

RELATIONSHIPS – HUSBANDS AND WIVES

In the old 1970s movie *The Poseidon Adventure*, the ocean liner S.S. Poseidon is on the open sea when it hits a tidal wave and tips over. Because of the air trapped inside the ocean liner, it floats upside down. In the confusion, the survivors can't figure out what's going on. They scramble to get out, mostly trying to climb the steps to the top deck. The problem is, the top deck is now 100 feet under water. In trying to get to the top of the ship, they drown. The only ones who make it are the few who do what doesn't make sense. They do the opposite of what everyone else is doing and descend into the dark belly of the ship until they reach the hull. By going 'down', they reach the ocean's surface. Rescuers hear them banging against the hull and cut them free. In marriage, the only way for us to find freedom is to choose what doesn't make sense: lay down our lives for our spouses. We must lay down to go up. Freedom lies in submission.

Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 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. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Marriage is a remarkable thing. Only God could create an institution that takes 2 very different beings (a man and woman) and unites them together for life. It is crazy when you think about it, yet it is God's design. God took something from Adam when He made Eve. In marriage these 2 parts are brought back together.

Marriage is not easy. Someone once said, "marriages may be made in heaven but the maintenance must be done on earth." For marriages to survive, they require regular maintenance. They require effort. Someone else said "One thing I know is that marriage is made in heaven, but then again, so is thunder and lightning." It is no surprise that today so many end in failure today.

A golden anniversary party that was thrown for an elderly couple. The husband was very moved by the occasion and wanted to tell his wife what he thought of her. However, she was very hard of hearing. With many family members and friends gathered around, he toasted her and said, "My dear wife, after 50 years I've found you tried and true!" Everyone clapped for them, but his wife was a little irritated and asked, "What did you say?" So, he repeated it again louder: "AFTER 50 YEARS, I'VE FOUND YOU TRIED AND TRUE!" The wife was now visibly upset and shouted back, "Well, let me tell you something, after 50 years I'm tired of you, too!"

Part of what makes marriage so hard is that men and women are very different. I once read: what women want: To be loved, to be listened to, to be desired, to be respected, to be needed, to be trusted, and sometimes, just to be held. What men want: tickets for the World Series.

God has created men and women in such uniquely different ways.

A while back there was a debate on whether computers are male or female, and should be referred to as 'him' or 'her'. One list came from a number of male computer scientists who felt computers must be female since:

- No one but their creator understands their internal logic.
- The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.
- The error message, "bad command or file name" is about as informative as "if you don't know why I'm mad at you, then I'm certainly not going to tell you."
- As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your paycheck on accessories for it.

That was countered by female computer scientists who felt computers must be male since:

- They have a lot of data but are all still clueless.
- They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they are the problem.
- As soon as you commit to one, you realize that if you'd waited a little longer, you could have obtained a better model.
- In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on!

Men and women are different. In addition to this every person brings with them their own sin nature into the relationship. We live in a day and age where personal freedom and your own happiness is everything. However, marriage involves sacrifice. Joining yourself with another person must involve a sacrifice of the will.

Paul spends the first 3 chapters of his letter to the church at Ephesus telling them about their position in Christ. The last 3 describe how we should live in light of that position. He writes that we are to be filled with the Spirit and then describes what that should look like:

Eph 5:19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What does that look like? The very next verse he writes, "submit to one another out of reverence to Christ". What follows are examples of relationships that most of us have to illustrate this principle. Today we are talking about the first (husbands and wives). Paul gives here the key to a successful marriage. While this verse is often separated – the key principle is clear from verse 21.

1. Instructions for Husbands (25) -

Let's start with the husbands. Paul takes 3 verses to talk about wives but 9 verses to talk about husbands.

It says in verse 25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her". What does it mean to LOVE your wife? To answer that question, you need to first understand what the word LOVE really means. There are three words in Greek which are translated as LOVE.

The first is word is PHILEO. This means brotherly love or friendship. This is the first level of love. As you get to know someone, eventually you enjoy being around them. You form a close friendship. Imagine a boy and girl who grow up living beside each other as next-door neighbors. When they are 5 they are playing and the boy says to the girl "I like you". That means they are friends. PHILEO love.

The second word in Greek is EROS. This is the word for romantic love. This is the second level. Imagine that same boy and a girl grow up. One day when they are in High School the guy says to the girl "I like you". She says "I know, I like you too". He says, "No, I mean I REALLY LIKE you". She finally gets the message. He has moved from PHILEO love to EROS love. Romantic love.

The third word AGAPE is the deepest level of love. This means sacrificial love. Imagine again that boy and girl. Eventually they get married and at first everything is perfect. However, one day they have a bad fight. At that point she does not like him as a friend and certainly not romantically. AGAPE love is not an emotion but a decision. It is an act of the will. Reaching out in AGAPE love draws them back together to work through their problems and eventually the relationship is restored.

It says that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and GAVE HIMSELF up for her. This is AGAPE love. Sacrificial love. This means that husbands are to lay down their own rights and will to their wives. Love is not an emotion but an act of the will – it is a command. What does that kind of love look like?

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Remember the key here is mutual submission. Christ willingly laid aside his rights and will and gave his life for the church. Husbands likewise are to give their lives to their wives. True leadership in the home comes from serving. You may be thinking that the idea of mutual submission does not work. You may think "I will submit to her when she submits to me". It doesn't work that way. In serving one another we are served. In loving we are loved. In giving we are given to.

Driving down a country road, a man came to a very narrow bridge. In front of the bridge, a sign was posted: "YIELD." Seeing no oncoming cars, he continued across the bridge. On my way back, he came to the same one-lane bridge, now from the other direction. To his surprise, he saw another YIELD sign posted. Curious, he thought, "I'm sure there was one posted on the other side." When he reached the other side of the bridge he looked back. Sure enough, yield signs had been placed at both ends of the bridge. Drivers from both directions were requested to give right of way. It was a reasonable and gracious way of preventing a head-on collision.

The key principle here is true for any relationship – you get out of it what you put into it. The more you give the more you get. You will be loved to the extent that you love. You will be served to the measure that you serve. You will get as you give. So, what are you willing to give?

Before Eve was created, God was talking with Adam. He said, "You really need a helper, don't you?" And Adam answered, "Yeah, I really do." So, God said, "What if I make a woman? She'll be perfect for you. She'll be beautiful. She'll rub your back at night and your feet in the morning. She'll prepare all your favorite meals without fail. She'll clean up after you and take care of the kids. You'll never have to do a thing, just sit around and be the king of your household." Adam said, "Boy, that sounds great, but how much is this going to cost?" God said, "Well, it's pretty expensive. It will cost you an arm and a leg." Adam thought for a moment and then asked, "Ok God, what can I get for a rib?"

2. Instructions for Wives (22-24) -

In this passage it says that wives are to submit to their husbands AS TO THE LORD. This means that they are to lay aside their rights and will to their husbands in the same way as they do to Jesus. The word submit is the Greek word HUPOTASSO. It is a combination of 2 words - HUPO which means UNDER and TASSO which means ORDER or AUTHORITY. The word was used as a Greek military term meaning "to arrange in a military fashion under the command of a leader". In non-military use, it meant "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden".

The verb is in the MIDDLE tense which means that it is a choice. It means literally "place yourself in the position of submission." In other words, it means to sit down on the inside as well as the outside. Paul is speaking here to women who were already forced into submission by culture. He is speaking of a heart attitude, a spirit of humility by choice, not coercion. Richard Foster says, "Paul made decision makers out of those who were forbidden to make decisions."

In our society today the word submission has very negative connotations. Often submission is talked about but in the following ways:

- a. Qualifying Submission - I will follow you IF you do things my way. You submit but only when things are going your way.
- b. Grudging Submission - I will follow you BUT I do not like it. You follow outwardly but not inwardly so there is no joy.
- c. Faithless Submission - I will follow you BUT I know you are going mess everything up. You follow but you are not doing it with confidence in the Lord or in your husband.
- d. Forced Submission - I will follow you BECAUSE I have to. You are forced to submit. Husbands, you are never told to enforce this command. Submission is a choice and cannot be coerced. If you have to force people to follow you then you are not a true leader.

Your focus in getting married should not be in getting your own needs met. Some people get married thinking their spouse will rescue them from all their problems. Their focus is on TAKING and not on GIVING so at some point in the relationship they become disappointed. When your focus is on GIVING your expectations are different. Your focus is no longer on your mate but on your own actions.

I never got married to get my needs met. My husband does not exist to meet my needs. I exist to meet his needs. And incidentally, while I'm doing that, a couple of my needs might get met as well. Surprise, surprise! That is the joy, I think, of being married. It's also the joy of ministering. -- Joni Eareckson Tada

It's easier to sacrifice your will for your mate if you envision doing it for Jesus. Picture your loving Lord rather than your flawed spouse. The imposition then becomes an honor. I once said that worship is not so much what you do as who you do it for.

3. Sanctify One Another (26-27)

This passage says that husbands are to love their wives for the following reason;

Eph 5:26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

This should not only be the goal of the husband but also the wife. To make holy means to sanctify. It is helping a person to grow into the image of Christ. Your responsibilities as a husband or wife is to sanctify your spouse. That means you build one another up in the knowledge of Jesus. Show by example the love of Christ daily in your marriage. Pray together and pray constantly for each other. Serve Christ together as a couple. Encourage one another and build each other up. Do everything in your power to help your spouse have a dynamic and exciting relationship with their savior.

Marriage is not an end -- it is a beginning. It is not a destination, but rather a method of travel.

Marriage requires work so it is important to marry someone who will be willing to work with you. This is why the bible is so clear about making sure that you only marry (and therefore only date) other Christians. Without this, the marriage will be one sided. You will seek to sanctify your spouse but you will not receive the return. Over time this can and does destroy marriages.

Years ago the space shuttle Discovery was grounded -- not by technical difficulties or lack of government funding, but by woodpeckers. Yellow-shafted flicker woodpeckers found the insulating foam on the shuttle's external fuel tank irresistible material for pecking. The foam is critical to the shuttle's performance. Without it, ice forms on the tank when it's filled with the super-cold fuel, ice that can break free during liftoff and damage the giant spacecraft. The shuttle was grounded until the damage was repaired. Marriages are most often damaged not by big things -- infidelity or abuse or abandonment -- but by the little things. Criticism, lack of respect, and taking each other for granted peck away at the relationship and keep us from reaching the heights.

Don't let little irritations destroy your marriage. Replace them with little acts of kindness and love.

Let me tell you about a little girl who discovered a great secret from her grandparents. Ever since she could remember, her grandparents had played this secret little game. They would leave the word "SHMILY" around the house for one another. Grandfather would stuff little notes with the word "SHMILY" in Grandmother's sock drawer. Grandmother would trace the word "SHMILY" in the steam on the bathroom mirror so Grandfather would see it when he took his morning shower. Over the years, they competed to see who could find the most creative way to leave a "SHMILY" note for the other. And when Grandmother lost her ten-year fight against cancer, her casket was wreathed with a huge bouquet of flowers. And on the yellow ribbon around the bouquet was that one word, "SHMILY." The thing that held her grandparents' marriage together, the thing that nourished them in life and sustained them in death: SHMILY. What does SHMILY mean? S-H-M-I-L-Y: See how much I love you.