

Follow up Question

What principles of Scripture will guide you as you search for a marriage partner?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.