
Wednesday GEL Group

Grow Encourage Learn

Tonight, we are going to explore some biblical imperatives from Ephesians 5. Please recognise, tonight is not a marriage course. For all of us, we need to see that Paul uses the marriage metaphor to describe the union with Christ and His church.

As Paul contemplates the mutual love and loyalty, loving headship of the husband, the loving submission of the wife, riches bestowed, intimacy and oneness, most of all a sacrificial love, all these functions should describe every marriage. These functions also describe the way we should love each other as well. Yes, there are biblical imperatives for those of us who are married, but this is part of a biblical foundation for all of us to consider why this metaphor is holistically important. Read Revelation 21:1-9 as an example.

We need to also recognise; these Ephesians 5 has been mis-interpreted and used in unhealthy ways to promote an unhealthy positional authority in relationships rather than understanding who we are in Christ, having a good character and the role of servant-ship in relationships. You may have heard words or theological views like complementarianism and egalitarianism as part of your faith journey.

1. Before we read the passage, what does the phrase “equal but different” mean to you?

Let’s just allow Paul’s words here in Scripture to speak for itself. We need to also be mindful of the culture in which it was written.

2. Let’s read Ephesians 5:22-32
3. In terms of how we have equality, let’s initially view some brief examples of how the Bible describes this. Let’s read Genesis 1:27 Are men and women the same fundamentally in the divinely bestowed dignity that sets us far above the rest of creation?
4. Let’s also read Romans 3:22-24; Galatians 3:26-29. How do these verses describe our spiritual condition? Is anyone singled out as more special than anyone else?
5. Who were the first witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus? Did Jesus himself treat men and women differently?
6. We need to now recognise that we also have differences. We weren’t created ‘exactly the same’. We were created male and female according to Genesis 1:27. The question to ask here is ‘why the difference?’ What is the primary reason?
7. When we come to the passage in Ephesians, is Paul writing that one of the functions of marriage is to be an expression of the union between Christ and the church? If that is the case, what was the culture like in the days of the Ephesian church? Is Paul making a counter cultural statement?

8. In a similar place, what does Paul write to the church in Colossae? Read Colossians 3:18-24

9. To understand Jesus as 'head of the church' and the church as the correlative figure of his body, let's read Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Colossians 1:18; 2:19. What do these verses tell us?

10. What does Paul ask wives to do in verses 5:23-24? In view of this, what does Paul exhort husbands to do in verse 25? What patterns emerge in these verses?

11. Let's read Ezekiel 16:6-4 to place some Old Testament context on verse 26. What is written here?

12. What does verse Ephesians 5:28 say?

13. Unpack verses 29-33.

14. If one is single, do these verses apply to you?

15. How do we live counter-culturally in the way we love each other? What is the basis for how we are a community?

16. How has your faith grown tonight?

17. What has encouraged you?

18. Is there something specific you have learnt?