

LIGHTHOUSE GROUP CURRICULUM

Ephesians 5:21-33

LEADER'S STUDY

It's a Mystery

Ephesians 5:21-33

What is happening?

Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus to give clarity to some of the more difficult truths of God. He speaks of “mysteries” in 3:1-8 and 5:32. These mysteries are simply truths that have been present from the beginning, but only hinted at in the Old Testament and now fulfilled through Christ. In 5:21, Paul begins by saying that we are all to submit to one another in the church because of what Christ has done for us. He then describes what this looks like in marriage relationships. Lest wives bristle at the idea of submitting to their husbands, he reminds husbands that they are to cherish their wives as they do their own selves—in other words, to submit to her needs. This is in contrast to the usual view of marriage as something we enter into in hopes of pleasing ourselves.

Where is the gospel?

Husbands are instructed to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. That's the epitome of self-sacrificial love, and a super-high standard for a man to follow. Jesus submitted Himself to the Father's will in everything He did, and wives are called to submit themselves to their husbands—and that's no easier. How can any of us do that? It's not quite so hard when we realize what a privilege it is to portray the gospel message through our everyday lives and all our relationships. From the very beginning, God designed marriage to be reflection of the gospel. Our relationships are a way for His people to share the gospel with the world through love, unity of purpose, and self-sacrifice. As followers of Jesus, we are the “bride” of Christ. He gave himself for us so that we can follow Him and, in humility, lay down our lives for one another.

As you prepare for this week, ask yourself questions like these: How do I respond to Jesus giving His life for me? How does Jesus Cherish me as His treasure? Do I cherish others this way? Do I embrace the idea of submitting to Jesus as his bride? If you're married: do you see your marriage as an opportunity to demonstrate the gospel? Do you see your spouse as being there to serve you, or as someone you have the privilege of serving? Why does Paul call this a mystery? If you're single: are you willing to hold out for someone who shares this view of marriage? How does this truth affect all my relationships? How is God calling you to think and to live differently? How does this change your perspective today? How is God calling you to respond based on this scripture?

Spend some time reading and meditating on this passage as you prepare for your meeting. Be willing to share this with your group and invite them to join you in sharing how God is asking them to respond to His word. Be willing to share areas that He is calling you to “follow Him” and make clear “I” statements about how you are going to align with Him.

Some helpful scriptures: Gen. 2:15-25; Mt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 6:12-20. What other places in scripture speak this same truth?

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INTENTIONAL BIBLE READING

READ Ephesians 5:21-33

and meditate on it.

Read in the ESV or similar word-for-word translation.

Read it again in the NLT to get a thought-for-thought perspective. (The New Living Translation is particularly helpful with this passage)

Try to summarize the passage in your own words.

Every verse of scripture points to the gospel. Look for how this passage points to Jesus and what He has done.

POTENTIAL STUDY QUESTIONS

These are just questions you might ask to help your group discussion. Don't feel like you need to answer all of these as a group

What is significant, surprising or confusing from these verses?

What seems to be the main point of this letter?

How does this portion of scripture point to Jesus and the gospel?

What parts of this passage are challenging to your current way of thinking?

What did you discover or learn about God and His character from this passage?

What parts of this passage can you relate to?

Look at one or two key words and define them really clearly, then look at them in context with that definition. Does this change your understanding?

Why did God bring me to this scripture today?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

How is God calling you to obey, based on this passage?

or

What is your "I will" statement?

(Encourage everyone to steer clear of "we" or "us" or "Christians" statements)

With whom are you going to share what you have learned?

(This is a critical part of growth that is often overlooked. If we can share it with someone else it means we really understand it, it cements it in our own minds, it makes us accountable to the truth and it blesses the one who hears it. Rom 10:17)

Based on this passage, what can we pray about and how should we pray?