

XXIII. God's Blueprint in Biblical Perspective  
*Foundations From Genesis*  
"A Theology of Marriage – Redemption Part 2"  
Ephesians 5:21-33  
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We are doing this series because we live in a culture that is embracing a progressive secular movement which in reality is a neopagan movement that is deconstructing the very foundations of the culture. The word that can be put with progressivism is the word deconstruction because that is what it is there to do. It is to deconstruct in order to reconstruct that which is 'secular.' When I hear an atheist say 'I don't believe in God' I say 'How can you not believe in God when you have to use His name to define what you don't believe.' That is just illogical to me and I think the same thing when someone says they're not religious, they are a secularist. Secular comes from a Latin word that means living life outside the sacred, again you are appealing to the sacred to define your life as outside of the sacred. It doesn't deny the sacred, it just says you're going to rebel against the sacred. How do you do that? You do that by deconstructing what God has laid in the hearts and consciences of people through common grace and what has been built into society through redeeming grace. You want to deconstruct it as an act of rebellion against God.

People don't get saved without faith in Christ and you can't have faith in Christ without hearing the Word. So, our Christian example will not save people but hopefully it will affirm salvation, attract people to hear the Gospel message and bring authenticity before the world. As you see the deconstructions of the foundations (sanctities) that Jesus has laid in the book of Genesis – all those things we have been studying in this series) – as secular progressivism would seek to deconstruct it, one of the great witnesses is for Christ's church to double down, to go to work on this. We're going to love life. We're not only going to say 'no' to murder – pre-born, born or end of life – but we're going to promote life. We're not only going to say 'no' to sexual immorality, sexual abnormality, sexual promiscuity, sexual perversion but we are going to commit sexuality in its sacred gifted place in the context of marriage. We not only want to affirm gender but we want to understand it, knowing what it means to act like a man or woman in the spheres of life. To know how to live in the creation of the Almighty as day after day and night after night speech goes forward declaring the praise of the Almighty as God is revealing Himself in creation.

As we disciple God's people in the disciplines of grace, the means of grace – preaching, discipleship, fellowship, worship – as they are applied to people's lives, God's people begin to bear that testimony in the community which will be moving into a death spiral of chaos. This is why I say we are living in a culture of insanity, absurdity, immorality and lethality, all rooted in industries of sin with profitability. When these sins are rooted in profitability the battle becomes that much more intense. This is the reason for why I'm doing this series and praying that God's people will become highly motivated to know how to live in this world as testimonies of Christ. In light of who God is and what He has done as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, how then shall we live? That is why what we are studying in this series are called foundations (sanctities) for life and we have covered five of them. We are currently looking at the sanctity of marriage and will cover the sanctity of family after this one.

So we pick of the theology of marriage in redemption – how God works through the Gospel in discipleship as it bears upon marriage and how to counteract the evidence of the fall with God’s grace which is greater than that sin in a marital relationship. In this study I will give you some Biblical practicalities in terms of how we implement this Gospel marriage which has to be in place to make effective the next step which is family which is built upon marriage. That lays the groundwork for the next step of parenting in the family rooted in a marriage that is established in the context of the Gospel.

Paul looks at the Gospel life starting in Ephesians 4 as he starts off by urging God’s people to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Then he goes into putting off the old man and putting on the new man. Then he moves into relationships, our personal relationships as he disciples them through showing right behaviors and wrong behaviors. Then he turns to the marriage relationship as he ends the personal relationships with submitting to one another and then shows how submitting is worked out in a marriage. Then he will go to parenting, the family and working relationships. For now we continue with the marriage and I want to give you ten best practices in this study so let’s look at the text of Scripture for this study.

Ephesians 5:21-24 says *[21] submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

*[22] Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. [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. [24] Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

As the Lord calls a wife to submit to her husband that is not a call for her to submit to all other men and the wife is in a covenant relationship with her husband. Submission is exemplified by the very creation of the woman just as the man is taken from the dust of the ground because his mandate is to rule over the earth so his origin points to his mandate. He is also to subdue the earth and populate it. Then God takes from his side the creation of the reflection of man – woman so that the woman comes along side of the man, submits so that together they can now accomplish the mandate God gave him to do and that’s why it wasn’t good for the man to be alone – because he couldn’t accomplish the mandate by himself. In his role of authority in his marriage names her. Genesis 2:23 says *[23] Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

I like the picture Matthew Henry gives when talking about this; she is not taken from his head for she is not over him, she is not taken from his feet for she is not under him, but from his side for she is the helper completer and the man is called to nourish and cherish her from his heart. It’s interesting to note that God brings her into existence from that which is next to his heart, because she is to be a heart focus in the name of the Lord as he serves the Lord. She is the priority of his heart in the Lord.

God has appointed the husband in a position of spiritual leadership, earthly provision and protection. The wife is to come under his headship which is to mirror the love of Christ and His headship for His bride, the church which is His body and is Himself its Savior. Not that the man can save his wife from her sins, but the man will give Himself to save His wife in this world. He is there as her protector as she comes along side of him and under him. That is why in Christianity the name is changed for the wife to identify that a new family has begun.

As the church submits to Christ in everything so is the wife to submit to her husband in everything. This isn’t 50/50 for this is a man who is 100 percent committed to his wife and a woman who is 100 percent committed to her husband. Is there limitation on this? Yes and no.

There is no limitation in the sense that now the man and the woman in this world are fully identified together. They leave and cleave and they become one, therefore all of life is seen in the context of each other. It's not you have your life and I have my life when they are married. But in obedience to the husband, the husband's authority is a delegated authority. Whenever there is delegated authority that means it's limited authority. What limits this authority is the man cannot call his wife to do anything that is in violation of Biblical truth and principles.

It's similar to what happened to Peter and John in the book of Acts when Jesus had commanded them to preach the Gospel to the Jew and Gentile and they were arrested. When they were let out of jail, they were told they were not allowed to preach the name of Jesus but they went out and preached the name of Jesus. They were arrested again and were told they were not to do that and were threatened by the government to be punished. Peter and John were willing to take the punishment but they were not going to disobey the Lord. The principle here is that we must obey God rather than man and this applies in a marriage if the husband is telling his wife to do something against God's commands – she must obey God rather than him in this case. This principle applies to any delegated authoritarian relationship. Another example would be parent to child or civil magistrates. The child cannot obey if their parents are telling them to transgress God's commands, His Word. The only thing that limits us to human authority is if it is causing us to transgress God's Word, to disobey the Lord of glory. The wife is fully committed to her husband as he is to be to her, even to lay down his life for her. Let's continue in the text.

Ephesians 5:25-33 says [25] *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, [26] that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.[28] In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, [30] because we are members of his body. [31] "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24 – the foundational text for marriage.) [32] *This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. [33] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

A husband is to minister to his wife the way Christ, the Bridegroom is ministering to His bride, the church. Note, the priority on the spiritual leadership the man is to give, not excluding the protection and provision of the physical. Secondly, note the full commitment he is to make to the woman. Thirdly, note that he is to put an eye to eternity just as Christ will put His bride to eternity without spot or wrinkle. He is taking care and shepherding his wife all the way to glory. He wants to be an asset of her progress in the Gospel that she might be presented to the Lord without spot or wrinkle. There is a sense that the husband's responsibilities are lining up with his wife's responsibilities.

From Ephesians 5:28 builds upon the fact that in a Christian marriage one plus one does not equal two. It equals one and if I Biblically love myself before the Lord then I love my wife in the same way. You don't destroy or distort your body but you are called to take care of your body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the same way you are to take care of your wife with the same kind of thoughtful, nurturing, careful, biblical sense of love where you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind and your neighbor as yourself. You don't make yourself an idol but an effective vessel for the Lord. This goes from the sacrificial love of laying down

your life to the shepherding love of nurturing and cherishing your wife. We are one with our wife and therefore we would treat her with the same thoughtfulness in a sanctified treatment of our own bodies.

It is pretty clear the historicity of Adam in Paul's theology the way he refers to him. One of the affirmations of this is when Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 as the foundation of marriage. Where is the genesis of marriage? It's in Genesis 2:24 where God created marriage and that's why we begin with a theology of marriage from creation. According to creation, marriage is very clearly a monogamous (one man, one woman), heterosexual (male and female), conjugal (they are biologically, sexually, physically and spiritually to be one), covenant relationship. This means it has vows and sacramental signs and seals. I didn't say marriage was a sacrament. I said it was a covenant and all covenants have a sacramental sign and seal.

This marriage relationship allows procreation and is intimate and sexual. It is initiated in the intimacy of sex in the marriage bed and there is the constant renewal of marriage, the recreation of marriage as the husband and wife continue in the intimacy of their relationship with one another in the giving of each other. The mystery Paul refers to in this text is the intimacy of the marriage bed which is why when I close a marriage ceremony I say 'Upon the consummation of this union I pronounce you man and wife.' It doesn't mean you're not legally married because according to our legal system you would be but it does mean before the Lord the design is, unless sin has brought the incapacities to the weakness of the flesh, that is the place of the sexual relationship. The sexual relationship initiates, recreates and procreates within marriage.

This is how God designed marriage and then there is the fall. The curse of sin for Eve is that she now becomes a predator. Her desire is for her husband in which the Hebrew word for desire is predatorial. This is the same word used when Cain was jealous of his brother when God accepted his brother's worship and not his. God tells Cain that sin is crouching at the door and its desire is for him. Cain is the prey of sin. Women unaffected by common grace are born with the predatorial desire for their husband's position and status.

The curse of sin for the man is that he will rule over the woman and the Hebrew word here in the noun form is tyrant. So, the husband will tyrannize his wife. Men who are unaffected by grace because of the curse of sin will in response to the predatorial behavior of his wife responds with tyranny either by ignoring or isolating with abandonment or by intimidation verbally, physically, emotionally and in however ways he can do it. Because of the fall and the curse of sin on men and women we see why Ephesians 5 is so important.

When the Bible tells men to love their wives nourishingly and cherishingly, is there anywhere in the Bible that it tells the wives to love their husbands? There are a number of passages that tell them but one is Titus 2:3-5 which says *[3] Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, [4] and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, [5] to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.* So why is the emphasis in Ephesians?

In Paul's discipleship in Ephesians to those who are married he is telling them they no longer have to live according to the sin nature they were born with, because men you are not tyrants – you are servants and shepherds. You husbands bring the love of Christ whereby you're willing to lay down your life for your wife, even as Christ loves His bride and gave Himself for her. You are called to a sacrificial, shepherding, nourishing love. As Jesus does with His bride so the husband does to his wife. The husband is called to love and lead with a shepherd and servant's heart. The Shepherd knows His sheep – guards the fold, lays down His life for the

sheep. The redemptive side of the marriage attacks and removes the curse of sin functionally within the marriage.

In a Christian marriage, wives are not predatorial and instead of a conqueror you're a completer. Instead of subjugation you come along side. This is what a wife is called to do and is your heart's desire when you are in Christ. Aren't there a lot of women who are smarter than their husbands? Yes, and I'm fully aware of that for I am one of those. I have recently been discipling young pastors and I can tell you they all married up, but their wives never put them down. Their wives lift them up. They become completers and put a reign on the sharp wit of the tongue that wounds a man. They fill the heart with desire together – let's move forward. I'll use my gifts in your life for Christ not to overshadow him but to complete him.

I see this so many times in employment circles where you have someone who is in a position of authority and someone who is smarter than them in a certain area. Instead of seeing the vacuum in their employer's life as an opportunity to come along side and enhance them, it becomes an occasion to undermine them. Wives don't do that in a Christian home. They come along side of their husband, and build them up in and through the Lord.

There are many passages to get Biblical best practices but there is a passage that affirms all of that and at the same time gives some best practices. It comes from Peter and Peter can speak to this because Scripture tells us that Peter was married. According to Paul, Peter's wife traveled with him in the ministry quite often. Let's look at what Peter says about marriage from a Gospel framework and a Biblical world and life view. I want to look at I Peter and you will notice that Peter does something similar to Paul as he starts talking about relationships in various spheres of society.

I Peter 2:13-17 Peter talks about being subject to governmental authority and then in I Peter 2:18 he starts talking about the most common employment of that day which was the servant/master and how we deal with that relationship according to the Gospel. He lays out how we are to live with one another. After talking about submission in various relationship he gets to the marriage relationship in I Peter 3.

I Peter 3:1-6 says *[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— [4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*

*[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

Peter is not only giving the Biblical principle of subjection but then he addresses those who are married to men who either don't know the Lord or are not walking with the Lord. A wife's wordless coming along side (submission) of her husband is maybe the most powerful instrument a wife has to win their husband to the Lord. The pastors and the elders will be preaching at the husbands but you wives tee it up with your life secure in Christ. When I first met my wife, I was not a believer – I was empty in my sin. I had pretty much come to the end of everything. I remember besides being attracted to her, the very first thing I said to my mother

when I got home was ‘she (Cindy) has stability for there is something secure in her. She is not easily shaken.’

This is why Paul says in I Corinthians that if you’re husband or wife doesn’t know the Lord it’s not grounds for divorce. Do you not know that your presence sets them apart? It’s just like your presence sets your covenant children apart who are holy, so you bring the testimony and the set apartness of the Holy Spirit in their life. Peter puts legs on this when he says that your submission is that which can win them. There are others things you can do like prayer, exhortation and all kinds of things but submission is an instrument that wins them to the Word. The last thing Paul said to the woman in the Ephesians 5 text was also to honor and respect her husband and Peter affirms that here as well in I Peter 3:2.

Then Peter gets really practical when he gets into the way you dress. He is not saying to go dress in a sackcloth. He is not forbidding jewelry, cosmetics, fixing your hair or clothes but your focus in your presentation of yourself in life is not upon the outward but the inward and then Peter says to find examples/models of this. Peter gives an example of Sarah from the Old Testament in her submission to Abraham. Your confidence is not in your husband but in the Lord so you do things fearlessly in the Lord. You might be thinking I’m not married to Abraham so thank God for two different times he was willing to lie at the cost of his wife’s life – one to rulers in Egypt and another to God’s enemies. He told Sarah to tell them she was his sister because he feared for his own life. Abraham was not a self-sacrificing husband here but Sarah according to the text refused to be frightened. Then the Lord got a hold of Abraham through a couple of kings who came and gave him the riot act by saying ‘You almost caused me to sin against your God and that could have been the death of me because you lied!’ Sarah’s submission became the occasion for Abraham’s repentance.

Now Peter turns to the husband in I Peter 3:7 which says *[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

Now Peter gives some best practices to the husband. Husbands, you can’t live with your wives in an understand way if when you come home from work you go do your own thing and not spend time with your wife. You can’t have an understanding relationship without time and communication invested. You are to show honor and respect to your wives. When Peter says she is the weaker vessel he is not saying she is inferior in the sense of status before God because he says we’re joint heirs, equal heirs. So, he is affirming our equality before God but Peter is also recognizing creation science. God made her from the man and God made the man to take care of her, protect her and provide for her. The husband won’t take care of that which they do not respect and honor. This is what a husband is called to do.

Here are some best practices for you. Number one, it is not your responsibility to make sure your spouse does their responsibility. That is the Holy Spirit’s work. It’s the Word of God in the hands of the Holy Spirit and the work of discipleship. Husbands are to love and lead. Wives are to submit and come along side your husband. Our responsibility is to do what the Lord calls us to do.

Number two, remember husbands, your affections and devotion are for your own wives. A wife’s marital honor, respect and submission is to her own husband, not to other men. Paul says it is not good for a man to touch (in a sensual way) a woman, only have your own wife. Wives it is not appropriate for you to enter into relationships with other men that go to the depths of conversation and relationships that are reserved only for your husband. Our fulfillment is to our own husband and to our own wife.

Number three, prioritize the spiritual while always addressing the physical. Men, we want to get our wives to the finish line and it doesn't matter how many square feet are in the house when we get there. We want them to grow in grace all the way there. We certainly want to provide and protect physically but remember the priority upon the spiritual.

Number four, prioritize the Lord's Day, because it's foundational for every other day. I'm not saying this because I'm a preacher for this important period. Make this day all about worship to the Lord as you make the Lord's Day, the Lord's Day, the Lord's hour when it's convenient. Worship is invigorating and sets you up for the six days of work in the week to come as you rest in the Lord.

Number five goes along with number four and that is to prioritize the morning and evening sacrifices of praise of the Lord's Day as a couple. Everyone I have ever met that was effective in growing as a Christian had a functionally high view of the Lord's Day. Many from this have seen it carry on to their children when they have raised their family in the context of the Lord's Day but it began in their marriage that the Lord's Day is sacred and sanctified. I don't believe watching TV or movies matches giving praise and worship to God on His Day. I don't believe staying in the house and calling it rest matches the rest we get when we feed on God's Word, giving praise and worship to God on His Day. I pray for you that as you come morning and evening on the Lord's Day that you sense the Sabbath rest in worship, because you have six days to work Jesus and now you rest for His work in you in worship, praise and honor of the Lord.

Number six, courtships can and many times should be long, but engagements should always be short. Obviously, I'm talking to singles here. Once you have made a commitment you are drawn toward the full expression of your love. Keep that period of time where you have to exercise discipline as short as possible. In my life, I went half and half where I courted my wife for three months and then struck while the iron was still hot and then had a three month engagement. Don't necessarily look to me but I will say that the courtship needs to be as long as necessary to get to know the person. There have been many young people I have discipled who love Jesus who had long engagements and faltered in the midst of it and part of the issue was that once they made that commitment and began to move toward the marriage everything pulled them toward each other, therefore it needs to be a short engagement for the sake of discipline and purity.

Number seven, prioritize a daily time with your spouse in intercessory prayer and the Word, together, as it is also a time of encouragement to each other. Men, please take the lead. I don't know what time works for you and your spouse but for me and my wife our time for prayer and the Word is in the morning before I leave. I'm not talking about family worship here for that's different, a different time. We will get to family worship when we get to the sanctity of the family.

Number eight, get some mentors in your life as a couple, older couples than you preferably. Just like I believe every Christian ought to have mentors, couples need to have at least one to three mentors in their life. This means getting engaged in Christ's church as a couple. Don't play drive-by church. Some of you have a hand up on this because your parents are excellent mentors for you and praise the Lord if you can take advantage of this, but also get outside of that with another couple. I love that Briarwood has the diversity it does with the age and season of life from young couples, to older couples and all in between. Take advantage of that. Then you as a couple mentor those who are coming behind you. Both of those things will bless you as couple for you will gain from your mentors and you will gain when you mentor.

People need ministries in their status of life and their season of life and both ought to be available for us in the church.

Number nine, get a date night, preferably one a week. My wife and I do Thursday nights each week. You might say 'we're poor and can't afford babysitters.' Here are Briarwood take advantage of those in the Sunday school communities in the same way and do for one another. That is the way my wife and I did for many years when we had small children, in the church we were a part of.

Number ten, always remember and talk about what your marriage is ultimately showing – not only the power of the Gospel for we don't have to live according to the fall, but we can live in such a way that people are drawn to why marriage exists ultimately. There was a man who left His father and His mother to cleave to His bride and that's our Savior and nothing will separate His bride from Him and His love. The fidelity of Christ's bride to their Savior as we honor and respect Him can be mirrored in a wife and the sacrificial, nourishing, continual faithfulness of Christ the Bridegroom for His bride can be established for a watching world in our marriage. Always keep in front of you that your marriage is a witness to the redemptive work of Christ for His bride and may the Lord bless you as you move forward.

There are a lot more things that could be said but at least here is a place for you to get started. These best practices have worked on the principles we have looked at in this study on the theology of marriage. I didn't come up with all these practices for my wife and I learned them from my mentors so we pass it along to you.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word and to encourage one another in and through Christ. Thank You Father for the glorious blessing of the institution of creation – marriage – which You have established through the work of redemption that it may show forth Christ and His bride and we may enjoy the blessings of grace that is greater than the sin that would destroy our marriage. Your grace is greater and so bless us that our marriages may testify to the greatness of abounding grace over sin to the praise of Jesus, Amen.