

Small Group Guide THE GOSPEL IN MARRIAGE

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. Bart Box

May 29, 2011

Ephesians 5:22-33

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool, not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Sermon Outline

The Gospel in Marriage

Ephesians 5:22-33

The Mystery of the Gospel in Marriage

- The mystery of the gospel in marriage is ultimate.
 - The wife portrays the church to the world.
 - The husband portrays Christ to the world.
- The mystery of the gospel in marriage is profound.
 - Our Savior is exalted in gospel-centered marriage.
 - Our witness is enhanced in gospel-centered marriage.

The Marks of the Gospel in Marriage

- The mark of the gospel among wives is glad submission.
 - Submission that is willing.
 - Submission that is reverent.
 - Submission that is comprehensive.
- The mark of the gospel among husbands is sacrificial love.
 - Love that is costly.

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- Love that is unconditional.
- Love that is effective.
- Love that is tender.

The Motivation of the Gospel in Marriage

- In the gospel, we receive the mercy of our God.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:4-5)

- In the gospel, we have the help of the Spirit.

Be filled with the Spirit... (Ephesians 5:18)

Message Summary

Using Paul's letter to the Church at Ephesus, Dr. Bart Box preached a message directed toward husbands and wives intended to challenge the way they relate to each other because their relationship is intended to show the gospel to the world. While God does use other things, such as books or marriage retreats, to strengthen marriage, the gospel is the most central element to a biblical, God-honoring marriage. The mystery of the gospel in marriage is ultimate, meaning marriage itself is not ultimate, but Christ and His Church are ultimate. The wife portrays the Church to the world as the husband portrays Christ to the world (Eph. 5:22-27). This mystery is profound as our Savior is exalted and our witness is enhanced through marriages that are gospel-centered.

Next, Dr. Box looked at the marks of a gospel-centered marriage, or what marriages that show the gospel look like. Among wives, glad submission is key: submission that is willing, reverent, and comprehensive. As the Church desires to submit to Christ, wives should desire to submit to their husbands, as unto the Lord. This requires the grace of the gospel. It is not the worth of a husband that calls for his wife's submission, but the worth of the Lord. Among husbands, sacrificial love is key to marking a gospel-centered marriage: love that is costly, unconditional, effective, and tender. Essentially, a husband's love requires him to die to himself and put his wife's needs and well-being above his own. Even if she never shows him the submission described in the preceding verses, he should show her unconditional love, just as Christ has done for us. As Christ's goal is to present His bride to His Father, husbands should create and promote their wives' holiness and create an atmosphere in their homes where the gospel can flourish.

What motivates the gospel in marriage is receiving the mercy of our God (Eph. 2:4-5) and having the help of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). First and foremost, husbands and wives must be driven to the gospel to find the strength to believe and apply truth and receive His mercy. Living this example of marriage is impossible in human strength and must be lived out by the Spirit. Husbands and wives must be diligent to pray for each other and for themselves as they seek to live out the gospel.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review the Head (What does God want me to know?), Heart (What does God want me to value?), and Hands (What does God want me to do?) aspects of the message.

- How has God designed marriage to show the gospel to the world? How is this design of marriage different than what the world tells us the right design for marriage?
- How does viewing marriage as a tool to show the mystery of the gospel change the way you value marriage?

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- How should this view of marriage change the way you value and treat your spouse?
- Describe what “glad submission” looks like in a wife. Describe what it does not look like.
- Describe what “sacrificial love” looks like in a husband. Describe what it does not look like.
- Consider Ephesians 5:15-18 and 6:10-12. If marriages are under attack from within because of our sin and attack from without because of spiritual forces, how can ordering your marriage by the verses in today’s passage proclaim the truth of Christ’s reign over all?
- If the mark of the gospel in marriage is glad submission from a wife, how has our culture corrupted this truth? How can you guard yourself and your family from being deceived?
- If the mark of the gospel in marriage is sacrificial love from a husband, how has our culture corrupted this truth? How can you guard yourself and your family from being deceived?
- Wives: What is the biggest hindrance to your submission to your husband? What lie is at the root of that hindrance? How can you combat that lie with a specific Scripture? What does it mean to submit “as to the Lord?”
- Husbands: What is the biggest hindrance to you showing your wife sacrificial love? What lie is at the root of that hindrance? How can you combat that lie with a specific Scripture? What does it mean to “give oneself up” for your wife?
- Think about your parents’ relationship and the ways it did or did not show the gospel to you as you grew up. Why is it significant that Paul used the relationship between Christ and His Church as the ultimate example of marriage instead of any human marriage?
- Have you experienced a gospel-centered marriage drawing someone (or yourself) to Christ? Share that experience.
- Is a gospel-centered marriage possible between two people who are not walking in the Spirit? Why is walking in the Spirit vital to husbands and wives fulfilling their roles to their spouses and showing the gospel to the world?

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.

Weekly Prayer Focus . . .

- **Lives and Church:** *Pray this week for the marriages within our faith family, whether they be your own or another’s. Ask God to grant His grace for the gospel to be lived out in our marriages.*
- **Local:** *This week we are praying for Biblical Marriage Institute. We are also praying for Center Crest Baptist Church, Tim Evans, Pastor.*

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- **Global:** *This week we are praying for Tom H., our field partner in East Asia. We are also praying for Brook Hills teams in India, Macedonia, and Southeast Asia.*