

The Flying Trapeze: Marriage

Family Circle #2 - Pastor Gary Combs - July 28, 2024 - Ephesians 5:22-33

INTRO: Good morning church! We are continuing our sermon series today called, “Family Circus.” Now I know what you’re thinking. “Why should I come to church to hear about a family circus? I already have one of those at home!” Well, you’re not alone. Because none of us have a perfect family.

You’re not going to want to miss a Sunday during this series. Listen to these titles::

July 21 - The Circus: Family

July 28 - The Flying Trapeze: Marriage

August 4 - The Lion Cage: Parenting

August 11 - The Tight Rope: Singleness

August 18 - The Safety Net: Grandparents

ILL: Take a look at this “The Family Circus” cartoon. Little Jeffy (Today, Jeff Keene has taken over from his father, Bil): “People getting married always hold hands to make sure the ‘gagement ring doesn’t fall off.” Do you ever feel like the “gagement” ring has fallen off? Or that you need to “re-engage” your commitment to one another in marriage? When’s the last time you held hands?



ILL: Speaking of holding hands, we’ve named this sermon “The Flying Trapeze: Marriage.” The title is not only in keeping with our “circus” theme, but it describes how every marriage is like a high flying dangerous acrobatic endeavor that requires two people to focus on hanging on tight to one another.



Need: How is your marriage doing? Are you hanging on tight to one another? Are you holding hands to make sure your “gagement” ring doesn’t fall off? Think about your marriage for a minute. Are you experiencing the blessing of God on your marriage today? Wouldn’t you like to?

Trans: As we learned last week, experiencing the blessing of God on our family means bowing to His authority and plan and depending on His power and love. Have you decided to follow God’s plan, His design for the family?

BODY: In the apostle Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he gave instructions on how to follow God’s design for being the family of God. Among these, are his instructions on how to follow God’s design for marriage. We can follow God’s design for marriage. The text gives **three instructions** for following God’s design for marriage.

Read Text: Ephesians 5:22-33 (ESV) ²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so 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. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because we are members of his body. ³¹Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

HOW TO FOLLOW GOD’S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE:

1. WIVES: Willingly follow your husband.

EXP: (22-24, 33) Three key words for understanding God’s design for the wife: Submit, head, and respect.

1st key word: “Submit” (22, 24) (ὑποτάσσεσθε, *hupotassethe* - Middle Imperative) (*hupo* “under”+ *tasso* “to arrange.”) – to willingly line up under. Submission is granting permission for him to be the head in “everything” (24). Why does it start with her? Because he can’t be a servant leader without her permission.

ARG: **The Sin Problem: The wife tends to be “contrary” instead of “submissive” to her husband.**

Genesis 3:16 (ESV) To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

“When sin has the upper hand in woman, she will desire to overpower or exploit man. And when sin has the upper hand in man, he will respond with his strength to subdue her, or rule over her.” – John Piper

Why should the wife “submit?”

- **Because it is “fitting” for wives to show that they are “in the Lord.”** (ἀνήκω, *anēkō*: to pertain to what is due, duty, as was fitting, proper, becoming)

Colossians 3:18 (NIV84) Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

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- **Because it brings you into alignment with the Word** (“Reviled” - Literally, “blaspheming”).

Titus 2:4-5 (ESV) 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.

- **Because it’s the most powerful way to influence an unbelieving husband.** (Peter teaches it too)

1 Peter 3:1-2 (NIV84) ¹ Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, ² when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

EXP: **2nd key word: “Head” (23)** (κεφαλή, *kephale*) – head, ruler, lord. This is an organic term. The head leads the body, but depends on its support. One cannot live without the other.

ARG: **Headship is about function, not equality.**

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV) But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

For we are all equal in Christ.

Galatians 3:28 (CEV) Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman.

EXP: **3rd key word: “Respect” (33)** (φοβῆται, *phobetai* – Pres, Mid, Sub) – to revere, fear, reverence. Preceded by the Greek *hina*, it might be translated: “so that the wife might respect her husband.” Submission is her permission for him to lead. Respect is her response to his loving leadership. Submission is how she shows her husband respect. And respect is how she shows her husband love.

ILL: “In marriage, a woman’s basic need is to feel loved whereas a man’s basic need is to be respected... Often, we focus on our own needs and simply overlook the needs of the other person... When a husband feels disrespected, it is especially hard to love his wife. When a wife feels unloved, it is especially hard to respect her husband.” — Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs*



APP: Submission does not mean: To be a slave, to lose your identity, blind obedience, being used, allowing your husband to violate the law or abuse you. Submission does mean: Responding to your husband with a view to Christ’s Lordship. Encouraging your husband to lead by lining up under him. Allowing your husband to lead. Honoring God’s Word. Wives, will you follow God’s design for marriage. Will you submit to your husband as the head of your family, showing him respect according to God’s design?

2. HUSBANDS: Sacrificially love your wife.

EXP: (25-29, 33) Three key words for understanding God’s design for the husband: Love, nourish, and cherish.

1st key word: “Love” (25, 28, 33) (ἀγαπάω, *agapao* - Active Imperative) – unconditional love, sacrificial love that flows from God.

“... **As Christ loved the church**” (25) – Paul illustrates both sacrificial and sanctifying elements of Christ’s love. The husband is to be a Servant Leader like Christ by being both a . . .

- Sacrificial leader – Sacrificial: “gave himself up” (25) Leader: “Christ is the head of the church” (23).
- Spiritual leader – Spiritual: “Sanctify her... with the word” (26).

“... **As their own bodies**” (28) – Paul uses two active verbs to describe how the husband is to love his wife as his own body:

2nd key word: “Nourishes” (29) (ἐκτρέφει, *ektrephei*) – nurture, feed in order to bring up to maturity.

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3rd key word: “Cherishes” (29) – θάλπει – Literally, “to keep warm.” To love with tender and gentle care. Husbands are to be the “thermostats” in their home, setting the temperature. Wives are natural thermometers. They’s let you know what the temperature is. APP: One way husbands can cherish is by leading in having a regular “date night.” (Look at cartoon)



ARG: **Sacrificial love means not being “harsh”** (“rough, cruel, ungentle”).

Colossians 3:19 (ESV) Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

Sacrificial love is “understanding” and “honoring.” (When it’s not, your prayer life will suffer)

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV) 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. (“Weaker vessel” - Treat her like fine china, not Tupperware!)

The Sin Problem: The husband tends to be a “heeder” instead of a leader. (The passive man)

Genesis 3:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

ILL: Remember the “Crazy Cycle?” When she disrespects him, he acts unloving towards her. So, how do we break out of the “Crazy Cycle?” By starting a new cycle. Someone has to go first. Someone has to put the other’s needs ahead of their own. More than that, both husband and wife must start obeying God’s design. When they do, it starts a new “Energizing Cycle.”



(From Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs*)

APP: Husbands, will you follow God’s design for marriage. Will you sacrificially love your wives, nurturing and cherishing her according to God’s design?

3. MARRIED: **Display the mystery of our oneness in Christ.**

EXP: (31-32) Paul quoted Gen. 2:24 to show how marriage is to display the “mystery” of our oneness in Christ.

“Mystery” (32) (μυστήριον, *musterion*) – a hidden thing, secret, mystery. A thing that must be revealed to be known. To what “mystery” is Paul referring? Answer: “one flesh.”

“One flesh” (31) God’s original intent for marriage is that the two shall become one. This “oneness” is exhibited in at least three arenas:

(1) Biological union – God created them perfectly “fitted” for mutual pleasure and for procreation.

(2) Relational union – that they should “leave and cleave,” for life.

(3) Spiritual union – God is both “witness” and participant, “making them one with a portion of His Spirit.”

ARG: **Christian marriage is a threefold covenant between husband, wife and God.**

Malachi 2:14-15 (ESV) ¹⁴ ... the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

EXP: **“Christ and the church” (32)** – “Christ” is repeated 5 times in this passage. Including other references (“Lord, Savior, His, Himself, etc.) over 15 times. Christian marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. The “oneness” of the husband and wife are to reflect the glory of God in Christ and point to the fulfillment someday of the marriage banquet between Christ and His bride, the church.

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ARG: The oneness on display in Christian marriage points to our present oneness in Christ and its future fulfillment at Christ's return when the "wedding feast of the Lamb" will take place.

Revelation 19:7-9 (NLT) Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb."

ILL: Following God's design and active participation in church is a proven path to marital success:

"Every study that has ever been done has found that the rate of divorce among those who regularly attend church is much lower than among those who don't. ... the bottom line is that weekly church attendance lowers the divorce rate significantly." – Shaunti Feldhahn, *The Good News About Marriage*

APP: Will you display the mystery of our oneness in Christ by committing to oneness in your marriage? Will you let Christ make your house a lighthouse for Him?

CONCLUSION: So marriage is kinda like a flying trapeze. The wife takes a leap of faith trusting that the Lord will empower her husband to catch her. The husband decides to trust the Lord to strengthen him to love and serve her by being there to catch her as a servant leader. Do you want to have a marriage that follows God's design and comes under His blessing?

Will you follow God's design as...

1. ...Wives, will you willingly follow your husband's lead as you follow Christ?
2. ...Husbands, will you sacrificially love your wives as Christ loves us?
3. ...Married, will you prayerfully commit to display your oneness in Christ?

Let's pray.

First for those who need to give their lives to Jesus.

And second, for our marriages. If you're near your wife, hold hands as we pray. Let's make sure that 'gagement ring doesn't fall off!