

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD: IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Text: Ephesians 5:18-33

The command of Jesus is to seek first the kingdom of God which means that our highest priority in life is to come into alignment with God's rule. The portion of scripture we just read is about how marriage is supposed to be lived by two Christians in God's kingdom. At the time this was written, it was revolutionary because in the Greco-Roman world of that time wives were treated as property, while men frequently sought sexual gratification outside the marriage. Ephesus was the epicenter of the cult of Artemis. While the cult empowered women to be priestesses and elevated women to independence, and competitive roles. So, the commands given by the Holy Spirit to them through Paul were completely against their culture.

Fast forward 1950 years to today and the God's commands for kingdom marriage is still against the culture. The western world has been shaped by feminism, the absence of fathers in the home, redefined gender roles, living together instead of marrying, gay marriage, declaring masculinity to be toxic, and rebellion against the traditional patriarchal system. The divorce rate in America is high, but what is more alarming is that according to a study done by Barna, Christians experience divorce as often as the general population. The top contributing factors being infidelity, lack of commitment, financial struggles, unrealistic expectations or marrying too young. Now most of these problems could have been avoided or navigated better if folk would put their marriage under God's rule.

God is the maker of marriage – Marriage is not an idea that man came up with, it's a covenant relationship that God instituted. It was God that looked at Adam and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone". God made a suitable help for Adam and then joined them together in the first marriage ceremony ever. People want to downplay marriage by referring to it as "a little piece of paper". Marriage is not just a mere legal contract, it is a covenant of an unconditional, lifelong promise made before God to love, honor, and remain faithful. Since God made us and marriage, He knows what is best in marriage for us.

Marriage is to be a model – Paul frequently compares the husbands and wives to Christ and his church. The priority of a Christian couple is not their happiness, it's to be visible representations of the Lord and his bride. **Romans 14:17** For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Happiness in a

marriage is a byproduct of obeying God's commands. When Christians come into alignment with God's commands for marriage, there is righteousness, peace and joy in it. God's goal is for us to be light so He wants us to model the love and reverence that exists between Christ and his church.

Marriage as a ministry – The word ministry means “to serve”. The husband is to sacrificially love his wife selflessly. To do that he must put her needs before his own. The husband models Christ and even though Christ is Lord, he came to serve. He served food, washed feet, put other's needs above his own tiredness. He told his disciples that the greatest among them is he who serves. The wife is to submit to the headship of her husband out of her love for Christ. The church is to be in submission to Christ because he is Lord, but also as a willing response to his great love for us. Wives are to reverence their husbands. That means to respect and admire them with love and devotion.

How do we live out these commands – By being filled with the Spirit. Before we can live out the high demands of God, husbands and wives must first submit themselves to the Holy Spirit before they can be filled by him. When we submit to God's authority first, He gives us the power we need to obey the commands He has given us. If we don't submit to God and be filled with the Spirit, the commands are impossible for the flesh.