

“Be Filled with the Spirit, Love Your Wife, Submit to Your Husband”

Ephesians 5:21–33

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by Senior Pastor Hong Poonghwa

Ephesians 5:21–33 (PowerPoint)

Preface

What a beautiful Word of God this is.

And how much this Word strikes at the very heart of all problems.

Come to think of it, from the moment I was born into this world as a child, what I had always desired since childhood was to see the closest human relationship one encounters upon birth—that is, the married couple who are one's parents—living harmoniously together. And also, that someday, I too would meet a wonderful woman and become a loving couple with her and live as such.

As far back as I can remember, I think that since about the first grade of elementary school, for some reason, I had always carried the desire to meet a wonderful woman and live a wonderful married life, and I often found myself lost in fantasies about it.

The home in which I grew up was one where my father was remarried with four children, all of whom were in the midst of adolescence and quite troubled, and my mother, on the other hand, was entering her first marriage—and what's more, she married a Zainichi Korean man from Korea, making it, one might say, an almost international marriage. Well, even just putting that into words reveals how unusual the situation was in many respects, and it's easy to imagine how difficult it must have been. I believe a turbulent married and family life began under those circumstances.

Even such a father and mother, of course, experienced a major crisis of divorce, as many married couples do. I saw scenes where my mother cried because of my father, and scenes where my father made my mother cry. I also saw my mother criticize my father in front of us children. And yet, despite all that, I still think my parents were a loving and harmonious couple.

When I saw my parents' stormy marital relationship, I would think, “I want to become a couple not like them; someday, though I don't know who yet, I want to meet a wonderful woman and become a married couple with her.” And still, I must have

unconsciously witnessed my father and mother admiring each other, trusting each other deep down, and joking together—and that became embedded in my subconscious. From childhood, I instinctively longed to become such a trusting couple, to live my life as a married couple in that way.

Then eventually, I came to believe in Jesus, became a Christian, and looked into the Word of the Bible. And I came to understand that this desire—to meet a wonderful person, to become a wonderful married couple, to build a wonderful home—is an instinctive longing that God has implanted in every person, no matter their past experiences or starting points.

Moreover, I learned that this is the very field of blessing established by God—this is the sphere of blessing, the smallest unit of community that is most essential and important for human beings, who live socially.

In other words, marriage is not something that simply occurred vaguely within the thoughts of humans or as a product of the natural world and its accidental processes. There was a clear intention.

Marriage is a vital human institution that originated from God, that was ordained by God, under His clear will.

That is why the Word we saw up to last week—“Be filled with the Holy Spirit, and out of reverence for Christ, submit to one another”—is, I believe, first applied in the practical field of marriage.

Marriage is the very place where God’s intervention must appear, where the fullness of the Holy Spirit is revealed, the most basic and indispensable site of spiritual blessing and practice.

Also, what is interesting and fascinating about today’s passage is that it is spoken by the Apostle Paul, who remained single his entire life.

The Apostle Peter, who was the leader of Jesus’ twelve disciples, had a family. The Gospels include an episode where Peter’s mother-in-law, who likely lived with him, was healed of a fever by Jesus. So if such a man as the Apostle Peter spoke on marriage, it would be understandable. But the Apostle Paul, who never married in his lifetime, speaks about the form of marriage—and that is interesting. On the contrary, it is precisely because Paul never experienced marriage with someone that he could speak as he did. Precisely because he was the Apostle Paul, he was able to speak about marriage solely based on the Word of God in Scripture.

When I was a college student, a friend once said, “If Paul really was single, he couldn’t have said this kind of thing. I think Paul was actually married.” But I couldn’t agree with those words.

Rather, I think, it was precisely because Paul was single that he was able, regardless of whether he had experienced it or not, to speak not from personal experience or preconception, but to declare the Word of God clearly as God’s Word and speak about the form of marriage as God truly desires it to be. I am only impressed again by the fact that God’s way of using people always goes beyond our human expectations.

Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, Paul himself points out that there are people who, like him, are given the gift of singleness. And yet, even so, he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, about marriage as the most straightforward, familiar, and important field for practicing the fullness of the Spirit.

Part One

As the Apostle Paul teaches us about marriage, he refers to a Word from Genesis that is indispensable when looking at this world from God’s perspective—namely, from the perspective of the world that God created. It is a foundational Word that shapes this world.

Ephesians 5:31–32a (PowerPoint)

In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, the fact is recorded that the Lord God, with all His might and the zeal of the Lord of Hosts, created the heavens and the earth and all things in them in six days.

And at the end of this work, He created the first man, Adam.

As I meditate on such a work of God, I wonder, “What was God’s purpose in creation?” “Did God create the heavens and the earth for Himself? Or did He create the world for Adam, whom He created last as His own child?”

When I think about this, I believe it is the latter.

I imagine that, after creating Adam last, God might have spoken to him like this:

“Adam, all of this—I made it for you, to give it to you.”

That is precisely why God, with zeal and with all His might, created the heavens and the earth.

Over six days, with all the zeal of God, He created the beautiful Garden of Eden, paradise, the kingdom of God. But when we look at Adam himself, in Genesis 2, we see an Adam who appears somehow unsatisfied, not very happy.

Sensing Adam's heart, God immediately puts him into a deep sleep.

In the image of God laying Adam into a deep sleep, I see the image of a mother holding her precious child to her breast, protecting him from all things so that he can sleep soundly and peacefully. At the same time, I imagine the peaceful face of the child, sound asleep in the warmth of that embrace.

Then, while Adam was asleep, God took one of his ribs and created Eve as someone irreplaceable and deeply important to Adam.

The words Adam spoke when he first saw Eve, I believe, are the most beautiful words spoken since the birth of humanity and are the most needed words for us humans, and for this world.

"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh."

There is a book by Martin Buber called *I and Thou*, in which he writes that the most fundamental relationship we ought to cherish in human relationships is the second-person relationship of "I and Thou," or "I and you." Yet, he says, many of us live most of our relationships in the third person.

Not "I and that person," nor "I and it."

It is a relationship where distance arises, and we treat people not as warm beings, but as things.

However, Adam and Eve were not, of course, in a third-person relationship. Nor even in a second-person relationship of "I and you." They were in a first-person relationship.

"Bone of *my* bones, flesh of *my* flesh"—in other words, "You are me."

It is a relationship of "You are my very self, the most precious part of me."

Everyone, to see someone else and recognize, "That is me," to recognize that person as the most important "me" within the self—that, I believe, is the most fundamental answer to all the problems humanity holds. And in this sinful world, isn't it something astounding—one might even say impossible—beyond imagination?

And yet, the Bible straightforwardly tells us that humans were originally created by God in that way. And that this astonishing, seemingly impossible, once closed-off path has

now been opened again and is being restored—this is what the Apostle Paul teaches us today through the passage in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:28–33 (PowerPoint)

Ephesians 5:21–25 (PowerPoint)

Again and again, we see “Christ.”

“In the fear of Christ,” “as unto Christ,” “as Christ loved,” “because we are members of Christ’s body.”

Just as Christ recognized each and every one of us as His own body—as Himself—so too, we are taught that “you also”—a wife to her husband, a husband to his wife—this path has been restored and reopened.

That once-lost first-person relationship—where two are one—is being made manifest in the relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, which is the most basic, foundational, and essential of all human relationships. We are taught that this first-person relationship between husband and wife is something that appears through the Holy Spirit, and only through the God who is the Holy Spirit.

This mystery—this truth—that was never spoken of, nor taught, nor even imagined in the education system humanity has proudly called “high-minded,” is now being taught to us by the Apostle Paul, who remained unmarried all his life, guided by the Spirit of God, simply in obedience to the Word of God in Scripture.

Part Two

Now, the marriage relationship spoken of in Ephesians, one that exists only because of the intervention of the Holy Spirit, a relationship that has been restored to its original form in Christ, a relationship where the once-closed path has been opened again — is not a suddenly invented religious term devised by people to spread a newly emerged religion called Christianity. Rather, it is the original form, the prototype, from the time when humans were first created by God, as described in the Book of Genesis.

In Genesis chapter 1, it is recorded that when God created human beings, He said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” God Himself used the first-person plural “us” in referring to Himself when creating humans.

The triune God — God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit — used the first-person plural “us,” not in the third person, not in the second person, but in the first person, and created humans in that first-person image of God.

In other words, the human being was originally created to have a first-person relationship, not a third-person relationship, not a second-person relationship, but one that exists in relationship with others within a first-person context.

Why is there conflict in this world? Why do we fight? Why do we become jealous, hurt others, insist on our own rightness, and always try to point out others' faults? The Bible teaches us: "It is because human beings have lost the first-person image of God."

In the first man and woman, the first husband and wife, Adam and Eve, God established this first-person relationship — a relationship where, though two, they are one.

Moreover, when He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," He breathed into both Adam and Eve the Spirit of God, the breath of God's life, and constructed a blessed first-person relationship that exists in God.

That is to say, in Adam, Eve, and God — we also see the image and likeness of the one true triune God. And I believe it is only by discovering the presence of God within and among ourselves that human beings can recover their original form.

Then, can the image of God be seen in our human relationships?

Is the image of God found in our world today?

Is the likeness of God seen in our daily lives?

Is the likeness of God found in our relationships with others?

Is the image and likeness of God present in the relationship between husband and wife?

Once it was lost — but now it has been restored. This is the image of God in our human relationships through the salvation of the cross of Jesus Christ. And it is in man and woman, husband and wife — the smallest unit of society, yet the most important, most essential, and because of Christ, a first-person community in Christ.

Part Three

The sexes of man and woman — were created by God.

When God created humans, He created them male and female, and in the oneness of these two sexes, the Spirit of God became one with them and was present with them.

At the very least, the Bible — though perhaps it is irreverent to use the phrase "at the very least" when referring to Scripture — the Bible does not mention any sexes other

than male and female, and as far as I can see, there are no passages in Scripture that affirm the existence of any other genders.

And if there are sexualities other than the relationship of man and woman becoming one, then I believe these appear only in the Bible as evidence that humans, having sinned by rebelling against God, were cast out of the Kingdom of God, the paradise, the Garden of Eden, which God had completely given to Adam and Eve — as spiritual symptoms of sinners, appearing in Scripture only after they became sinners before God.

I would be grateful if you do not misunderstand me.

I am not speaking from this pulpit to discriminate against anyone in this society. Rather, as the Apostle Paul says in Romans, I want to share that we first need to honestly, directly, and sincerely face the foolishness, dullness, and emptiness of us human beings — who have exchanged the truth of God for lies, worshiped and served created things instead of the Creator, and while claiming that these things are knowledge, intelligence, the spirit of the age, freedom, or pleasure — we have been running this world.

As humans who have forgotten God, we have created a world that twists the order God created, according to our own thoughts, ideas, emotions, and desires. And conforming to the rhythm of that world, being stained by that world, is praised with noble-sounding words such as rationality, freedom, and rights — all the while, people are being led further and further away from God by Satan, who is zealously at work. While recognizing this reality, we must live with the forgiveness, mercy, and love of God, accepting one another, submitting to one another — and I believe we, humanity, who have enthroned ourselves as kings, must come to know this.

In that sense, I believe the church is a hospital for sinners, established by God on this earth.

Jesus did not come to this earth to call the righteous or the good, but to call sinners — to love them, to receive them, to forgive, to heal, and to restore them.

And the church is a hospital established by God where such people can feel safe and recover together. It is a hospital necessary for everyone — a place of healing where we share each other's pain, desire healing for one another, and bring our pain together before God. A place of grace, where wounded and hurting people gather together — people must come to know that this hospital of God exists here.

In this way, I believe the foundation of all human relationships under the grace of God is this:

That man and woman, husband and wife, each in their own role, in Christ, “As unto the Lord,” “As Christ loved,” “As members of Christ’s body,” Love their wives as themselves, and respect and submit to their husbands.

Next week, I would like to explore this point a bit further.

Conclusion

Lastly, I would like to conclude by introducing one incident.

Last week, I read in the newspaper what was probably the most shocking article I have ever seen.

At a certain home, bodies of a man and a woman were found, both covered in blood, each with several stab and cut wounds caused by a bladed weapon, dead together. And according to the testimony of a five-year-old child living in that home, who witnessed the incident, “Dad and Mom were fighting with knives in their hands.”

I could not help but pray for the Lord’s help and protection, thinking, “What will happen to that child’s life from now on? How will they live?”

And I was made to reflect on my own self—on how, at times, I too, toward the wife or husband I love or ought to have loved, cannot hold onto a first-person relationship or feeling, and instead am ruled by, even willingly hand myself over to, not even a second-person but a third-person emotion of “me and that”—on the merciless image of us humans who have forgotten God.

Finally, I would like to close by reading the Word of Ephesians 5:33, wishing that the blessing of this Word may be upon us, and upon you all.

Ephesians 5:33 (PowerPoint)

Let us pray.

Benediction: Ephesians 5:33