

"The Blessing Of Marriage"

Ephesians- Blessed Beyond Belief- Part 6

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Introduction:

Here's a thought to begin today: God created marriage. It was His idea. And, because He created it- He is in the best position to say how to have a great marriage. Today, I want us to look at God's instructions for marriage-- the Biblical model for how a marriage can thrive. The beautiful thing about this is that the Bible says that *if we can get marriage right—we're going to better understand our relationship with God.*

This is a huge topic and one of great significance- so much has been written on the subject of marriage. Here's a few quotes and illustrations on the subject:

My favorite philosopher, Anonymous, once said, *"Many girls marry men just like their fathers, which may explain why many mothers cry at weddings."*

There is a story about two men who were talking together one morning. The first, holding up a puppy, said, *"I got this poodle for my wife."* "Wow!," the other man said, *"I sure wish I could trade mine in for something like that!"*

Then there was the subway commuter who told his seat-mate: *"Actually, my mother-in-law and I have a lot in common. We both wish my wife had married someone else."*

One empty-nester mom told this story... *"After our last child left home for college, my husband was resting next to me on the couch, with his head in my lap. I carefully removed his glasses. Then I told him, sweetly, 'You know, honey, without your glasses you look like the handsome man I married.' He replied with a grin: 'Honey, without my glasses you still look pretty good too!'"*

One more. Any husband knows the challenge of picking the right gift or buying the right peace-making gesture for his wife. So, Herb Forst suggests what NOT to buy your wife. He explains, *"Recognizing that the only person a man usually shops for is his wife, the whole experience is stressful. As a veteran of these wars, I'm still not sure what to buy my wife, but I do pass along these suggestions of what NOT to buy her:"*

--1) Don't buy anything that plugs in. -- Anything that requires electricity is seen as utilitarian.

--2) Don't buy clothing that involves sizes. -- The chances are one in seven thousand that you will get her size right, and your wife will be offended the other 6,999 times. "Do I look like a size 16?," she'll say. Too small a size doesn't cut it either. "I haven't worn a size 8 in twenty years!"

--3) Avoid all things useful. -- The new vacuum advertised to pick up more quicker is not going to win you any brownie points.

--4) Don't buy anything involving weight loss or self-improvement.

- 5) Don't buy jewelry. -- The jewelry your wife wants, you can't afford. And the jewelry you can afford, she doesn't want.
- 6) Don't buy her frilly underwear. -- Your idea of the kind your wife should wear and what she actually wears are light years apart.
- 7) Don't spend too much. -- "How do you think we're going to afford that?," she'll ask.
- 8) But don't spend too little. -- "Is that all I'm worth to you?"

I wish you well, guys....happy shopping!

WELL, BEFORE WE EXAMINE THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF MARRIAGE, THERE ARE TWO TRUTHS WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND FIRST...

- **Marriage is a journey.**

The things we are going to talk about today are based in Scripture. They are God's instructions to husbands and wives. But, like in any other are of following Christ, **we are all imperfect creatures.** *There are no perfect husbands and, even though my wife is close ☺, there are no perfect wives.* We are all on a journey- being perfected, as we live by following the Holy Spirit, into the husbands and wives God wants us to be.

As we talk today- push yourself to be more like what God expects...and yet, view yourself with the grace that God extends.

- **Marriage is a partnership.**

We often hear it said of marital conflict: *"It takes two to tango."* **It also takes two to create harmony.** God expects both spouses to be working in concert with each other to create health in the home. Both men and women, as they follow Jesus, must be absolutely committed to living out God's roles for them as a husband or wife. The purpose of this message is not to give you reason to keep tossing elbows your spouses' way...but to look at your own heart and ask yourself—***What can I do to better reflect Jesus' desire for me as a husband or wife.*** And, as each of us look at ourselves and ask Jesus to transform us...we move closer to what God wants and closer to a great marriage.

We're here today because making a marriage thrive is a difficult task...achievable, but a challenge. Churches face challenges because the Church is made up of a bunch of sinners in a room that just come together a few times a week. Marriage is a challenge because you have two sinners living in the same home- 24/7! ☺

-QUOTE: Robert Keeler explains, *"Marriage is like twirling a baton, turning handsprings, or eating with chopsticks: it looks easy until you try it."*

Marriage is a challenge because we all look first to have our own needs met. And, when I don't feel my needs are being met- consciously or unconsciously- I resist meeting yours.

In Chuck Swindoll's book, THE GREAT AWAKENING, he reveals a survey of thousands of men and women, asking them about their needs.

--The 5 Major Needs women expressed: 1) Affection; 2) Conversation; 3) Honesty/Openness; 4) Financial support; 5) Family commitment.

--The 5 Major needs men expressed: 1) Sexual fulfillment; 2) Recreational companionship; 3) An attractive spouse; 4) Domestic support; 5) Admiration/respect.

When one or more of these is not being met...tension begins to spark in a marriage.

It is no surprise, then, that a similar survey conducted by Dr. Robert Travis, co-director of Marital and Health Studies at the University of Alabama- listed the most common complaints of husbands and wives.

---The main complaints of wives: He doesn't listen to me, he takes me for granted, he's not romantic, he doesn't help with the children.

---The main complaints of husbands: She doesn't understand that I need time by myself, she nags me about little things, she expects too much emotionally, she complains that I spend too much time at work.

Here's a key truth for today: *If we will learn to follow God's instructions to wives and God's instructions to husbands...marriage will be a blessing and not a curse. Marriage will be full of joy and not tension. Let's look at what God says, let's follow what God says to be and do, and then let's expect God's blessings in our most important human relationship—marriage.*

3 Keys to a great/biblical marriage:

1. Wives Follow God AND Bless Their Husbands Through Submission

²² For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. ²⁴ As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

Paul offers the key every wife needs if she hopes to influence her marriage to success – Submit. This is difficult to teach on...because what we're talking about is so counter-cultural that just reading God's words here makes me feel uneasy. It's not easy for us in our culture to read this passage, it is not easy to listen to it, and it is not easy to apply it.

But, whatever Paul means by "submission": look how important this is. The wife's role to her husband is described here as how she also relates to the Lord. As a wife lives out these instructions—she is following Christ. Just as the Church is to be submitting to Christ in everything—so wives should submit to their husbands.

Word: submit (hupotasso) means *to relinquish one's rights and to fall in line by willingly placing oneself under another's authority and care*. It is a military term of a soldier who comes under the authority of a superior officer and obeys his commands.

Note: This is a choice women make. This is a woman looking deep into her heart, and out of strength, dignity, and a desire to follow Christ- she agrees to relinquish her right to lead in the home and place herself under the leadership of her husband. The emphasis is on a wife who willingly makes herself subject to her husband's authority and care – she falls in line under his love. It is a voluntary response to God's will to give up one's independent rights to her husband.

I want to be very clear here. A godly wife isn't commanded to *obey* (hupakouo) her husband, as children are called to obey their parents and slaves their masters. Likewise, a husband is never called by God to make his wife obey (bring her into submission) or to treat his wife as subservient. Instead, she is a precious bride to be cherished, respected, and adored.

God is calling a wife is to fall into line under God by falling into line under her husband who is to falling into line under God. Unfortunately, this doesn't occur naturally, but supernaturally.

Genesis 3:16

¹⁶ *Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. **And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you.**"*

Way back in the beginning of time, Adam and Eve lived in complete harmony with God and each other. There was no selfishness, no jealousy, no lust for control or power in their relationship. But, then, Eve gave the forbidden fruit to Adam, Adam followed his wife into disobeying God, and God paid a visit to the Garden of Eden to punish the first two humans He created.

Word: **desire** (t'shuqa) Arabic root meaning *to seek control over or to compel*.

The curse God placed on Eve as punishment for disobeying His instructions was this: From this time forth every woman's natural desires would be to usurp the place of her husband's headship in the home. This inclination of the woman would lead to her husband to resist her desire and he would then try to keep her in her place under his rule. **And...here you have a summary of much of our culture's marriage issues.**

John MacArthur has said: *With the fall and its curse came the distortion of woman's proper submissiveness and man's proper authority. This is where the battle of the sexes began and women's liberation and male chauvinism started.*

Everything about God's instructions here wages war against what we are conditioned to believe as 21st century Americans. We are about rights. We are about individualism. We are about equality and tolerance.

But, God is about selflessness. God is about laying down our personal agenda to follow His agenda. God is about setting aside rights to live out our love for Him through obedience.

The challenge here for ladies, for our lovely sisters in Christ, is great. The challenge is this: *resist the urge within you (the remnants of the curse still coursing through your feminine flesh) to usurp your husbands' authority and follow Christ.* Because you love Jesus, and wish to follow God's will for your life- it is your spiritual calling to submit to your husband – as to the Lord.

Ladies- you have incredible power. You are absolutely essential to the health of your marriage.

- You can choose to follow God and bless your husband in the process. In this case, you will have the joy of knowing you are at peace with your Father and doing all you can to bless your husband.
- Or, you can refuse to submit to God's call on your life to submit to your husband. If you refuse...your marriage will suffer even if your husband loves you as Jesus loves.

Here's an amazing thought: *We think of submission as demoralizing. But, who was the greatest example of submission?* Jesus! The truth is this: a wife who submits to her husband as to the Lord **follows in the footsteps of her Savior.** A wife's attitude should be the same as Jesus – who surrendered Himself to the will of the Father, humbled Himself, and gave His life for the forgiveness of sin.

When a Christian woman submits to God and to her husband, she experiences a release and fulfillment that can come no other way. The result will be an environment of intimacy, growth, and ministry partnership that will make a difference in her home and in the world.

Application:

What does submission look like in the home?

2. Husbands Follow God AND Bless Their Wives Through Love

²⁵ For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶ to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. ²⁷ He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹ No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. ³⁰ And we are members of his body.

Word: love (agapate) *to unconditionally and continuously love sacrificially.* Husbands are to love their wives as Jesus loves them – unconditionally and sacrificially.

Love does whatever needs to be done and doesn't consider the cost or keep a tab – whatever is needed it gives. It gives w/out looking for anything in return.

God's idea here is this: *A woman's role of submission makes sense when the husband is fulfilling his role of unconditional and continual sacrificial love.* Men- it is much easier for your wife to come under your care when you genuinely show you care for her.

One Bible commentator said this: *Let there be no mistake about it – while we cannot minimize the importance of a wife's chaste and respectful attitude and gentle and quiet spirit as a catalyst for change, God's priority in change is the husband. If the husband is a Christian and listens to the Word, the Lord places the welfare of the relationship squarely on his shoulders first. When he becomes "Christ" to her by sacrificially loving her unconditionally, she can more easily become "the church" to him.*

This is an enormous challenge to men—your standard is Christ. In the same way that Jesus loved us—love your wife. Man up...step up to the plate...put on your game face...*however you want to say it—your calling in your marriage is to imitate Christ to your wife.* So how did Christ love?

Jesus loved us so much that He willingly gave His all, even his life, for our welfare. Jesus showed us how to love and He showed us the limitless extent of real love.

- He experienced pain to show love.
- He gave up His own rights to show love.
- He thought of our best- present and future to show His love.
- He gave all of Himself to show His love- He held nothing back.

As if modeling Jesus' love wasn't enough- God gives us another comparison to help us get it. I am to love my wife in the same way I care for myself. What does it mean to love your wife as your own body? If it's sick, he puts it in bed. If it is hungry, he feeds it. If it is thirsty, he gives it drink. If it is dirty, he cleans it. This is the essence of God's call for men in caring for their wives.

The issue here is to give attention to meeting needs, to being concerned to fill each issue w/ great eagerness, great speed and great devotion. Men are called to treat their wives w/ the same preoccupation they give to themselves.

God has called the husband to represent Jesus by loving his wife unconditionally and sacrificially. To love means the husband must yield his desires and rights to his wife. He is to lay down his life that she might be found spotless, holy, and blameless. The husband, like Jesus, has been called to lead his wife by serving her even unto death, to encourage her, uplift her, and protect her.

Application:

What does a husband's love look like in the home?

3. Godly Husbands And Wives Emphasize “WE” Over “ME”.

²¹ And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

³¹ As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”^[c] ³² This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ³³ So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

A marriage is more than me and you (husband and wife); it is about us. Two people becoming one. If either person makes the marriage about themselves, then it will not work. Marriage is about two people working together to become US – it is two becoming ONE! *and the two are united into one: (one flesh- vs.31)*

To become one a couple has to do two things – leave and cleave. Word: leave – to step away from a parent's protection and influence – to cut ties. Word: cleave (proskollao) to be glued or cemented together.

When a man and woman are “glued or cemented together” they become ONE spiritually, emotionally, economically, socially, intellectually, and finally physically – one flesh!

In real terms, it's not two agendas, but it is to be one, shared agenda. Not two dreams, but one, shared dream. It involves shared priorities, a joining of goals, and a desire to see each partner become the best person he/she can be.

Not two approaches to raising children, but one, united, agreed-upon, shared plan. Not two budgets, but one budget. Not separate vacations, separate future plans, but one vacation, one plan for the future.