Ephesians 5:22-33  
**Greatest Love Story Ever Told**

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Slide2-7 Larry: Harvest. REAL. Rise. Young Adults. Fresh Hope. CR.

B. Slide8 Stuff the Bus: This is a once a year program to come alongside *Operation Safehouse* by donating goods to fill their shelves for the upcoming year.

1. *Operation Safehouse* provides emergency shelter, intervention, and outreach services to youth in crisis in Riv County, *including* victims of human trafficking.

2. We only have 2 weeks to collect items. **Pick up flyer to see list of items or go online.** Questions see Kelly.

C. Slide9 Project Touch: Support the HS group in collecting TP for Project Touch, a homeless prevention organization. Drop off by Mon.Nov.6th.

D. Slide10 Fight Club: Books are in.

II. Slide11 Intro: **Greatest Love Story Ever Told**

A. You are either...married, want to be, or don’t ever want to be.

1. **Avoid** clicking off *“doesn’t apply to me”*. **Avoid** hoping *your spouse* is listening.

2. **Remember**, It’s ultimately about *Christ & His Church*.

3. Please give me grace, *I can’t say everything about marriage in 45 minutes.*

B. Please also note, as I will be talking about *gender roles* in a marriage, I need to bring up the topic of *gender confusion* today. **But** my desire is to deal with it *biblically & sensitively*, as many of our youth & many w/in the church are also confused by it today.

C. **Also note** what is before & following this passage? *I believe this is the key to a great marriage.* The habitual filling with Spirit (5:18). The continual bombardment of spiritual warfare (6:11,12).

1. **PRAY:**

D. **This is** the longest & most detailed scripture on *marriage* in all the bible...

1. **Slide12 But**, I confidently believe, *1st & foremost*, it is *not* about an *earthly marriage* that ties in a *heavenly marriage*; but instead, it’s about a *heavenly marriage* that ties in *earthly marriage*. [read vs.32]
a) (32) The meaning of human marriage is based on another greater marriage designed by God in heaven before creation, namely, the marriage of Christ to the church. - The mystery not revealed fully in the OT was that the one-flesh union of human marriage is a picture of the one-flesh union of Christ and his church. Piper

2. So, I am going to come at it from the heavenly meaning 1st, so as to really understand the earthly.

III. Slide13 HEAVENLY MARRIAGE Christ & The Church

A. Slide14a What Does It Mean to Be the Wife of Christ?

B. If we want to know what it means to be the church and to live like the church - then we need to learn from this passage what it means to be the wife of Christ. What does it mean to have Christ as our husband? [4 things that it means for us to be the wife of Christ]

1. Slide14b Christ Loved Us Before We Were Attractive (25-27)

   a) It means first that Christ loved us before we were attractive. Unlike how we choose wives. So, Christ did not choose His wife the way we do.

   b) He did not look for an attractive woman or an intelligent woman or a even a faithful woman. He chose an unlikely woman, and then He set out to make her attractive and wise and faithful at the cost of His own life.

   c) We already read, we were not chosen because He could see we were holy; He chose us because he planned to make us holy.

      (1) Before we could look pretty, or sound wise, or be faithful, the electing love of God chose us and the regenerating love of God raised us from the dead.

   d) So, Christ Loved Us Before We Were Attractive.

2. Slide14c Christ Gave Himself for the Church (25)

   a) Christ did not win his wife the way men do today. He paid a dowry for her. And the dowry was His life.

   b) And it was a self-sacrificing love that died for us while we were helpless and sinful and ungodly, even enemies. [as Rom.5:8 says, God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners]
(1) In other words, He did not simply die for an **unworthy** woman or for a **reluctant** woman, but for a woman who **found him repulsive**.

c) So, Christ Loved Us **Before** We Were Attractive. And, Christ **Gave** Himself for the Church.

3. **Slide14d Christ Loved the Church ****Uniquely** (28,29)

a) **In** Jesus’ **dying** he had the **church** especially in view. **It was for her - uniquely for her, especially for her, peculiarly for her** - that he died.

(1) God means for my wife Kelly to experience and to enjoy and to be strengthened and secured by a love coming from me, her husband, **that is peculiar to her, and different from the general** Christian love I may have for any other woman in the world.

(a) **It is a great sadness when a wife only knows herself loved with the love that her husband has for every woman.**

b) The powerful saving, cleansing, sanctifying, beautifying effects of the cross were directed to a fiancée who not only was **unattractive** in herself, **but** who found Christ Himself **repulsive** and did not have any intention of marrying him.

c) So, Christ Loved Us **Before** We Were Attractive. Christ **Gave** Himself for the Church. And, Christ Loved the Church **Uniquely**.

4. **Slide14e Christ Cleansed the Church from the Guilt of Sin** (25,26)

a) Being the wife of Christ means being cleansed by Him from the guilt of sin.

b) **Yes**, it is a **highly unflattering picture** that He must bathe us in order to marry us.

(1) We were **unattractive** not beautiful; we were enemies not friends; and we were dirty with the guilt & moral filth of sin all over us & inside of us.

c) The water of baptism is a representation of that **spiritual washing**.

(1) Notice that the cleansing from sin in vs.26 comes from the **self-sacrifice of Christ** in vs.25. So it is with baptism.

(2) It represents a **dying with Christ** as we are buried with him in water.

(3) It represents being **cleansed by Christ** through that very death in water.
(a) So immersion in water provides a perfect symbolic combination of _dying_ with Christ and being _cleansed_ by Christ.

(b) John combines them in 1Jn.1:7, _The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin._

(4) Baptism represents a _burial_ and a _bath_; because the _burial_ is the _bath._

d) Slide15 Let me give you one of the _most graphic biblical pictures_ of God's marriage to his people Israel. Ezekiel's Picture of God's Marriage to His People.

e) I think we can see in it a _picture_ of both the heavenly marriage & the earthly marriage. read Ez.16:1-14.

(1) Vs.4 This description of caring for a newborn in eastern culture is one of the _most complete statements in Scripture_. Upon birth, the child’s umbilical cord was cut & the midwife salted the child’s skin for antiseptic purposes. The child was washed, rubbed with oil, & wrapped in cloths for 7 days. The process repeated for 40 days.

(2) Vs.5 Thrown into an open field – Prob a ref to their sufferings in Egypt. She was in wretched shape when He called her & saved her.

f) That is what it means to be the wife of God or the wife of Christ. _Cast out, bloody, dirty, as good as dead_. And then the Son of God walks by. Stops. Looks at this disgusting, filthy, aborted thing as good as dead and covered with blood, and says, _"At last! My wife. My beloved. My chosen one. Live!"

(1) And he comes again when she is _grown_ and covers her nakedness and washes away her filth and makes a marriage covenant with her...and then beautifies her and prepares to present her to Himself in glory.

g) So, Christ Loved Us _Before_ We Were Attractive. Christ _Gave_ Himself for the Church. Christ Loved the Church _Uniquely_. And, Christ _Cleansed_ the Church from the Guilt of Sin.

IV. Slide16 EARTHLY MARRIAGE Husbands & Wives

A. _Wives_, Submit to a Dead Man. _Husbands_, Love a Blemished Bride [wives get 3 vs, husbands get 8]

B. Marriage is the __doing__ of God & the __display__ of God. [God Himself officiated the 1st Wedding]

C. 2 Distortions of marriage: _tyranny_ by the husband & _the usurping of authority_ of the wife
1. The opposite is equally bad. Errors of *passivity or laziness* on the husbands part. Becoming entirely passive (doormat) on the wife’s part.

2. Slide17 Wayne Grudem, *Husbands, therefore, should aim for loving, considerate, thoughtful leadership* in their families. *Wives* should aim for active, intelligent, joyful *submission* to their husbands’ authority.

D. Slide18a Submit – *to line up one’s self under.* Submission has the sense of voluntary yielding in love.

1. *Used in* a military sense of *soldiers* submitting to their superior. *Used in Jesus* subjecting Himself to His earthly parents. *Used in persons* to civil authorities. *Used in one Christian* to another.

E. Slide18b For a wife to submit to her husband is to play out the *Jesus role* in her marriage.

1. *It is an expression of a God-ordained role.*
   a) We see why in 1 Tim.2:13,14 *For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result.* [from Gen.3:16/women’s curse...*and he shall rule over you*]
   b) Slide18c/d The husband is the God-appointed leader of the home…and he is *held accountable* for that role. Also we remember this is *servant leadership,* which means being the head...he is responsible to *go 1st, to die-to-self 1st, to repent 1st, to love unconditionally 1st,* w/o waiting for, or insisting on, his wife’s submitting 1st

   (1) *Husbands...we are dead men. And dead men don’t whine.*
   *Dead men don’t live selfishly. Dead men don’t live uncaringly. And Dead men take up their cross daily and follow Jesus.*

   c) It’s interesting though, the *principle* is clear on the husband being a servant-leader, *but* the Bible gives almost *no details* about *how* that is expressed in concrete behavior. [bible doesn’t give us a list of things men & women must & must not do. eg. *Women working outside the home. Men doing the finances. Men not washing clothes, doing dishes, or changing poopy diapers*] Because? The Bible was written for all centuries & for all cultures.

2. *Note it’s inferred:* She’s *not* holy & clean. She’s *not* glorious. She’s *not* spot/wrinkle free. *Both Jesus’ bride & man’s bride.*
a) Yet note also, 2 things:

(1) **Slide19a** The bridal bath was when a Jewish bride enters the *mikvah* (ritual bath) in order to be purified prior to the marriage ceremony. The cleansing here is *unlike* baptism as it is *perpetual* and is *from the Word*.

(2) **Slide19b** SoS4:7 *You are altogether fair, my love, there is no blemish in you*

(a) **Experientially**, she is constantly needing washed in the Word. **Positionally** see her as blemish free. [serious problem if you only see & point out your wife’s blemishes...it only means you aren’t doing your job]

F. **Slide20a** In marriage we enter the *Great Dance* of the universe as we submit to our own distinct, divinely ordained gender roles.

1. We understand headship and submission correctly as we look at Jesus as the perfect model of both.

G. Every human culture has found a way to interpret *male headship* in a way that has marginalized and oppressed women.

H. Whatever you identify as...an egalitarian (equal), a feminist, a traditionalist, a complementarian, the *difference* between men and women become an unavoidable issue in every marriage.

1. **Everyone comes into marriage with their idea of roles.** These are gathered from our parents, current cultural norms, observing friends marriages, and fictional reading, TV, and movies.

I. **Slide20b** The first mention of gender in the Bible, is in the first chapter of the bible, and also is the first mention of humanity itself. *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Gen.1:27

1. Jerry Brown signed a bill into law *this last Monday* that provides people with the ability to request a new birth certificate with a 3rd option (M&F), now there is a *nonbinary* category. It is the first state to offer such an option. [non-binary = bi-gender, tri, pan, 3rd, fluid]

2. **Slide21a** Our gender is at the heart of our nature. Every cell of our bodies is stamped XX or XY.
J. Created equal? Yes! Equal in the image of God, equally blessed, equal in personhood, equal in importance, equal in value. But distinct/different in our roles.

K. We have a beautiful complementary union. Adam alone, not good.

1. Eve came from Adam’s rib and he was given the responsibility of naming her.
   a) Both of these elements are the basis for the NT statements about a husband’s headship.
2. Slide21b Gen.2:18 It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.
   a) Helper = ezer. Not merely assisting someone. Ezer is almost always used in the Bible to describe God himself. Or military help such as reinforcements, w/o which a battle would be lost. So it means to make up what is lacking in him with your strength. Woman was made to be a strong helper. Kathy Keller, The Meaning of Marriage, ch.6
   b) Comparable/neged (suitable) - lit. like opposite him. Like 2 pieces of the puzzle that fit together because they’re not exactly alike nor randomly different.
      (1) Marriage is a full embrace of the other sex.
   c) Often in homosexual relationships it’s conveyed, how much easier it is than dealing with someone of a different sex. This might be true.
      (1) A person of one’s own sex is not as likely to have as much otherness to embrace. But God’s plan for married couples involves embracing the otherness to make us unified.
         (a) Even at the atomic level, all the universe is held together by the attraction of positive and negative forces.
         (b) Christ embraced the ultimate Other...sinful humanity, and brought us into a new unity with Himself.

L. Slide22 Book Recommendation: I would like to recommend my favorite Marriage Book by Timothy & Kathy Keller, The Meaning of Marriage [Kathy wrote ch.6 on submission]

M. *****

N. Slide23a-g 7 Ways to Destroy Your Marriage. Then 7 Ways to Save It

O. Here are 7 ways to absolutely destroy your marriage that always works.

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1 Perry Noble, former pastor, New Spring Church
1. **Refuse To Communicate** [Talk about the person and not to them because doing so will be awkward]

2. **Refuse To Listen** [Interrupt your spouse during conflict to immediately correct them]

3. **Always Assume The Absolute Worse About Your Spouse** [Always carry your thought to its *fullest illogical conclusion*. Don’t EVER ask for an *explanation* or *clarification* as more open communication will lead to a stronger marriage]

4. **Make Sure The Goal Is To Win The Argument Rather Than Actually Settle The Dispute** [you must allow *pride* to dominate your thought life, thus unleashing a barrage of *accusations* that actually have nothing to do with your original argument/discussion] Win at all costs, even if it means saying things that hurt and wound deeply.

5. **You Must View Your Spouse As Your Enemy, NOT Your Friend** [view everything as a manipulative game. Make it a goal to *compete* with them and not actually complete them]

6. **Focus As Much As Possible On Their Inadequacies & Shortcomings** [You’ve GOT to talk about how much they are “not meeting your needs” and how they need to “step up and do better” as often as possible]

7. **Do NOT Have Fun Together** [You each need your own set of friends. Don’t have mutual friends. Don’t have date nights. Don’t do anything fun as a family]

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**P. Slide24a-g 7 ways to Save your Marriage**

1. Stop fighting **IN** it and start fighting **For** it.
2. Stop asking God to fix your spouse and ask Him to **fix you**.
3. **Ask For Help.** You’re NOT the 1st married couple that has ever struggled, you WON’T be the last. The problem is that (especially in church), we are so obsessed with *what people may say or think* that we allow our relationships to *implode*. We can’t allow our desire to *appear happy* distort the reality that we need help.
4. Ask the Lord to allow you to **see your spouse through His Eyes**.
5. **Choose** right now that you are always going to believe the best about your spouse. *Love always assumes the best about a person* (1 Cor.13)
6. Stop seeing your spouse as your *servant*, But rather your opportunity to *serve*
7. **Do whatever it takes** to make your marriage work.