

(Ephesians) God and Marriage

by Brian Brodersen

Marriage is a sacred institution that originated with God, and its primary purpose is companionship, including spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical aspects.

Duration: 53:27

Scripture: Matthew 7:3

Topics: "Christian Marriage", "Spiritual Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of three essential things to glorify God in marriage. The first key is having a personal commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The preacher highlights the significance of focusing on the vertical relationship with God before addressing the horizontal plane of interpersonal relationships. He encourages believers to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, walk in the Spirit, and concentrate on fulfilling their biblical roles in marriage. The preacher also mentions the detrimental effects of responding with harsh words instead of soft answers, which can escalate conflicts in the home. He concludes by pointing out the need for believers to not only study and teach about godly marriages but also apply those principles in their own lives.

Transcript

All right, let's turn this evening to Ephesians. As we pick up once again in our series of studies through Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we begin tonight a series within a series, teaching through the epistle, but we're gonna spend a few weeks beginning this evening concentrating on the subject of marriage and family. So over the next several weeks, we'll be looking at the wife's role in the marriage, the husband's role in the marriage, and then at what it means to bring up our children in the training and admonition of the Lord.

But we'll begin this series tonight by taking a general look at the marriage relationship. So let me begin by reading to you Ephesians 5, verse 22. It says, 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 savior of the body.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 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. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.

He who loves his wife loves himself, for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let each one of you in particular so love his wife as himself and let the wife see that she respects her husband. So this first message in the series, I've entitled God and Marriage.

And we want to look this evening at three things concerning the subject of marriage. We want to look first of all at the origin, sanctity and permanence of marriage. Then secondly, we want to look at the purpose of marriage.

And then thirdly, we'll look at three keys to a God glorifying marriage. So beginning with our first point, the origin, sanctity and permanence of marriage. Where did marriage originate? How is it that marriage is a part of the human experience? Did it just develop over a process of time? Did someone at some point say, you know, this would be a good idea to do things this way.

How did marriage come into existence? Well, according to some, marriage is considered to be nothing more than a social institution based on an outdated value system that has outlived its usefulness and should be replaced by something more relevant to today's values. That's the opinion of some people. Marriage is just a social phenomenon and it's no longer serving a purpose so we ought to replace it with something else.

According to others, marriage needs to be redefined to include other than the male-female relationship. Same-sex unions are the vogue among the social and academic elite today. According to the Bible, marriage originated with God.

Marriage exists because God is the one who planned it. God is the one who ordained it. God is the one who actually brought it into being and therefore marriage must be understood in light of what the Bible teaches on the subject.

Now, we have the introduction of marriage into human life recorded for us in Genesis chapter two, verses 18 through 24. So, right at the beginning of human history, marriage is instituted. Let me read the account to you.

And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone. Remember, God created Adam first and so man was there with the rest of creation, the animal world, the plant world, but as of yet, the woman has not been created. So God, beholding man, he says, it is not good that man should be alone.

I will make him a helper like him. Out of the ground, the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and he brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

But for Adam, there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and he slept and he took one of his ribs and he 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.

And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. And now here's marriage.

Verse 24, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh. So we find that marriage was instituted by God. It originated with God.

Because marriage originated with God, marriage is therefore sacred. Marriage is special. Marriage is something inviolable.

It's something that is not to be tampered with. It's God's creation. Jesus affirmed the sanctity of marriage by performing his first miracle at a wedding feast and in doing so, embarking upon his messianic mission.

What an interesting place for Jesus to perform his first miracle and to manifest himself as the son of God at a wedding. And I do believe that it was for the purpose of affirming the sanctity of marriage that Jesus did perform his first miracle at a wedding. So really what he was doing is as the Messiah, as the son of God, he was putting his stamp of approval upon the marriage relationship.

Now, because marriage is sacred, it is not to be replaced with something more culturally relevant. It is not to be redefined to suit the fancy of a supposed sexually liberated society. It's not to be messed around with.

Because if you do mess around with it, you're messing around with something that God established and you're going to create problems in society. And of course, that's exactly what we see happening all around us today, because man has tampered with marriage. So it's not to be tampered with, rather it's to be held in the highest esteem and entered into with the deepest of commitments.

It's to be held in the highest esteem. Now, of course the world is gonna do what it's gonna do. The world has rejected the revelation of God through the scriptures, rejected the revelation of God through Jesus Christ.

And so the world is in rebellion to God and going to just go from bad to worse. Our task is to seek to persuade people to come out of that rebellious system into a right relationship with God. But for us, God's people, we really do need to understand once again, the origination of marriage, the sanctity of marriage and the permanency of marriage, because in the church of Jesus Christ, we have as much confusion and seeming disregard for marriage almost as we have outside the church.

And various statistics show, you know, differing kinds of conclusions, but it is safe to say that the rate of divorce, for example, among Christians is not a whole lot different than the rate of divorce among those who are not Christian. And throughout the church of Jesus Christ today, there is a disregard for the sanctity and the permanency of marriage. Jesus affirmed the sanctity.

He also spoke clearly about the permanence of marriage. In Matthew chapter 19, verses three through six, let me read to you, the Pharisees also came to him, testing him and saying to him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason? And he answered and said to them, have you not read that he who made them at 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 then they are no longer two, but one.

Now listen, therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate. So according to Jesus, marriage is to be permanent. And this is the clear teaching of the Bible, but yet in the church, we have really compromised when it comes to the commitment to marriage.

And we see it not merely on the level of those who sit in the pews, but we see it also among those who occupy the pulpits. Many pulpits are occupied by men who have obviously not taken seriously God's word concerning marriage. They've been divorced and remarried.

There's a particular teacher that's quite popular who speaks on the subject of Bible prophecy and he's sought after because of his great knowledge of end times kinds of things and so forth. And I know people personally who are having him come and do seminars at their churches and all because of what's happening in the world. And when I've been asked what I've thought about it, I've said, well, I find it hard to get around the fact that he's on his fourth marriage.

I just cannot bring myself to invite a person like that to come and occupy a pulpit. There's a radical contradiction there. But my point is this, it just shows where we've compromised in this area as Christian people and as Christian leaders.

And I think that if we want to see things change in the world regarding marriage and attitudes toward marriage, we ought to reevaluate our own attitudes first of all and readjust them according to scripture and then maybe we can have some sort of an impact on the world outside. You know, it's hard to convince the world of anything if we're not doing it ourselves. Get up and telling them how wonderful marriage is and the virtues of marriage and here we are on our third or fourth marriage.

It's a radical inconsistency. So we see here that marriage is something to be held in the highest esteem because it originated with God, was held sacred by the Lord Jesus Christ and by God back in the Old Testament and by God the Son in the New Testament, it is declared to be permanent. Now we come to the next question and that is what is the purpose of marriage? What did God have in mind when he created the woman to be the helper of man and what is the primary purpose of marriage? And I think clearly the primary purpose that God had in mind when he ordained the relationship between husband and wife, the relationship that we call marriage was companionship.

That was the first and the primary purpose of the marriage relationship. Remember as God looked at Adam, he said, the loneliness of man is not good. So I'm going to make him a helper who is like him.

I'm going to make him a companion. I'm going to make him someone that he can have fellowship with, someone that he can commune with, relate to, enjoy life with. The first and primary purpose of marriage is companionship.

Now companionship would apply to three different areas, spiritual companionship, mental and emotional companionship and physical companionship. And so God created the woman to be the companion of the man and to be able to commune with him in the spiritual realm, the mental and emotional realm and in the physical realm as well. So the first purpose is companionship and at the top of that list, there would be spiritual companionship.

God brought about the spirit or the marriage relationship so that we could have a close, intimate spiritual relationship with another person so that we could share closely, deeply and intimately the things of God with someone very, very closely. God desires that we have deep, intimate, close spiritual communion with

one another as husbands and wives, that we minister to one another on a spiritual level, that we communicate the things of God to one another, that we enjoy together a relationship with the Lord. And I must say for myself, when I first met my wife, who was not my wife at the time obviously, the thing that, well, the thing that initially got me interested was the way she looked, but after that initial physical attraction, I became very attracted to her spiritually.

And what I sensed as I began to talk with her was here was another person who really knew the Lord and loved the Lord and delighted in the things of God and sharing the things of God. And that was so exciting to me because quite frankly, I hadn't met a girl like that up until that point. I'd met other girls who went to church, but they didn't have that intimacy that she had.

They didn't have that depth of personal understanding and experience with God. And I remember that's where we really initially began to connect. And that is what God had in mind, that we would connect with one another spiritually and that we would have spiritual companionship.

And then secondly, that we would have mental and emotional companionship as well, that we would be able to enjoy one another's company, that we would be able to enjoy one another's conversation, that we'd be able to share the things of life together. We'd be able to converse and reason and talk together, but also be able to feel things, experience things together. And this is something that God had in mind when he saw Adam.

He looked at Adam and he said, it's not good that the man is alone. He needs someone that he can connect with. He needs someone that he can speak to and reason with and enjoy life with and laugh with.

One of the most wonderful things about the relationship between my wife and I is the laughter that we enjoy together. And I appreciate it so much, even more and more it seems as we grow older together. Sometimes she'll come off with some hilarious things.

Cheryl has a knack for renaming people. She's done that all of our lives together. She just will look at somebody and I guess she just decides in her mind that the name that was given to them by their parents really is inappropriate.

I'm going to rename them. And so she'll call the person something else and then from that point on, that person is always the name that she's given them. When we were living in England, there was a great fellow in the church named Rod.

Cheryl thought he should be Walt though. So she would never call him Rod. She would always call him Walt.

And in conversation, she'd be going on and on about Walt and she'd say, what do you think? I said, you know, I agree with you and I think Rod would probably feel that way as well. But it's become the sort of thing between us that we really were able to get a good laugh out of it and I enjoy that so much. I'm going to get killed after the service tonight, but we're getting a good laugh out of it anyway.

But they're just those things that you experience together. Cheryl's good at impersonations too. Sometimes she impersonates me, it's really funny.

Because a lot of times, she'll ask me a question and I'm just not paying attention, I guess. Well, I hear what she asked me, but for some reason, I don't answer her. I just sort of keep doing whatever I was

doing.

So she starts answering her for me and she gets this voice, like it would be my voice. And she starts saying, well, Cheryl, I think that, you know, and she'll go on with this great, and the stuff she comes up with is hilarious. I mean, I kind of just ignore her to hear what she's going to come up with when she answers on my behalf.

But, you know, these little pleasantries of life, of mental and emotional companionship, these are the things that God had in mind when he created the marriage relationship. God wants us to enjoy one another. And the marriage relationship ought to be the most enjoyable relationship in the world to you.

That's what God intends. And if it's not that, then you need to adjust things because that's what the Lord has. That's what he wants to bring about for you.

It's a beautiful thing to have a marriage that's based on the biblical model. It's a wonderful experience. And that's what God intended.

He did not intend marriage to be a drag. He didn't intend it to be a downer. He didn't intend it to be, you know, a 15 round boxing match.

He intended it to be an enjoyable thing. And it can be a very enjoyable thing if we do things the way he said. And we'll get to that as we go on tonight.

But there is that companionship, mental, emotional, and then there is that aspect of physical companionship. God created us, male and female, to enjoy a physical relationship with one another as well. So that's the primary, that's the primary purpose.

I think as we look at scripture, this is the first and the primary reason why God brought about the marriage relationship. Now, among Roman Catholics, and as a result of the teaching of Roman Catholicism, the primary purpose of marriage according to Roman Catholicism is not companionship, but procreation. So the primary purpose of marriage according to Roman Catholic doctrine is to reproduce the race.

Let me quote to you from the Catholic Encyclopedia. It states, the marriage contract that is made by two persons of the opposite sex, by which each acquires the exclusive and irrevocable right over their bodies until the death of one of the parties for the procreation and education of children. While this last is the primary end of marriage, there are secondary purposes.

So you notice what it says, the primary end of marriage is that of procreation and education of children. The encyclopedia goes on to say, to employ the sexual function for self-gratification is to pervert the function. But this is not biblical teaching.

This is ascetic ideas that were brought over into Christianity early in church history that were based on wrong ideas about the body itself. There were heresies at the time that the scriptures were written that taught that the body was inherently evil. And so the ascetic communities developed around the idea that the body was inherently evil.

Therefore, you had to deprive yourself of every conceivable pleasure in order to become spiritual. And that crept into the church in the early centuries. And so in the thinking of Roman Catholicism, which has greatly influenced the world, the primary purpose of marriage is that of procreation.

But according to the Bible, the primary purpose of marriage is companionship. The secondary purpose of marriage is procreation. Now procreation is obviously important.

If somebody hadn't done that, we wouldn't be here tonight, would we? And if we don't do that, then there won't be any world after we're here. But it's not the primary purpose. It's the secondary purpose.

You see, what we need to understand is the companionship aspect. The joining together of two lives in communion spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically, that's the primary thing God had in mind when he created marriage. But then of course, as an outcome of that, procreation comes.

And so the second purpose of marriage would be that of producing families and building societies. And so God said to Adam and Eve, he said, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. And so that is a purpose of marriage.

Of course, there are marriages where that is not a possibility because of some biological issue, but there have been many occasions when God has intervened in people's lives and touched them miraculously and enabled them to bear children and other occasions where they haven't been able to do it physically, but they can adopt and so forth. But that's part of God's purpose to bring new life into the world, to create a family unit and to build society from that. Biblically, a society is based upon individual families.

Boy, today in our culture, there is a major war against the family, but it really is a major war against God and his declaration of how things are supposed to be. In all of this that we see happening today, the redefining of the family, the redefining of marriage, all of this, although it looks in a sense just like a sociological trend, oh, this is just something that happens among societies as time goes on, it's rooted in an absolute rebellion to God himself. And although we get sometimes just the, sort of the tip of the iceberg when we're listening to the news or reading the newspaper or different articles or something like that about issues concerning marriage and family.

And we see the arguments for and against different kinds of family arrangements and things. When you get down behind it and see what's really going on, it is just an absolute war against God and what the Bible teaches. And that's true when it comes to the redefinition of marriage.

It's true when it comes to the redefinition of family. It's true when it comes to the redefinition of the roles of the men and the women. I was talking to somebody recently and they were telling me that when they were attending USC, they decided to take a course in feminism.

And as they were sitting in the classroom, what really amazed them was all the Marxist material that they were having to study as they were studying the subject of feminism. Feminism is rooted in Marxism. Marxism is pure atheism.

It's an attack against God. And so that's what's happening. The attack against the family, the attack against society, the attack against marriage, all of these things are basically an assault against God himself and his declared order of things.

And so we have got to be careful. We've got to hold firm to what the scriptures say and as we go through this series, hopefully you'll see how right the scriptures are in declaring what marriage is all about, what a family is all about, what society is to be all about. So then thirdly, the third purpose for marriage is to display to the world the relationship between God and his people.

So God has an interesting purpose in marriage of displaying to the world the kind of relationship that he does share with his people or that he would like to share with his people. Just as Israel was to be a light to the world and to demonstrate to the world the virtues of following the true God, so God wants to use the marriage of his servants to demonstrate to people out in the world the virtues of doing things his way. It's interesting that as you look at the Old Testament, frequently God describes his relationship to Israel as that of husband and wife.

Israel is the wife of the Lord. The Lord is the husband of Israel. And God was seeking to provoke through Israel, the nations, the surrounding nations to jealousy so that they might say, we wanna know that God, we wanna have that kind of a relationship with God.

But Israel, of course, failed miserably. Israel became an adulterous wife, forsook the Lord. Now, under the new covenant, on an individual level, Jesus Christ wants to take your marriage and my marriage and he wants to use it to demonstrate to people outside the beauty of God's plan.

He wants to demonstrate to people the love that he has for his church that they can participate in and enjoy by your marriage and my marriage. So Paul said, as we read here in Ephesians, for this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother. This is a great mystery, he said, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

See, there's something mysterious and mystical, but it is that God wants to communicate through marriage. He wants to communicate his love for his people. When a person outside of the body of Christ looks on at your marriage, God wants them to see through the husband the kind of love he has for his people and through the wife, the kind of respect that his people have for him and that beautiful relationship that exists between them.

That's what God wants to show. Now, if we understand that, that is going to, I think, make us a lot more diligent to really be representing the Lord properly. I think it's because we don't understand this sometimes that we don't really put a whole lot of effort into developing the kind of marriage that God wants us to have.

We need to see it as a priority. It's top priority for the Lord. You know, sometimes we who are committed to God, we wanna serve the Lord and, you know, we have dreams of evangelizing or becoming a missionary or teaching the Bible or writing a book or, you know, doing some, you know, marvelous thing for God and all those things are good and they can all be very wonderful.

But do we think in terms of loving our wives and raising our kids for the Lord? Boy, that's a great spiritual project right there. It's about the greatest one that you could find, really. And, you know, what's happened though in our culture is because of the attack on the family, the attack on marriage, even among Christians, we have failed to see the importance and the significance of these relationships and we've sort of just, you know, become negligent in regard to these relationships.

And even sometimes, as I was saying, we're considering that, oh no, I can't concentrate on the marriage, I've gotta serve the Lord down at the church. Serve the Lord at home first and then come down to the church. And if your house is in order, then welcome to the ministry here.

But if it's not, go back and realize that's the first priority right there. As a matter of fact, Paul said regarding a person who's in leadership in the church that they couldn't be in leadership in the church unless they had their own household together. For if a man cannot rule his own house, how is he gonna take care of the

church of God? So he puts the family in the place of priority.

So the three purposes of marriage, companionship, the primary purpose, procreation, the secondary purpose, and then God wanting to display to the world his love for his people through the marriage. Now we come to three keys to a God-glorifying marriage. And we'll talk about a lot of things in a very practical sense over the next several weeks.

But this'll just sort of lay the groundwork for that. Three keys to a God-glorifying marriage. That's the goal.

That ought to be our goal in marriage. Our goal in marriage ought to be nothing less than glorifying God. Our goal in marriage is not to be to, you know, keep up with the Joneses.

Our goal in marriage is not to outdo one another. Our goal in marriage is not to raise a super race for the future. Our goal in marriage is to be the glory of God.

We glorify God through our marriage. Three ways to do that, three keys to doing that. Number one, this is absolutely essential.

All three of these things are essential. Without these things, you'll never glorify God in your marriage. Number one, you must have a personal commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

It starts right there. You know, Pastor Chuck on Wednesday night was talking about the issue of relationships and how many churches have gone away from teaching the Bible to concentrating on the horizontal plane of interpersonal relationships. And he emphasized the importance of getting the vertical relationship right.

And there is certainly a lot of truth to what he was pointing out. You can't possibly have a marriage that's going to glorify God unless you've got your vertical relationship right. It all starts right there.

It starts with a personal commitment. Notice what I'm saying, to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Now I could have said a personal commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and you might have said, oh yeah, I've got that.

But I want to clarify what I mean and that's why I use the term the lordship of Jesus Christ. You see, we glibly refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, but we don't think in terms of the fact that when I say Lord, that means he's the boss. That means he's in charge.

That means I obey him. I do what he says, not what I think or feel. And a lot of the trouble in marriages today among God's people is due to the fact that we are not really submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

We call Jesus Lord frequently throughout the day. Lord this and Lord that. But many times I think the Lord would ask us the same question that he asked to the disciples.

Why do you call me Lord and not do what I tell you to do? If you're having trouble in your marriage tonight, I want to say this and you might think it's insensitive or, you know, oh, he doesn't know what I've been through. But I would venture to say if you're having trouble in your marriage tonight, it is because one or both of you are not truly submitted to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And if you would do that, you would notice a drastic and positive change in your marriage almost immediately.

I have never understood why people want to run off for years of counseling and pay thousands of dollars to somebody to help them rather than just get on their knees and say, God, I'm wrong. I repent, forgive me, help me to obey you. I've never understood that.

It's just the stubbornness of the human heart, I guess. But I've seen it over and over again. I've sat in counseling situations with people and, you know, it's crystal clear that the problem is due to just an unwillingness to obey God.

And, you know, many times I've said to people, you know, this has nothing to do with a lack of information. You know what to do. It's not a lack of information, it's a lack of application.

You're just not doing what you know to do. And they'll say, oh, no, you don't understand, pastor. We need professional help.

We're going to the therapist. And off they go to spend their thousands of dollars for months and even years at a time, and then they get divorced. Because a therapist, although a Christian, concluded that you probably were never meant to be together in the first place.

So God understands all that and, you know, just move on into the next phase of life. But you see, if we have a personal commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we're going to have a good marriage. There's no such thing, by the way, as, you know, a good marriage or a bad marriage in the sense that, oh, I got a bad one, you know.

Like, you wouldn't have got a lemon at Toyota of Orange sort of a deal, you know. Oh, you just got a bad marriage, you know. Yeah, there's a few of those around, you know, looks like you got one.

Their marriage is what you make it. It's good or bad depending on your obedience to Christ. So a personal commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Lord. He's in charge of my life personally. I remember an incident that happened in my marriage a long, long time ago.

Must've been 20 years ago at least. Cheryl and I were having a dispute and I don't even remember what it was about, but I remember I was really upset. And I remember leaving the house and going down to the garage and I think I was beating on something in the garage or something like that to try to get my frustrations out.

And, you know, in the midst of doing that, the Lord just spoke to me and said, what are you doing? Oh, Lord, I've got to take my frustrations out. This woman's driving me crazy. And, you know, the Lord just spoke to my heart and said, now, did I instruct you anywhere in my word to come down to your garage and beat on the wall or anything like that in case of marital difficulty? No, Lord, I don't really remember reading that anywhere.

And the Lord just spoke to me and said, then stop it and just go up and say you're sorry. Oh, but what do you mean say I'm sorry? You mean go up and just tell her to say she's sorry, right? No, you just go up and say you're sorry. And after arguing with the Lord for a bit, I went and did it and problem was solved.

It was over. But it's just that commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the second key to a God-glorifying marriage is walking in the Spirit.

Now, you know, Paul says here in Ephesians, oh, no, it's in Galatians, actually. He says, if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. You know, it's possible to live in the Spirit but not walk in the Spirit.

In other words, it's possible to be truly a Christian and yet not walk in the Spirit and not demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit and not receive the blessing that comes from the life of the Spirit. So we've got to walk in the Spirit. You know, I've seen this over and over and over again in the ministry.

You know, in the ministry, you can get so into serving God and doing things for God that you sort of forget that the primary purpose of God's saving you is to do something in your life, to make you the person that He wants you to be. And I've seen so many occasions where, say, here's a man who, you know, really loves the Lord, wants to serve the Lord and has in his mind the idea of service to God as that of, you know, Bible teaching or evangelism or something like that. And therefore he's committed to prayer, he's committed to devotion, he's committed to studying the scriptures and he's wanting to gain all of this understanding so he can get out there and serve the Lord.

And yet he's radically failing to apply anything that he's studying to his own situation. So he even prepares great outlines on how to have a godly marriage. But then you talk to his wife and she says, boy, I wish he'd practice what he preaches.

It's just completely gone past him. That happens often. And there's that danger that we, although we live in the spirit, we would fail to walk in the spirit.

We have to remember that the first purpose of the word of God is to do something for God and to do something in us, not to tell us how to fix everybody else's problems. Jesus said, you remember, before you attempt to remove the splinter from your brother's eye, make sure you get the beam out of your own. And it's quite possible that you're out there telling everybody how to have a great marriage.

Oh, the Bible says right here, this is what you're supposed to do. And then right in your own home, your marriage is suffering drastically. But you see, we've got to walk in the spirit.

We've got to ourselves be obedient to what the word of God says. And here comes our final key. And this is such an important one.

And this is it, listen closely, obey explicitly. I see this is part of the problem. We don't obey explicitly, we obey partially.

We obey what, you know, sounds good to us at the time and then we disregard and we just sort of say, well, you know, God will understand. No, we must obey explicitly God's instructions. Now here's the key concerning your role in the marriage.

One of the conflicts that we so often see in the marriage relationship is, well, you know, if he loved me like Christ loved the church, then maybe I'd think about submitting. Or, you know, when she starts submitting, that's when I'm gonna start loving her as Christ loved the church, man. You know, she's unsubmitive.

I don't have to love her as Christ loved the church. And the problem is this, you, instead of concentrating on and obeying explicitly your own role in the marriage, you're concentrating on the other person's role. You know, I would venture to say that husbands know much better wives submit to your husband than they do husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church.

And I think the same is true with wives. Oh, they know husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church really well. But no, we don't wanna talk about wives submitting.

And that happens so often. You see, we don't obey explicitly what we have been instructed to do in our roles, but we concentrate on what the other person is supposed to be doing. And because they're not doing it, then we feel like we are exempt from doing it ourselves.

And we say, well, you know, I'm not gonna do that until he starts doing this, or I'm not gonna do that until she does that. We are to obey explicitly God's instruction concerning our role in the marriage and trust that as we do that, God will take care of our partner. But you know, here's what I've discovered.

And many of you know this as well. When you do what God tells you to do, it just lends itself to your partner doing what God tells them to do. My wife is a very independent woman.

She's very strong. But you know, I've never, ever felt that she was not submissive. She's always been very, very submissive.

Submission on the part of the woman is the natural response to being loved as Christ loves the church. It just, it's the natural response. When a woman senses that there's that security, there's that love, there's that concern, then her very makeup is to just submit and say, you lead.

See, if she doesn't sense that, then there's that friction, that resistance that comes. And likewise, I think it works the other way as well. When a wife is submissive and not rebellious and trying to push her own will or agenda or whatever, then it just lends itself to the husband being the leader, the person that he is supposed to be.

And I think that we could build a strong case from the scriptures and from the experience of many Christian marriages that having a God-glorifying marriage is a relatively easy thing to do. It's not complicated. You know, it's amazing.

If you go over into, well, our bookstore might not be the best example, but if you did go over to our bookstore tonight, you would find a fair number of books written on the subject of marriage and family. Other bookstores, because they carry authors that we might not carry, would have more titles. You know, here's my point.

With all of the stuff that's been written on the subject of marriage, with all of the books directed to the husband, all the books directed to the wife, all the books to do with marriage and family, all the books to do with, you know, personality, this and that, and with all of that stuff, you would think that we would not have a single marital problem in the church. And by the way, those are the best-selling books that we have in the Christian community. But with all the material that's available, why do we still have the problems? Because the one book, the main book, we don't take it to heart.

We don't really apply it to our lives. We don't obey it. And this is my point.

If we would just do that, we wouldn't have to spend all the money on all those books. We wouldn't have to read all of that other stuff, try to figure out how to do this and that. If we would just do what the scriptures say to do.

And over the next several weeks, we'll be talking very specifically about what those things mean. What does it mean when the scripture says, wives, submit to your husbands? What does it mean when the Bible says, husbands, love your wives? What does it mean when it says, parents, raise your children in the training and admonition of the Lord? Those are the things that we need to discover. And as we discover them, the key is doing them.

And as we do them, as we just put into practice what we're learning, as we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, as we walk in the spirit and as we concentrate on, okay, Lord, this is what you said. I'm the husband. This is what you told me to do.

I'm gonna concentrate on doing this. By the help of your spirit, I'm gonna be this man. You know what? Your marriage is going to begin to blossom and flourish and prosper.

Now, I know that there are people here who have had marital failure. I know that some of you are divorced. Some of you are maybe in the process.

And I know there are many reasons why those things have happened. And for many of you, there's not really necessarily any culpability on your part. You're more or less a victim because the other person has decided to disobey God and walk away.

And in those cases, I'm confident that God will either restore the marriage or he has something else for you in the future, a relationship that will be centered on him. And so as we go through these things, maybe there'll be things that you'll see that will help you in the future as well. And then of course, I'm aware that there are people with us that aren't married, and yet one day you hope to be married, and hopefully these things will be preparation for that.

And so let's be committed to marriages that glorify God. And let's take these simple keys. They're simple, but they're hard because the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

These two are contrary to one another so that you don't always do what you know you should do. But if we walk in the spirit, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. You know, one final word in closing.

The other morning I was reading Proverbs and I was in the 16th chapter, the first verse, and it's a verse that I'm familiar with, you might be familiar with it as well. It said, a soft answer turns away wrath. And I read that and I thought, yeah, you know, I understand that, I've experienced that.

But you know, the rest of the verse, which I wasn't totally aware of, said, but a harsh word stirs up anger. And as I read that and thought about it for a bit, I thought, you know, how many conflicts in the home are the result of something as stupid as that? Instead of giving a soft answer that will turn away the wrath, I give a harsh answer and it just stirs up more anger and the feud goes on. But you see, very practical, very simple.

The problem, the difficulty is applying it. But if we're submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, walking in the spirit and committed to obeying explicitly the instructions concerning our role in marriage, we'll know the kind of thing that God had in mind when he created the marriage relationship. Let's pray together.

Father, we pray that you would bless our marriages. Lord, we know that you've given us the keys to a God-glorifying marriage. We know it's not beyond us.

You've made it available, it's within our reach. And so Lord, we ask that you, through your word tonight and through the series that we're entering into, we ask that you would really work in our lives. Lord, heal marriages that are damaged, broken.

Restore marriages that have fallen apart. And Lord, build in prevention so that marriages that are doing well now will not end up shipwrecked in the future. Help us, Lord, to take your word seriously, to believe it and to obey it.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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