

# groups.

— Notes | February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## Marriage Series: What is God's Design For Marriage?

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God's design for marriage reflects the gospel. In Ephesians 5, Paul points us toward relationships formed by the standard Jesus set—a standard not rooted in control, fear, or harm. However, our past experiences, often painful, can make words like *submission* or *authority* within relationships feel uncomfortable. Scripture invites us to allow God to reshape how we understand His design. Jesus sacrificed first, and our response is surrender to Him. When submission and sacrifice flow from Christ, they become expressions of deep love.

### Key Scripture | Ephesians 5:21-33

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.<sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing<sup>[b]</sup> her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—<sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

### Related Scriptures

— Ephesians 4:1-5, Ephesians 5:20,

### Icebreakers:

— Q: What is one small quality you appreciate in the people you trust?

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## Key Thoughts and Reflections:

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### I. Scripture and Our Story

Q: How have your own experiences or opinions shaped the way you read the Bible?

Q: In what ways have past relationships, family dynamics, or experiences shaped how you view God's design for marriage?

Q: When you hear words like submission, authority, or headship, what reactions come up for you? What might those reactions reveal about areas that might need healing or rewiring?

### II. Submission to Christ

Q: Have you ever associated submission with suppression, control, or loss of voice? How has that shaped the way you view submission to Christ and/or in marriage?

Q: How does remembering that Jesus gave Himself first change the way we think about sacrifice and submission?

Q: How does submitting and following in Jesus' footsteps reshape the way we think about power, leadership, and trust in relationships?

### III. Start With Yourself

Q: Where are you most tempted to focus on what someone else should be doing instead of what God might be inviting you to do?

Q: What might change if you focused more on your obedience than someone else's behavior?

Q: What is one thing you can control this week? Some examples could be your attitude, your response to someone, or obedience.

## Get Practical

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Grab a pen and a piece of paper. Write your name (or if you are creative, draw the best stick figure of yourself) and draw a circle around it. Inside the circle, write down areas of your life where God might be asking you to grow, obey, or surrender. Outside the circle, write anything or anyone you've been trying to control or fix.

This week, focus on what's inside your circle and invite the Holy Spirit into this through prayer. Take one step of obedience or trust in that area.