

Christ-Centered Marriage

Colossians 3:18-19 - NCBC, Oct 18, 2015

Main Point: **A Christ-centered marriage pictures Christ's relationship with God and His church.**

- A Covenant of Companionship (Gen 2:18-25)
- Under the Authority of God (Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18)
- Reflecting the Gospel of God (Eph 5:25-33, Col 3:19)

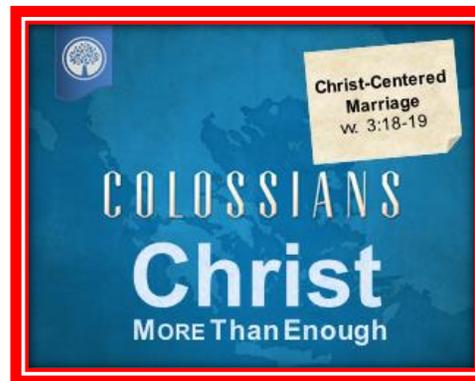
Application: **Redeem the realities of marriage in God's gospel.**

Opening Announcements:

*New Membership Class today – across the hall – 9:30a
Fall Festival Opportunities – sign up in commons area*

Gideon's Announcement - Marty (& Deb) Hochstetler –

Exit offering - Ask people to make checks out to New Castle Bible Church – memo – Gideon's



<< In Christ Alone >>

Let's now continue our worship by reading from God's Word. Please open your Bible to **Colossians chapter 3**.

If you do not have a Bible with you today, we'd love to give you one. Please catch the attention of the ushers as they pass by and it would be our joy to give you a Bible to use this morning. You are welcome to take this Bible home as our gift to you, or just simply return it after our service by placing it on the table in the back of the room.

Our text this morning from Colossians 3 is found on page 984 of the Bibles we've handed out. So please stand with me now in honor of God's Word as I read our text for us from Colossians 3:18-19, reading from the **English Standard Version**:

Colossians 3:18-19 *Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.*

**This is the word of God. You may be seated.
Let's Pray.**

Have you ever found that reality doesn't measure up to your expectations? Such was the case for my wife and me as we planned a very special 10-year anniversary trip. Our lives had been crazy, and schedules were tight, but we were excited about flying down to a family condo in Florida for a few days just to get some quality time together and celebrate 10 years of marriage.

But little did we know that the reality of this trip would be far different from our rose-colored expectations of rest and reconnection.

First at the airport, we arrived early for our flight...excited that the day had come to get away...only to discover that we had accidently booked flights for the wrong dates. Our tickets were for a flight that happened a month earlier!! Ouch. Opportunity for marital conflict #1. But we really wanted to get away, and we had been looking forward to this for so long...so we purchased new tickets at the counter, and off we went. Only to arrive and learn that we had booked the rental car at the wrong airport! Marital conflict #2. And so the entire trip went. What should have been a romantic water-taxi ride on the Florida Intracoastal Waterway turned into a nightmare with a flash thunderstorm with lightening, torrential rain, and 70-mile-per-hour winds. If it would not have been so cold and wet... it could have been humorous.

Jody and I both look back on that trip these days...and we do laugh about it. But at the time, it really wasn't

much of a laughing matter. For all of our rose-colored expectations for that trip were left unrealized and unmet.

And honestly, this is the reality of a lot of our marriages today, is it not? Disappointed expectations. Prince Charming has turned into Lord Chum... and fairy tales of romance have only delivered routines, unthankful chores, and endless piles of laundry.

So when you think of marriage today, what are your expectations? If you're single today – what are your expectations for marriage? And If you're married – what are your expectations for your marriage?

Our expectations or perceptions about marriage greatly impact our experience with it.

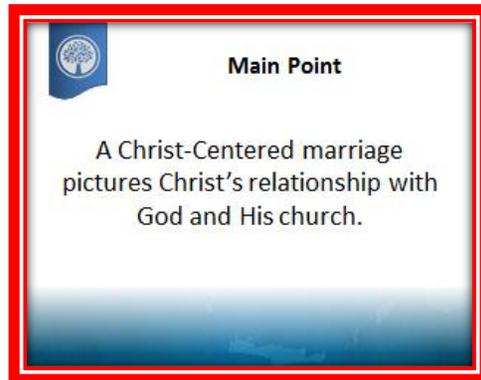
So what do you really think about the marriage institution?

The false teachers in Colossae were trying to convince the new believers that true spirituality was found in grand mystical philosophies and self-denial... and that true believers didn't concern themselves much with the common and routine relationships of their own households. But as Paul is writing from prison to encourage these believers on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ – he wants them to know that God's Gospel is powerful and sufficient enough to transform every part of their routine and normal lives – including their most intimate relationships in the home. **True spirituality is reflected first in the home.**

So with Gospel-produced relational virtues of verses 12-17 hanging in our minds, Paul writes to strengthen a Gospel-orientation towards marriage.

This morning, I am not coming with a typical verse-by-verse exposition of the text. Instead, I want to widen our perspective a bit on God's view of marriage from the whole of Scripture. I want to refresh our expectations with biblical truths of marriage that have the power to redeem our realities with grace and hope.

For as we examine the Scriptures this morning, I believe we will be encouraged to learn that **a Christ-centered marriage pictures Christ's relationship with God and His church.**



Christ-centered marriage is an illustration. A picture. A parable. Marriage is a shadow of the heavenly reality that belongs entirely to Christ. So having a biblical view of marriage will protect us from the frustration, despair, and hopelessness that comes from unmet expectations...while at the same time... giving us reason

to esteem and honor and value marriage for the beautiful purpose that God has given.

So let's begin where marriage began... back in Genesis chapter 2. Turn your Bibles please to Genesis 2, and look quickly at verse 18, where we see that God first created marriage to be a **Covenant of Companionship (Gen 2:18-25)**



Genesis 2 is the detailed retelling of the creation account of Genesis 1 with a highlighted focus on God's creation of people. In 2:7 we observe the personal nature of God's creation of Adam – very different from just speaking him into being like the rest of creation.

Let's pick up our context in verse 15:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

So man is commissioned to keep and have dominion over the earth, and to show his love for God by not eating of one tree. **For love always requires sacrifice, and it is not possible to express love for someone apart from sacrifice.**

Now verse 18,

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”



Notice... the purpose God created marriage was for **companionship**. Not procreation. Not tax-deduction. Not for overcoming temptation. No... **God created marriage to overcome loneliness**. To reflect covenant-faithful oneness.

Don't miss this church – God Himself is in relationship with Himself in His Trinity – 3 distinct persons of Father,

Son, and Spirit united inseparably in 1 divine essence. This mystery of 1 God, yet 3 persons.

So now God creates man in His image, and says, it's not good for him to be alone. I must make a way for him to reflect my own **unity in diversity**...and so God makes Eve. So that through marriage – a covenant of companionship – we might better understand His ONENESS – His unity in diversity.

And so a super-intelligent Adam names all the animals, and then God becomes the first anesthesiologist and surgeon in history – in verse 21:

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

I love how God the Father walks His bride down the aisle here and brings her to the man, and notice Adam's response in verse 23:

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.”

Adam's response is a vow – that's why it's offset in our English translations – Adam is here vowing and promising covenant faithfulness to Eve as his wife – for as long as they both have bones and flesh – for as long as they both shall live! Eve was the only woman on the

planet and Adam was vowing to be true and faithful to her as long as they both should live. This is the first marriage – created by God ...and ultimately for God – so that our own marriages would picture's Christ's relationship with God Himself.

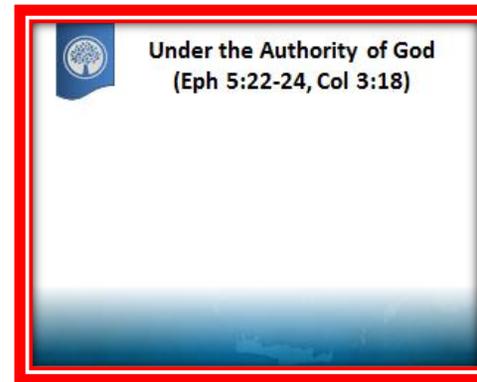
And then we see Moses' commentary on marriage in verses 24-25,

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

So we could say God's priorities for marriage are to **leave, cleave, weave, and receive**. Leave father & mother, exclusively cleave to each other, pursue oneness as two lives are woven together in emotional, spiritual, physical, financial, and relational oneness. And then verse 25 – receive each other as you really are – without pretense, judgment or shame... as they together embrace marriage as a covenant of companionship that reflects God's relationship with Himself in the Trinity.

Isn't God's Word rich and instructive for all of our needs?

With that foundation now, let's go to Paul's letter to the Ephesians – chapter 5 – where we learn that a Christ-Centered Marriage is not only a covenant of companionship, but also **Under the Authority of God (Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18)**.



Ephesians 5:22-33 is the parallel passage to our text in **Colossians 3:18-19**. And since the Ephesians passage is longer and more descriptive, it's worth looking at this morning.

Read with me **Ephesians 5:22-24** (pg 978 in the giveaway Bibles), and look for words that communicate authority, or our response to authority:

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.

In Genesis 2 we saw that God made Eve to be Adam's complementary "Helper." And now here in Ephesians (and also in 1 Cor 11:3), we learn that the husband is called the "Head." So there is a functional authority that God has designed within a Christ-centered marriage.

Under the Authority of God
(Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18)

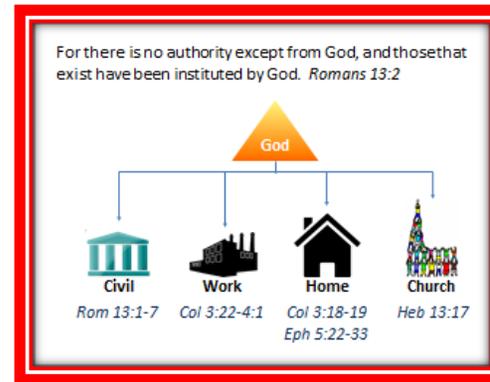
- God created male and female equal in essence, with distinctly defined roles:

Husband = **Head**
Wife = **Helper**

God created male and female equal in essence, yet with distinctly defined roles. Due to the creation order as explained in **1 Timothy 2:13-14**, God has selected the husband to be the leader of the home. He's the captain on the football team.

It's not that he's better than his wife in any way. It's just that this is his appointed role. He's responsible as head. And the wife's role is fulfilled as a helper.

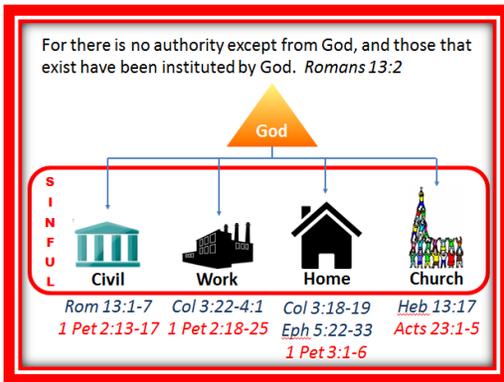
Ever since sin's curse in **Genesis 3:16**, men and women have rebelled against God's designated roles. So perhaps it's helpful to gain some wider perspective of God's delegated authority in the home... by reminding ourselves of all of God's delegated authority in this world.



You see, **Romans 13** teaches us that there is no authority at all, except those who have been instituted by God. So all civil and governmental and educational authorities receive their authority from, and are designed to represent the authority of God Himself.

All Employers and Corporate Boards are delegated authorities of God as well. And so likewise in the home ...and the church. The husband is the delegated authority of God in the marriage, just as elders possess the delegated authority of God in the church.

So God delegates his perfect and sovereign authority into every institution of life for our good, and for His glory. There is no source of authority apart from that which has been entrusted to us by God Himself. But note then – that every time God delegates His perfect authority outside of Himself... He is delegating it to sinners.



Every president, boss, husband, or church elder since the history of Genesis 3 is imperfect and sinful.

So don't miss this ... submission to God's delegated authority is never based on the righteousness of the person...on whether the person deserves our respect or not...but on their God-given position. **God's people submit to the *position* of delegated authority – in spite of the *person*.** That's how Christ-followers show their submission to God Himself.

And that's the point of every one of the red verses on the screen – God's people are called to submit to all delegated authorities, because of our ultimate submission to God Himself.

Now we could talk a lot this morning about what this means for how we talk about any leaders we may disagree with – whether they are in government or our boss or at church. But let's bring this foundational truth into our understanding of a Christ-Centered Marriage.

There's lots of misunderstanding about what it means for wives to submit to their husbands these days.

To submit means to voluntarily respect, and honor, and line ourselves up under their authority ... even if or when they are wrong or sinful themselves.

Pastor John Piper gives us a helpful outline of what submission does not mean from studying 1 Peter 3 – the passage that instructs wives on how to live with a sinful "heads".

Under the Authority of God
(Eph 5:22-24, Col 3:18)

From **1 Peter 3:1-6**, submission does not mean...

- Agreeing with everything your husband says
- Leaving your brain or will at the wedding altar
- Avoiding every effort to change your husband
- Putting husband's will before the will of Christ
- Getting your personal & spiritual strength primarily from your husband
- Acting or living out of fear

John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, p. 99-101.

From 1 Peter 3:1-6, we learn that submission does not mean,

- Agreeing with everything your husband says, or
- Checking your brain at the wedding altar, or
- Avoiding every effort to change your husband, or
- Putting your husband's will before the will of Christ, or
- Getting your personal, spiritual strength primarily from your husband, or

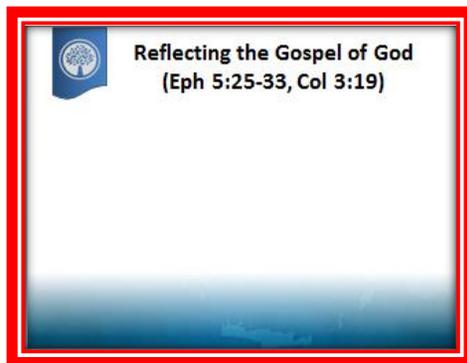
- To slavishly act out of fear.

None of this is what it means to biblically submit to God's delegated authority. To submit means to voluntarily assume your role – play your part on the team. Line up under our God-given authority and **help make them successful for God's glory to the best of our ability.**

This then all helps us understand the command to the thankful husbands and wives in Colossians 3:18-19 who are filled with God's Spirit and letting the Word of Christ dwell in them richly,

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

We can't say we respect the Commander-in-Chief if we are not respecting the sinful Lieutenant that He has placed over us. So Christ-centered Marriages are covenants of companionship under the authority of God. But it's all for a purpose – so that Christ-centered marriages might **Reflect the Gospel of God (Eph 5:25-33, Col 3:19)**

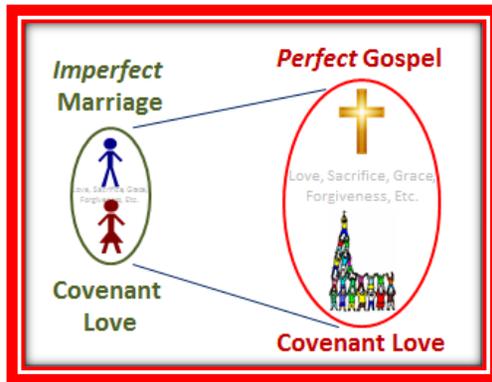


Flip back to Ephesians 5, and listen carefully as Paul continues his thought ... starting in verse 25,

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."
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.*

This passage makes God's ultimate purpose for marriage clear – **marriage is designed to reflect Christ's relationship with His Church.** To illustrate and picture the very Gospel of God!



Look at the red grouping first. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ (represented by the cross on the screen) sacrificially loved the church – though you and me who make up the church are sinful and undeserving of His love – yet even still He died for us – showing grace, mercy, forgiveness. Christ entered into a covenant-faithful relationship of communion and fellowship with His church. Effectively, through the Gospel provisions of the Cross, Jesus and His Bride – the Church – have been made One.

And so... through this imperfect shadowy picture of Christian marriage...the green grouping... we gain insights and understanding into the wonders of God's blessed Gospel. A **Christ-centered marriage pictures Christ's relationship with God and His church.**

And so we return to our text for this morning in Colossians 3:19,

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Once we understand the Gospel purpose of marriage, then marriage's roles and responsibilities make sense. A husband's role as head is to represent God to his wife ...and therefore his chief responsibility is to *love*. A wife's role as the helper is to represent the church ...and therefore her chief responsibility is to *submit*.

But as difficult as it is for wives to learn to submit to their imperfect husbands, it's just as difficult for husbands to learn how to love their imperfect wives.

Did you catch the last part of Colossians 3:19 – *Husbands – love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.* Brothers, this morning God is calling you and me to repent of our harshness with our wives.



**Reflecting the Gospel of God
(Eph 5:25-33, Col 3:19)**

How to be an Embittered or Harsh Husband:

- Focus on "leading" more than "loving"
- Fail to resolve conflict quickly & biblically
- Treat your wife as inferior
- Be impatient, nag thoughtlessly, & be critical
- Blame-shift everything onto your wife
- **Fail to love your wife as Christ loved the church**

I remember working as a marriage counselor during our stubborn-filled first year of marriage...and one day sitting down with one of my co-workers completely broken over the difficulty of my own marriage. After listening to me for some time, my friend gave me wise counsel... Kevin, it

sounds to me like you're trying to lead your wife a whole lot more than you're trying to love her.

He was right, you know. Brothers – Scripture says we are the leader or head of our homes...but it never commands us to lead. **Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to lead our wives... rather we're commanded to love them.** You know what kind of leader you are by how well you sacrifice yourself for her eternal good. How well you love.

Bitter husbands fail to resolve conflict quickly ... understanding full well that sin happens in a relationship – so it's just a matter of how we respond to it. If we harden our hearts, and become embittered towards our wife who fails to fulfill all our dreams and expectations – then we will treat her impatiently, blaming her for everything that is wrong in our lives, and we will fail in our God-given charge to love her as Christ loved the church.

Remember brothers – **no one can ever make you bitter.** Bitterness is a response of our own hearts. But it is a devastating reality in many marriages today...that obscures the beauty of God's gospel response to sin that our marriages are intended to display.



Reflecting the Gospel of God
(Eph 5:25-33, Col 3:19)

- God created marriage to illustrate how Christ and the Church are one in His Gospel:

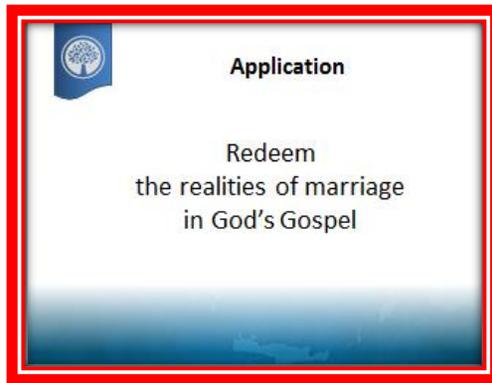
Husband = To Love / To Learn  

Wife = To Submit / To Respect  

The key to a Christ-centered marriage is remembering that God created marriage to illustrate how Christ and the Church are one in His Gospel.

So husbands are called to love – to sacrificially serve their wives and help them be successful for God's glory in their lives. And wives are called to submit – to pursue an attitude of trusting God to work in and through her husband's leadership – so that she is soft, receptive, responsive, and truly leadable. These are the gospel responsibilities of a Christ-centered marriage.

So then, what should we take away from our study this morning? I believe a biblical understanding of Christ-Centered Marriage should compel every one of us to **Redeem the realities of marriage in God's gospel.**



Let's start with those of us who are **single or widowed**. This biblical mindset of marriage is imperative for a biblical lifestyle of singleness. In a culture where marriage is distorted or despised in so many ways, it is imperative that single believers maintain God's view of marriage in honor and esteem. Only a Gospel-centered view of marriage is powerful enough to redeem marriage from both the depth of selfish disdain *and* the heights of idolatrous romantic fantasy. Remember – marriage was not created to give us our identity. Even though culture finds identity in marriage – Christ gives us our perfect identity through faith alone in Him. **Don't ask marriage to give you something that it was never created to give.**

For those of us who are **divorced or separated** right now... this biblical understanding of marriage is for you as well. First – because of God's gospel – there is always hope for reconciliation and restoration wherever there is God-given repentance. So keep a soft heart. Don't let the failed expectations of your past marriage harden or embitter you to the power of God's Gospel.

And don't blame marriage itself for one or both spouses' inability to respond to sin and unfulfilled expectations with grace, forgiveness, and biblical love. You see the reality of marriage in this sinful world is that such covenant-faithful love will always expose unmet expectations and sin.

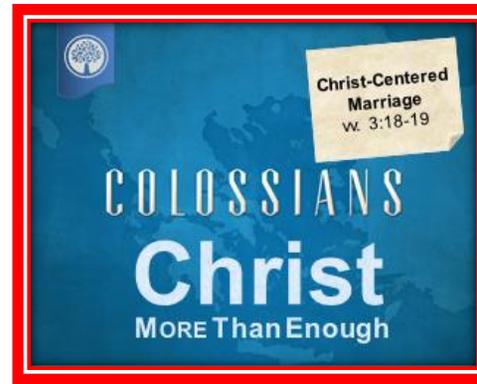
So for those of us who are **married** today... let's accept the calling we've been given to live out this parable of God's grace. Let's embrace honest expectations for our sinful spouse – don't expect them to be perfect. Don't base your submission or love on their love or submission ... but rather on the perfect example of Christ Himself. Live as is fitting in the Lord. Put on Christlikeness. And redeem the realities of marriage in God's Gospel.

There's likely someone here this morning who is hearing all of this, and honestly saying in their mind right now... yeah right. Pastor doesn't know my spouse. He doesn't realize the mountains of hurt and offenses that have piled high over my head these last decades I've endured in this relationship. If it wasn't for our kids, we would have given up on this marriage a long time ago.

Well dear friend... your marriage is not for your personal happiness, it's not to give you identity, it's not to just raise a family – God has graciously allowed you to participate in one of His living parables – His 3-D picture of His gospel love for Himself and His church through your marriage. But the truth is simply this – unless you know Christ and are filled with His Spirit, you will never be able to enjoy marriage the way God created it to be.

Of course non-believers can get married – and their marriages are recognized by God – but a marriage is unable to fulfill its Gospel intentions apart from saving faith in Christ.

Do you know Christ today? Maybe God’s kindness is using your own marriage (or marriage problems) to bring you to the end of yourself, so that you start trusting in Christ and His full sufficiency for your life? Repent of all self-reliance today. Stop thinking that you are smart enough and strong enough to make life work your own way. Jesus is the answer, and He’s paid for all your sins when He died the death you deserve to die. He’s offering you the life (and the marriage) that you’ve been created for – will you believe in Him, turn from your sins, and trust Christ today?

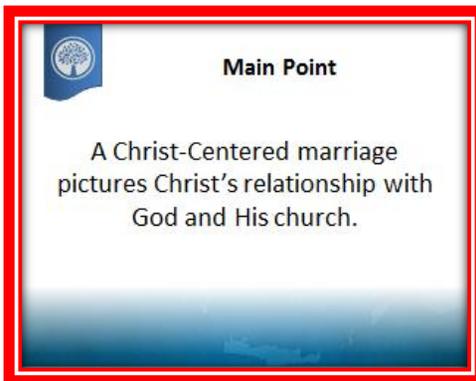


Next week we continue our study of how Christ transforms the household by considering Christ-Centered Family from verses 20-21. And no matter who you are, you’ve been born into a family – so I trust our study next week will have relevance for all of us. So keep reading through Colossians at least once every week during this series. And may God help us redeem the realities of our homes together this week!

Let’s pray.

Closing prayer.

Closing Song – << >>



A Christ-centered marriage pictures Christ’s relationship with God and His church. That’s the teaching of God’s Gospel...and what a joyful God is ours in His love towards us!

REMINDER ABOUT EXIT OFFERING FOR THE GIDEON'S TODAY

Jude 24-25 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Recommended Resources on Christ-Centered Marriage:

- Genesis 2:18-25
- Proverbs 18:22, 19:14
- The Song of Solomon
- Malachi 2:14-16
- Matthew 19:1-12, 22:30
- Mark 10:2-12
- Romans 7:2-3
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
- Ephesians 5:22-33
- Colossians 3:18-19
- 1 Peter 3:1-7
- Hebrews 13:4
- Revelation 19:9, 21:2-4
- When Sinners Say "I Do" by Dave Harvey
- This Momentary Marriage by John Piper
- What Did You Expect? by Paul David Tripp
- The Meaning of Marriage by Tim Keller
- Exemplary Husband by Stuart Scott
- Excellent Wife by Martha Peace