

GOD'S WORD ON MARRIAGE

Learning about Christ, we also learn about marriage

Trinity Lutheran Church

Summer Bible Study Series

August 2012

Session 1:

*Marriage: God Supplies for Man's Need
and Defines Marriage*

INTRODUCTION:

- *"The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work"*
- *"Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage"*
- *"Love and War: Finding the Marriage You've Dreamed Of"*
- *"Men Are Like Waffles – Women Are Like Spaghetti: Understanding and Delighting in Your Differences"*
and of course, don't forget about:
- *"Making Marriage Work for Dummies"*
and
- *"The Complete Idiot's Guide the Perfect Marriage"*

If you were to do a book search on "marriage" at "Amazon.com" these would be six of the more than 66,000 book results! The implication with so many marriage advice books is that married couples need advice. And indeed advice is needed! The current divorce rate in America for first marriages is between 41-50%, about 60% for second marriages, and over 70% for third time marriages. The statistics show what every married couple already knows - marriage is hard! In an attempt to help, countless psychologists, sociologists, marriage counselors, therapists, and even clergy have authored books with marriage advice. However, the fact each year *another* set of marriage advice books are published tells us that no one has been able to solve the problems that plague every married couple.

Recognizing our need, let us seek advice from the Author of marriage - Almighty God Himself! We will turn to His Book, that we may gain heavenly wisdom about the closest relationship that exists on marriage - between a husband and wife.

GOD SHOWS OUR NEED AND WELL SUPPLIES IT!

Throughout Scripture, God often shows a need before He shows how He is going to take care of it. Before Jesus fed the 5,000, He first asked Philip, **"Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"** (Jn 6:6) John reveals that Jesus knew what He was going to do (miraculously feed the multitude with five barely loaves and two small fish), but He wanted to test Philip. He wanted Philip to think about the huge need before them (5,000 hungry people), before He showed how He was going to fulfill that need.

Our God does this also when it comes to our most important need - salvation. First of all, God tells us what He requires of us:

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 "...What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?"

God is perfectly clear in what He wants from us - an "all-in" commitment to Him and His commandments. His commandments sounds simple enough. Holiness almost seems achievable.

However, when we actually compare our lives with God holy requirements we immediately see a GREAT need. We have not been fully committed to God with ALL our heart and ALL our soul. We have not always walked in His ways and kept His commandments. So in His Law, God not only makes known to us what He requires of us, but He also shows us how we have failed Him:

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Having shown us how great our sin is, He then shows us how His love is even greater by supplying us with a Savior!

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

John 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

1 Timothy 1:15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

The love of God is clearly seen in WHAT He did and WHO He did it for. He sent His own beloved Son to die in order to save unworthy sinners such as ourselves. By His Law, God showed us our need - forgiveness, life, and salvation. In His Gospel, He shows us how He took care of our greatest need by sending His Son, Jesus, to save us!

Romans 5:20b-21 But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THIS is our God - He shows us our need and then well supplies it! Understanding this quality of our God, may help us better understand and appreciate marriage.

Marriage: God Shows Man His Need

Genesis is the book of beginnings. In fact, the word “genesis” itself means, “beginning.” In Genesis God reveals to us the truth about the beginning of all things, including marriage. As we dig deep into God’s Word in Genesis about marriage, I’d encourage spouse to reflect on how you can apply these words to your role as a husband or wife.

Over the course of the first six days of Creation, God brought all things into being. On the sixth day, He created the jewel of His creation - human beings.

Genesis 1:27: So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In chapter 2 of Genesis, the LORD goes into detail about the way in which “***male and female He created them.***” When God created the animals, He created male and female of each kind at the same time - male dog and female dog; male monkey and female monkey; bull and cow; etc. But when it came to the creation of man, God did things a little different:

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

Rather than just commanding, “Let there be humans,” the Almighty was more intimately involved in our creation. God Himself formed man from the dust and breathed life into him. And at this point on day six, He only created one human - a male human (Adam).

When God looks at man, whom He has just formed from the dust of the ground, He sees something which unlike everything else He has created, He says is not good. Something is missing from His perfect creation:

Genesis 2:18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

The “***not good***” part of God’s creation was the aloneness of man (Adam). Once again, we see the Almighty HIMSELF determined to remedy what was lacking. HE would supply what was lacking. HE would make a helper comparable to him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1) WHAT DO CAN WE TAKE AWAY FROM GOD’S USE OF THE WORD “HELPER?”

2) WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORD “COMPARABLE?”

Hebrew: “as over against” Opposite to each other are set things to be compared (Isaiah 40:17), those which answer to each other, those which are alike. (Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon)

Once again, we find that God sees man’s needs and desires to fulfill that need. But before He does, He first shows man what he is missing.



Genesis 2:19-20 ***Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them [lit: caused them to go] to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.***

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

3) HOW DID GOD SHOW ADAM WHAT HE WAS MISSING? WHY?

4) CAN YOU THINK OF WAYS/EXAMPLES IN WHICH GOD MAY HAVE DONE THIS WITH YOU? (Especially in regards to the topic of marriage?)

God knew it was not good for man to be alone, and now Adam realized that he was alone. All the animals had gone by, and he did not see anything in which he could see something like him (“comparable to him”).

GOD SUPPLIES THE NEED:

Having shown to Adam what he is lacking, God immediately fills that need.

Genesis 2:21-22 ***And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.***

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

5) WHY ARE THE CLOSING WORDS OF VERSE 22, “AND HE BROUGHT HER TO THE MAN,” SO SIGNIFICANT AS WE CONSIDER THE TOPIC OF MARRIAGE?

Matthew 19:6 ***"So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."***

Genesis 2:23 **And Adam said:**

**"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman (Hebrew: "Eesh-ah"),
Because she was taken out of Man (Hebrew: "Eesh")."**

FINALLY! Now God had supplied what was lacking in His creation and what was lacking in man's life! A helper comparable to him! This truly was love at first sight and marriage at first sight as God "brought her to the man." God the Father gave her away.



*For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife...
Genesis 2:24*

MARRIAGE DEFINED:

Having expanded on the creating events that took place on day six of Creation, Moses, inspired by the Holy Spirit, then gives the Creator's definition of marriage:

Genesis 2:24 **Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**


Let's explore this verse a little more in-depth. Marriage, in God's eyes, involves:

FIRST: _____

This means: _____

NEXT: man is _____

The Hebrew word for "joined/cleave" (King James Version) very rich in meaning.

	<p><u>Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon:</u> "to cleave, to adhere, specially firmly, as if with glue, to be glued, hence to be attached to any one, to be lovingly devoted, e.g. to a king, to God, to a wife; 2) ["to attach oneself to any thing"], to come upon"</p> <p><u>Dr. Emerson Eggerichs:</u> "When Scripture speaks of 'cleaving,' the idea in the Hebrew is to cling, hold, or keep close." ("Love and Respect")</p>
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THIRDLY after the leaving and the cleaving: _____

By this the LORD is referring to: _____


God's design for marriage is one man being joined to one woman for a life-long relationship as husband and wife. Jesus Himself emphasizes that this continues to be God's will about marriage:

Matthew 19:4-6 **And (Jesus) answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."**

THE BLESSINGS OF MARRIAGE

While we may frequently talk about the struggles that come in marriage, but God instituted it for our man's blessing. He saw that it was not good for man to be alone. He made a helper comparable to him. That helper for man was woman. And of this relationship Jesus says:

Matthew 19:6 **Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.**



So one of God's blessings in marriage is:


Another blessing we find in the phrase, **"they shall become one flesh."** (Gen 2:24) We also learn from Scripture:

1 Corinthians 7:2, 9 **Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. ...For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.**
Hebrews 13:4 **Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.**

Another one of God's blessings in marriage is:

A third blessings which we can speak of in marriage:

Psalms 127:3 **Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.**
Psalms 128:3 **Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine In the very heart of your house, Your children like olive plants All around your table.**
Genesis 1:28 **Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth..."**



A third blessing from God in marriage is:

What a loving God we have, who so graciously provides for all our needs. In Jesus, our need for forgiveness and salvation is graciously supplied. In marriage God supplies our need for companionship, sexual happiness, and children!

Next week we plan to examine the roles the Creator gives to husbands and wives in marriage.



GOD'S WORD ON MARRIAGE

Learning about Christ, we also learn about marriage

Session 2:

"The Two Become One: Now What?"

The God Intended Roles of Husband and Wife

Weddings are exciting. The bride, all dressed up in her beautiful, white gown, walks down the aisle and is tearfully given away by her father. The groom, looking sharp in his tuxedo, takes his bride-to-be by the arm up to the altar. The vows are exchanged and rings are placed on each other's hand. The pastor then proclaims, "I now pronounce you husband and wife!" Together they walk back down the aisle, arm-in-arm, to the smiles of the congregation.

But soon reality sets in. The gown and tux are put away, and life begins. They are now, as the preacher pronounced, "husband and wife." They are no longer two individuals "doing their own thing." They are now, as we heard the LORD proclaim last week, "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The decisions and actions of the one directly affects the other. From finances to recreation, meal plans to job transfers, the simple process of living changes because they are no longer two but one.

So how exactly is this relationship as "one flesh" work? Many couples have struggled in their marriage to understand what their role is in this relationship. Often times there is strife because one spouse is not fulfilling his/her God intended role. Either that, or a spouse is trying fill a role that God intended for his/her spouse.

Thanks be to God, as the Author and Creator of marriage, He does not leave us guessing. The God who says to the church in Corinth, "***Let all things be done decently and in order,***" (1 Cor 14:40) also speaks of order in marriage and the home. He defines the roles of husband and wife, and how they can function in this relationship in a God-pleasing way. But more than just talk about it, God shows husbands and wives what He is talking about in marriage. He shows us Christ and His bride, the Church. And from THAT relationship husband and wife learn all they need to know about God's will for them as a Christian couple.

Let's first look at:

JESUS CHRIST - The "Perfect Husband"

As the Lord talks to us about marriage in Ephesians 5, He compares it to the relationship Christ has with His bride, the Church. When we look at Jesus, He truly is the perfect husband. In Him we find the ultimate example of selflessness. Jesus always put the needs of others ahead of His own. Frequently in the Gospel account of Jesus being hungry and tired, and yet putting His own needs aside and truly "loving his neighbor as himself" by healing and teaching.



Consider Jesus prayer after having been unjustly arrested, tried, condemned to death, and nailed hand and foot to the cross:

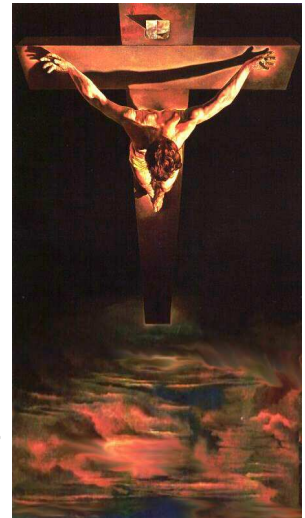
Luke 23:33-34 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Clearly, Jesus did love His neighbor as Himself - even more than Himself. He was constantly putting our needs ahead of His own. Nowhere do we see that more clearly than on the cross.

Galatians 2:20 (Jesus) loved me and gave Himself for me.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us.

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."



THE CHURCH - An Ugly, Soiled Bride

What makes this act of love even more remarkable is WHO exactly Jesus was laying down His life for. He came to "seek and to save the LOST." He came to call SINNERS to repentance. He came to save us! And it wasn't as though we were such great, noble, and righteous people that Jesus could not help BUT lay down His life for us. Listen to what God saw when He looked upon us:

Psalm 14:2-3 The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

Isaiah 63:6 We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

***NOTE:** to get the full force of what Isaiah is writing here, we have to turn to the Hebrew, which paints a pretty graphic picture. The "filthy rags" are literally "menstruation" or "menstrual cloths." Even our best, our "righteousnesses," are indeed filthy in the eyes of the most holy God.*

CLEARLY, we were not so glorious in Jesus' eyes that He would want to give His very self to save us. It was as though, in God's eyes, we were a disease infested, spiritual prostitute - giving ourselves over to all sort of sin. Yet, what did Jesus do for His "filthy" bride?

Romans 5:6-10 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Jesus died for us! He died to:

- “justify us” (declare us not guilty)
- “save” us
- “reconcile us to God” (give us a right relationship with God)

Though Jesus was and is true God, above all and against whom we had sinned, He put our need for justification, salvation, and reconciliation ahead of His own needs. He left heaven and gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

THE CHRIST-MINDED COUPLE

But what does this have to do with marriage? For the Christ-believer it has everything to do with our lives as His children, ESPECIALLY when it comes to our relationship with our spouse! Listen to what Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi:

Philippians 2:3-8 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Paul points all Christians to Christ and shows them the depth of his humiliation (humbling Himself). Rather than selfishly putting our needs ahead of everyone else, remember how Christ put YOUR needs for justification, salvation, and reconciliation ahead of His own bodily needs. The world teaches us that in order to be great we need to climb to the top of the pyramid, on the back of others, and be the “king of the hill.” But Jesus has something else to say about greatness:

Matthew 20:25-28 "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

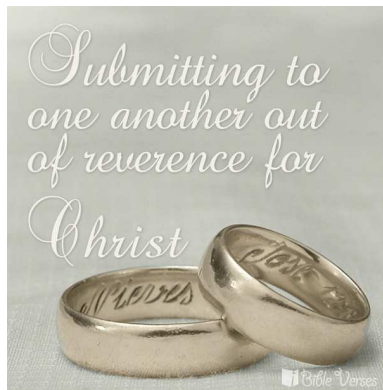
With this foundation, let's now take a look at what the Lord reveals to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5.

SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

When Paul writes about God's will for husbands and wives in marriage in Ephesians 5, the lead-in verse gets at the very thing we've been considering:

Ephesians 5:21 **Submitting to one another in the fear of Christ.** (NIV)

This verse first addresses all Christ-believers about their relationships with one another. Rather than taking the selfish and self-centered worldly view of "me first," Paul urges us to be "Christ-minded" and put underneath everyone else - put their needs ahead of your own.



Pastor David Reim on "Submit:"

"SUBMIT is primarily a military term, to rank under. An officer of lower rank is completely subject to a higher ranking officer, obeying what he commands and not talking back. ...In our text, the word is always used in the middle voice. In the middle it is - 'submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love.' This describes a willing recognition of rank and cheerfully accepting it." ("And the Two Shall Become One: Married Life in Christ," pg 9)

Notice the reason WHY the Christian willingly submits to the other. Paul does NOT say, "Because they deserve it." There may be no quality about the other person that makes the Christian WANT to submit. Rather, this willing, mutual submission of Christians is based solely in "the fear of Christ." The reverence and adoration for Christ and all He has done for us is the basis of our submitting to one another. As we consider what God says about husbands and wives, let us keep in mind how Christ became the servant of all in order to save us! **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."**

Discussion Questions:

Imagine for a moment, that in every marriage, both husband and wife, "Submitted to one another in the fear of Christ." What would such a marriage look like?

If that were the case, what do you suppose the divorce rate would look like?

What, then is the chief problem in marriage?

This, **"submitting to one another in the fear of Christ,"** sets the stage for what Paul is about to say directly to Christian wives and husbands in Ephesians 5:22-33. Remember, it is all centered in **"the fear of Christ"** - faith in and adoration of Jesus Christ, your Savior from sin!

WIVES:

Paul, first addresses wives in verses 22-24:

***“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.
For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church;
and He is the Savior of the body.
Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ,
so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”***

Discussion Questions:

1) First of all, which spouse is Paul addressing? _____



Who is Paul NOT addressing here? _____

Why is this so important to keep in mind? _____

2) What attitude is the Christian wife to have in the marriage relationship? _____

3) What is the wife’s motivation to submit to her husband? _____

4) What “role-model” is the wife given for this submission? _____

5) What kind of relationship does the Church have with Christ? _____

6) Why do you suppose these verses are difficult to apply? _____

Pastor D. Reim on the husband being the head of the wife:

“Christ has created His Church to be His body. He is the Head that rules and controls all the functions of the body. He gives direction, through His word, to His body. The body is to joyfully follow Him and do whatever He says. When members of Christ’s body do not follow His leading they cause troubles for themselves. When the members of His body do submit to Him, they are blessed richly in every way. So it is to be with the wife, she recognizes her husband as her God appointed head and willingly follows his direction. Where the wife does not recognize and follow her head, the family is paralyzed or handicapped. But where the wife does submit to her own husband as to the Lord, she gives honor to her Lord, her husband, her church, herself, and her family is blessed.” (Pg. 17-18)

On submitting to their own husbands in everything:

"The submission of the wife to the husband is to be complete. She does not have to decide when to be submissive. "In everything" is all inclusive and total. It is assumed that a Christian husband is not going to ask his wife to do anything that is against God's will. If that is the case then Peter's words apply, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). However, even where obedience to Christ may require a wife not to follow the leading of her husband, that should still be done in a spirit of meekness and submission. Perhaps reminding him of the Lord's will and her conviction to it will convince the husband and help him to be a better head. There are many times when the wife can and does help the husband to be the God-fearing head that he should be by her meek submissiveness to the Lord. With an unbelieving husband this will be much more difficult. However, in this very way, Peter says, "without a word, they may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1Peter 3:1)

"Submitting to her husband "in everything" does not mean that the wife should not say anything when she does not agree with her husband. It also does not mean that she is not to be consulted about matters pertaining to her and the family. She is to fulfill her role as a help meet to her husband. To stand by him and the family through thick and thin, and to support him in every way she can. As a helpmate her understanding and advice is very much needed and appreciated by a Christian husband.

"Willingly following God's order is not only pleasing to the Lord, but it is the way to enjoy the blessed, happy marriage and secure homes that God has in mind for us. God's order is not intended for the exaltation of man and suppression of woman, or visa versa, but for the completion and fulfillment of both, finding their fullness in each other the way God created them to be." (Pg 19-20)

Again, the relationship of a believing wife to her Savior Jesus, is to be reflected in her relationship with her husband. She gladly and willingly submits to her husband, whether or not he is deserving of such submission, because in doing so she is really reflecting her relationship with her Lord.

HUSBANDS!

Don't worry, wives, the Lord has something to say about husbands and their role in this relationship as well! Verse 25-32:

- 25) Husbands, love your wives,
just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,**
- 26) that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,**
- 27) that He might present her to Himself a glorious church,
not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing,
but that she should be holy and without blemish.**
- 28) So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies;
he who loves his wife loves himself.**
- 29) For no one ever hated his own flesh,
but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.**
- 30) For we are members of His body,
of His flesh and of His bones.**
- 31) "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother
and be joined to his wife,
and the two shall become one flesh."**
- 32) This is a great mystery,
but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

Discussion Questions:

7) Which spouse is the Paul addressing in these verses? _____

Who is Paul NOT addressing here? _____

Why is this so important to keep in mind? _____

8) What attitude is the Christian husband to have toward his wife? _____

9) What does Paul NOT tell the husband to do or be? _____

10) Who is the husband's role model? _____

Understanding the Word "Love":

In English, the word "love" can cover a lot of meanings. "I love pizza." "I love my best friend." "I love my wife." While the same English word is being used, we understand that the speaker has a different kind of love for each of those uses (hopefully!). However the Greek language has three different words that might be rendered as "love" in English.



"Eros" (erwj) - We get our English word for "erotic" from this Greek word. It is a passionate love, with sensual desire and longing.

"Philia" (filia) - Used in the English "Philiadelphia" = The City of Brotherly Love. "Philia" is love that two friends share with each other. A mutual love and usually conditional.

"Agape" (agaph) - This is a higher, nobler love. It is unconditional, sacrificial love. Love that gives and gives and gives. It is love that does something. It is "God so loved (agape) the world, that He gave His only begotten Son..." (Jn 3:16)

11) Husbands, what type of love do you suppose Paul calls on you to have for your wife? Passionate love? Friendly love? Or unconditional, sacrificial love?

12) What does Paul say Christ had do to for His bride the church? _____

13) Why is this important for husbands to keep in mind? _____

14) How is the husband to view his wife? _____

15) How should/will this cause him to treat her? _____

The Church certainly was not all “dolloed up” for Christ. She was filthy. Stained with sin through and through. The Church was not lovable. She was rebellious and disobedient. Yet Christ loved her unconditionally and sacrificially. He came to cleanse her from her sin-soiled condition and make her His bride - a glorious bride! In the same way, husbands, be mindful of Christ’s love for you and apply that to your bride, especially when she may not appear very lovable to you!

CONCLUDING VERSE:

As Paul closes this important section on the relationship between Christ and His Church, reflected in the relationship of husband and wife, he gets very specific. Verse 33 of Ephesians 5:

***Nevertheless let each one of you in particular
so love his own wife as himself,
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.***

16) Why might Paul see the need to emphasize again that husbands are to love their own wives as themselves?

17) Why might Paul see the need to tell wives to “respect” their husbands?

“Love and Respect” are two key words that we hope to explore more in-depth next week as we examine applying God’s Word to our own individual situations.



GOD'S WORD ON MARRIAGE

Learning about Christ, we also learn about marriage

Session 3:

“Love and Respect”

Applying God's Word to Our Relationship



Hank and Stella were about to celebrate their tenth wedding anniversary, and Stella began to wonder if Hank would remember. There had been plenty of times during the past decade when he had forgotten their anniversary altogether. No matter what Stella did - little hints, bigger hints - Hank would miss it. But on their tenth wedding anniversary, with no hints at all, he remembers! He makes a beeline for Hallmark and is soon gazing upon all those racks full of greeting cards. One colorful card quickly catches his eye. He skims the words - they are perfect! He thinks, *This card is her - no doubt about it.* He grabs it off the shelf, pays the clerk, and hurries home rejoicing. Finally, he has remembered their anniversary, and a special one it will be too.

Stella is there when he arrives home, so Hank sneaks the card into another room, signs it, and quickly writes her name on the envelope. He even adds a couple of tiny hearts over her name as an extra touch. Then Hank comes out and hands Stella her tenth anniversary card. She beams from ear to ear. She is so happy - finally he has remembered! She rips open the card and begins to read . . . and then her face falls. The eyes that had been bright with loving energy turn cold. Her beaming countenance becomes sour and dark.

“What’s wrong?” Hank asks.

“Nothing,” Stella shoots back.

“There is, too. What’s wrong?”

“No, there’s nothing wrong.”

“But there is - I can see it. What is it?”

“Well, it’s not bad . . . for a birthday card.”

Can you guess where the conversation is headed from here?

“You’re kidding!” replies Hank, grabbing the card from her hand. **“No way . . . unbelievable!”**

“No, YOU’RE unbelievable!”

Hank blinks in the face of his wife’s very real anger. He knows he is full of good will. He has remembered their tenth anniversary. He has brought her a present as well as a card. **“Well, honey, I made an honest mistake. Give me a break.”**

“Give you a break? An honest mistake - oh, it was an honest mistake, all right, because you just don’t care. Do you know what? If you took your car in to be detailed and they put a stripe on the side that was even a fraction of an inch off, you would notice that, right? Why? Because you care about it. But you don’t care about our anniversary. You don’t care about me!”

Hank can’t believe it. He is moving from feeling guilty to getting angry. What he thought would be a loving celebration of their tenth anniversary has become a conflict that is escalating fast.

“Hey, I made an honest mistake, all right? Give me a break. Good grief!”

“You buy me a birthday card on our tenth anniversary, and you expect me not to be upset? I’d rather you hadn’t bought me any card at all!”

Hank has been on the defensive, but now his pulse rate is up. He has tried to do the loving thing, and all Stella can do is say nasty things. **“You know what? The way you’re talking I’m glad I got you a birthday card for your anniversary!”** And with that brilliant parting shot, he storms out of the room, slamming the door behind him. Approximately two minutes have passed since he handed her the card. This couple, a husband and wife who truly love each other, have come home expecting to spend a wonderful, romantic evening together. Instead, they end up stomping to opposite ends of the house, staring out the windows into the darkness, wondering how it had ever come to this, and thinking, *This is crazy!*

Adapted from “Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs”

by, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs; pp. 24-27

Sound familiar? Maybe it wasn't an anniversary or had nothing to do with a card, but what couple can't, in some way, identify with Hank and Stella.

Discussion Questions:

<p>1) <i>HUSBANDS, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PROBLEM WITH STELLA?</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>DO YOU THINK HIS REACTION WAS JUSTIFIED? WHY?</i></p> <hr/>
<p>2) <i>WIVES, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PROBLEM WITH HANK?</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>DO YOU THINK STELLA'S REACTION WAS JUSTIFIED? WHY?</i></p> <hr/>

The Scriptural concepts we discussed in our last session seem simple enough to grasp. God desires that wives submit to their husband as to the Lord, and that husbands love their wives as Christ loved the Church and died to save it. As simple and straight forward as God's Word is to married couple, they are often difficult to apply - especially in the heat of the moment, when we feel like our spouse is not fulfilling his/her God-given roles in our marriage.

<p>3) <i>HUSBANDS, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PROBLEM WITH <u>HANK</u>?</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>LOVING HER AS CHRIST LOVES THE CHURCH, WHAT SHOULD HIS RESPONSE HAVE BEEN?</i></p> <hr/>
<p>4) <i>WIVES, WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE PROBLEM WITH <u>STELLA</u>?</i></p> <hr/> <p><i>SUBMITTING "AS TO THE LORD," HOW SHOULD SHE HAVE RESPONDED?</i></p> <hr/>

“The Crazy Cycle”

As the Apostle Paul concludes his discussion on the God-intended roles of husbands and wives in Ephesians 5, he summarizes:

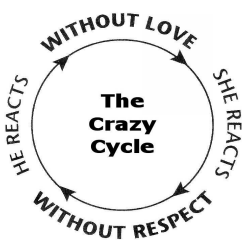
***“Nevertheless let each one of you in particular
so love his own wife as himself,
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (Eph 5:33)***

God, who created man and woman, knows their innermost needs. He created them to be different - to have different basic needs. In a marriage and family they were intended to complement each other. A woman, typically, does not need to be told to love her husband. Women are, by nature, loving, nurturing beings. They desire love in return. They desire to know that they are cared about. They desire love in word and in action.

Men, on the other hand, could function just fine in life without holding hands and being told how much someone loved them. On the other hand, men deeply desire respect. Respect at work, respect from his children, and few things build up a man more than to hear that his wife respects him.

Yet, when a husband feels like he’s getting no respect from his wife, he feels no reason to give her love she desires so much. On the other hand, when a wife does not feel loved by her husband she sees no reason to give him the respect he desires. We saw that with Hank and Stella. Stella felt that Hanks card selection and reaction to her, was unloving. “If he loved me, wouldn’t he have put more time and effort into selecting an anniversary card? If he loved wouldn’t he have reacted in a different way when he saw how this affected me, instead of laughing it off? He is acting like a child and isn’t worthy of my respect!”

Hank, on the other hand, felt Stella’s reaction was disrespectful and belittling to him. “If she respected me, wouldn’t she understand that this was an honest mistake and recognize that I tried to make an effort? And what was up with the detailing comment, out of the blue? If she wants me to love her, she better show me a little respect first!”



Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, in his book, “Love and Respect,” refers to this as the “Crazy Cycle” (depicted in the image to the left). The “Crazy Cycle” happens when a husband doesn’t love his wife because she doesn’t respect him and the wife doesn’t respect her husband because he doesn’t love her. The “Crazy Cycle,” as is, has no end - only a continual downward spiral. For Hank and Stella, it ended with slamming doors and an anniversary night spent alone.

So what is our problem? Why do we get on the “Crazy Cycle” and how can we get off? The beginnings of the “Crazy Cycle” can always be traced back to selfishness. “***I*** don’t feel loved, so ***I’m*** not going to respect him!” “How can ***I*** love her when she doesn’t respect ***me***?!” This is the natural, sinful response of our Old Adam. Our Old Adam loves conditionally. “I’ll respect you if you love me first.” Or, “I’ll love you if you respect me first.” When those conditions are not met, our Old Adam sees no need to respond accordingly.

Motivation to “Love and Respect” Begins at Calvary

Since we know our spouse will not always act “respectable” or “lovable,” we need to look for motivation outside of our spouse. Hank’s words and actions certainly were not very respect-able, and Stella’s reaction and words were not very lovable. Neither of them saw any reason to love or respect their spouse.

Rather than looking to our spouse for motivation to love or respect, as with all things in our Christian walk of life, we focus on Christ first. Remember, you were not always “lovable” to Christ, nor have you always “respected” Him and His ways as your Lord and God. Yet:

Romans 5:6-8 ...in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

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

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

Jesus didn't get wrapped up in the “Crazy Cycle” with us. Though we acted unloving and disrespectful to Him (we were ungodly sinners) He loved us with that “agape” love: sacrificial and unconditional love. He died for us, we might say, in spite of ourselves!

Knowing what Jesus has done for us, our Savior then says to us:

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

This “agape” love that Jesus speaks of, is not based on the qualities of the other person at all. Rather our “agape” love for one another is based on Jesus’ amazing “agape” love for us. In Christ, whether or not that other person is “lovable” is irrelevant (“Love (agape) your enemies!” Matt 5:44). Christ loved us, so let us love one another.

This most certainly applies to the one that is closest to us on this earth - our spouse. To break the “Crazy Cycle” we must look past the qualities (or lack thereof) of our spouse to Christ Himself. HE loved us when there was nothing lovable about us. HE loved us when we did not respect Him. Look beyond the failings and shortcomings of your spouse, and see Christ. See how He looked beyond your failings and shortcomings (sin!) and laid down His own life to save you!

***Nevertheless let each one of you in particular
so love his own wife as himself,
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (Eph 5:33)***

Breaking the “Crazy Cycle”

Unfortunately, our ugly, sinful nature frequently wants to take control of the relationship and we find ourselves spiraling out of control on the Crazy Cycle. How can we deal with? Dr. Eggerichs (“Love and Respect”) offers the following suggestions in his book:

HUSBANDS: When you feel that you have been disrespected and have the urge to be unloving toward your wife, stop. First, ask yourself:

- “Have I been unloving to my wife that she would want to be disrespectful to me?”

In humility, you may even want to communicate this to your wife to express how you feel and find out where you may have failed:

- *“Honey, the way you are talking to me (or acting) I feel you do not respect me. Have I been unloving to you?”*

Then, be ready to listen and repent for any unloving behavior. It may feel odd to verbalize things in such a way, but if your goal is to genuinely be a better husband, this is one way to stop the “Crazy Cycle” and learn to know your wife’s needs better.

WIVES: If your husband asks you this question, do not, as Stella did, assume the worst and attack. ***“Love...thinks no evil...believes all things, hopes all things...”*** (1 Cor 13:4-7) Christian love (“agape”) wants to believe that your husband truly did feel disrespected by your words or actions, and that he wants to know what he may have done to provoke such a reaction.

When you feel unloved by your husband, stop and ask yourself:

- *“Have I been disrespectful to my husband that he would act so unloving to me?”*

Even communicate this to your husband to find out where you may have failed:

- *“Honey, the way you are acting makes me feel like you do not love me. Have I been disrespectful to you?”*

Then, be ready to listen and repent for any disrespectful behavior.

HUSBANDS: As with your wife, do not assume the worst and get defensive if she asks you this. Be honest with her and yourself. Know that she wants what is best in the Lord’s eyes and in your relationship.

Forgiving and Forgetting

The night before their marriage, a young man asked the Grandfather of his bride-to-be what was the secret to a happy marriage. The Grandfather, who had been married to his bride for 60+ years quickly replied, “Forgiveness and a bad memory.”

This is a Christian virtue, a fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is to abound in the life of all of God’s redeemed children. It is a quality that we, thankfully, see first and foremost in our God. Though we have sinned against Him countless times, what does the Almighty, Omniscient (all-knowing) God say?

Isaiah 43:25 “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.”

The only thing the All-Knowing God says that He forgets is the one thing we truly want Him to forget - our sins! Imagine the horror of knowing that God would forgive our sins for Jesus’ sake - unless we committed them again. If God were to forgive but NOT forget our sins, we would be doomed eternally. Yet, we rejoice with joy inexpressible to hear this about the LORD our God:

Exodus 34:6-7a “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin...”

He forgives us and forgets our sins because Jesus took them all away!

For a Christian husband and wife, it is inevitable that both will sin against each other. How should we react? "I forgive you," we say to our repentant spouse. Yet, how many times do we dredge up old sins and remind our spouse, "I knew you weren't sorry! See you did it again!" Imagine, if our God dealt with us like that!

How many times should we forgive our spouse if he/she sins against us? Listen to how Jesus answered Peter on this very topic:

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. (Note: A "talent" is equal to about 20 years of the average wage.) But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; (Note: one "denarii" is equal to about one day's wage) and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

"So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

"And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

The point Jesus makes here is pretty clear. Our debt of sin to our Creator is HUGE! It is more than we could possibly begin to overcome or undo. Yet, our Master, in His amazing grace, has forgiven that huge for Jesus' sake.

Yes, our spouse will sin against us. Love and respect will not always be there. Unkind and unloving words and actions will happen. When your spouse confronts you about your sin, humble yourself and repent to him/her rather than pointing the finger of blame back at him/her. When your spouse repents to you, forgive him/her from your heart and FORGET IT! Even if it means forgiving him or her 490 times in a day! This is the very thing we ask for the Lord's Prayer:

***"Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us!"***

Forgiving and forgetting is one of the greatest Christian attributes in a Christian marriage. Sin is present - in you and in your spouse. But if Jesus is at the center of your relationship, forgiveness is as well - forgiveness for you and for your spouse! As Christ forgave us, let us forgive and forget!

Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Some Concluding Passages:

There is SO much more that could be said about this most amazingly close (and thus challenging) relationship of husband and wife. Marriage is a relationship which God created when He made Eve and brought her to Adam. It is relationship that Jesus blessed when He was present at the wedding feast in Cana (sight of His first miracle, changing water into wine). It is a relationship which is to mirror Christ and His Church. We could talk at length about many different circumstances (remember the 66,000 books on Amazon?!). But let us conclude our study by briefly looking at some more nuggets from God's Word about marriage.

To Husbands:

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.

1 Peter 3:7 Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Husbands, your wives are different. They are not men. They think differently than you do and they react differently than you do. Accept it and rejoice in it! Your bride is the help-meet God has given you. He has joined you together as one. Love her and be considerate of her needs as you live together as one. She may be more fragile (not inferior!) than you are, but the same Son of God shed the same blood to forgive her sins just as He did to forgive your sins! Don't be bitter toward her, because she doesn't think, handle, or approach things in the same way you do. Love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her!

To Wives:

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

1 Peter 3:1-6 Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands... Do not let your adornment be merely outward -- arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel -- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

How did Sarah show her submissiveness and respect to her husband Abraham? By going so far as addressing him as "lord" or "master." This is the same as the Church which submits to Christ in everything, addressing Him as Lord and Master. Such a willingly submissive spirit will be more attractive quality to your Christian husband and than make-up and plastic surgery could ever be. It is fitting in the Lord. This is what your God and Savior desires for you as a Christian wife.

"The Two Become One Flesh:" YOU BELONG TO EACH OTHER!

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Remember, even though you may not feel like you are “in the mood,” your spouse has sexual needs and God created marriage as a means for sexual happiness. When you became one flesh as husband and wife, you gave yourself - including your body - to your spouse. You belong to him/her.

Of course, a husband who loves his wife as Christ loves the Church would never force his wife to have sex. Nor would a wife who submits to her husband as the Church does to Christ, withhold sex as a way of “punishing” him for being unloving toward her. Don’t be afraid to talk about your needs with one another and enjoy the sexual happiness that God gives a husband and wife in marriage!

NEVER GO TO BED ANGRY

Ephesians 4:26 “do not let the sun go down on your anger”

Imagine that the last conversation you had with your spouse, was said in anger. How that last conversation would weigh heavy on your heart! Rather, be willing to talk about what angered you and be ready to repent in humility before you go to bed at night.

FINALLY, ABIDE IN CHRIST!

John 15:4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Abide in Jesus. Abide in Him as a Christian husband. Abide in Him as a Christian wife. Abide in Him together as a Christian couple. Whether or not your spouse is faithful to his/her God-given role, be faithful to your God and Savior in your marriage and His will for you personally. Don’t focus on your spouse’s role, focus on your own and your own relationship with Christ Jesus. In Christ you will have a fruitful and blessed marriage. He created marriage and He wants to bless it! May God help each of us to be faithful to Him and to our spouse!

*Oh, blest the house, whate'er befall,
Where Jesus Christ is all in all!
Yea, if He were not dwelling there,
How dark and poor and void it were!*

*Oh, blest that house where faith ye find
And all within have set their mind
To trust their God and serve Him still
And do in all His holy will!*

*Then here will I and mine today
A solemn covenant make and say:
Though all the world forsake Thy Word,
I and my house will serve the Lord! AMEN.*

(TLH #625:1, 2, 5)

