

As Christ Love His Church

by Carter Conlon

A successful marriage requires submission, love, and selflessness, as modeled by Christ's relationship with the church.

Duration: 1:00:19

Scripture: Genesis 2:24, Isaiah 50:1, Ephesians 5:21-31

Topics: "Church"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of following God's blueprint for marriage. He emphasizes that when a society turns away from God, the breakdown of the marriage relationship is often the first noticeable sign. The preacher highlights the significance of marriage as an institution linked to the heart of God and encourages couples to model their relationships after the pattern of Christ and His church. The sermon also emphasizes the need for husbands to love their wives selflessly and sacrificially, just as Christ loved the church.

Transcript

This message is one of the Times Square Church Pulpit series. It was recorded in the sanctuary of Times Square Church in Manhattan, New York City. Other tapes are available by writing World Challenge, Post Office Box 260, Lindale, Texas, 75771, or by calling 903-963-8626.

None of these messages are copyrighted, and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. Ephesians chapter 5. We're going to be talking about marriage this morning, beginning at verse 21. This is, I call Ephesians 5, God's blueprint for marriage, for a successful marriage.

Submitting yourselves, verse 21, one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, and he is the savior of the body.

Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.

He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and they too shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Marriage is one of the most holy and lasting covenants we can enter into on this earth. Marriage is holy because it was instituted by God, and it was instituted by God as an illustration of the depth of his love and his commitment to his bride, which is you and I, the church. The apostle Paul, in speaking of the unity between a man and his wife, he said, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall be joined unto his wife, and the two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery, Paul says, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. I love preaching at weddings, although I don't get an opportunity to do too many of them anymore, but I'm so moved every time we come into the house of the Lord and the groom stands and waits and the bride, dressed in white, comes down the aisle to meet her groom, because it's such a type in shadow, an example of a day that's coming, when you and I are going to be ushered into the presence of God without spot and without wrinkle, sinless and holy, before the holy and eternal Son of God. I don't believe it's going to be en masse in heaven, that's only my personal opinion, but I think we're so precious to God it's going to be one at a time.

You see, he's got all of eternity, there's no rush in heaven. One at a time, heaven's going to stand, and one at a time we're going to come down that aisle, spotless, cleansed, loved, with a love like we've never ever known or understood, and all of a sudden, as it's written in the scriptures, our eyes shall be opened and we shall see him as he is. We shall know then, even as we are known, there'll be a revelation of Jesus that will be ever deepening and ever increasing.

We will quite possibly fall every two, three feet on our faces as we come down that aisle to meet him. What a day that's going to be. What a day.

What a day. We are exhorted by God to fashion our earthly marriage and relationships after the pattern of Christ and his church. You see, Jesus gave us the institution of marriage here on this earth, and I believe with all my heart it's the closest institution that you're going to find, the closest covenant relationship that you're going to find on all of the earth to the relationship between Jesus Christ and his bride, the church.

And so if we're able to follow the pattern that he's established for us in our relationship with him, we will find that our relationships here with one another on this earth all of a sudden begin to take on a new depth, a new understanding, a new meaning, a new height that we never before even dreamed was possible if we're just simply willing to submit ourselves to him and to walk in his ways and to take on his heart one for another in the same manner that we love him. Sad to say that when a society turns from God, the first and the most noticeable sign of this turning is a breakdown of the marriage relationship and the family. And the reason that happens is because it's the first and the one institution most clearly linked to the very heart of God.

And so it stands to reason then when a society turns that marriages begin to break down, roles become confused. When people turn from God, men become like women and women become like men. Nobody

knows what they should be doing anymore.

Confusion seems to reign rampant now in our society simply because so many have turned from the Lord. Partners become selfish. What started out as a love relationship, what started out as a wholehearted commitment, and I believe that many people really, really meant it the day that they stood at an altar before God and before a man of God and gave their life to one another.

They really believed it. But as they began to turn from the Lord, selfishness got into the heart. See, selfishness is the exact opposite of Christ likeness.

And people now, even in God's house, have become strangers under one roof, strangers in bed. And what started out as a type and shadow of a covenant relationship now is an enduring fellowship at best. And the saddest thing of all, when a society turns from God and marriages begin to break down, is that children become bruised in heart.

I have talked to and ministered to children over the years that have been so bruised by the selfishness that has gone on in their homes. They break down, they've come out of homes confused, not knowing if they want to enter into any kind of a relationship with another person because of what they have experienced and what they have seen. We're living in an hour when God is moving in unprecedented power to bring about restoration in his house.

He's touching those who have the ears to hear and who have a yearning and a longing in their heart to live in a higher plane than what society has offered so many couples in this generation. Men, I'm going to speak to the men first. Our marriage calling is to a commitment of the highest order of love, of selflessness, and forgiveness.

In the book of Ephesians again, chapter 5, verse 25, the apostle Paul says, Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself.

We're to pattern our love for our wives after the love that Christ has for his church. And what an example Jesus gave us, how he loves us unconditionally, how we can come into his presence this day no matter what we have done, no matter what I thought life has been like, no matter where we've gone, we can come into his presence today and we find an unconditional love. That's an incredible thing.

I have spoken before about love. Love is really not a feeling. Love is a commitment.

You see, it was the love of Jesus that nailed him to the cross for you and I. It was not a feeling. He wasn't hop, skipping and jumping down the Via Dolorosa to Calvary. There was a deep agony in his heart at the thought of being separated from his father, at the thought of suffering the wrath of his eternal father.

All he'd ever known was the love of his father, but he knew it was necessary for you and I to be restored to fellowship with God. And so his love was first and foremost, before anything, it was a commitment. And our society is so lacking in that understanding in this generation.

They're so lacking in commitment. It's not a feeling. People get married and five years down the road, they turn to their partner and they say, well, I'm leaving or I'm going somewhere else.

I just don't love you anymore. And what they're saying in reality is the shallowness of my commitment. I never really was committed to you from the beginning.

I never understood what real love is all about. Aren't you thankful that Jesus didn't come out of the garden of Gethsemane and look at the people that were gathered around and the fearful disciples and those that were about to betray him even and run from him and leave him in his hour of need? Aren't you thankful today that he didn't look you and I in the face and say, I just don't love you anymore and walk away and live his own life? You see, husbands were to love our wives like Christ loved the church. There's no other type and shadow.

There's no other pattern. There's no excuses. We're to love our wives.

It's to be an unconditional love. In the book of first John, chapter four, verse 10, the scripture says here in his love, not that we love God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation. That means the sacrifice for our sins.

It's not that we even love God, but God loved us and sent his son and Christ loved us and all of his prayers. Everything he did was for us. His love was an unconditional love.

Unconditional love loves in spite of what comes back to it in return, whether or not it's reciprocated. It's a love that is a determination in the heart that for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health, for better or for worse till death do us part. I promise I pledged before God to love you this day.

That love is a commitment. It's not a feeling. Feeling will come and feeling as we draw closer to Christ should grow.

But love is first and foremost a commitment. And I feel so sad for this generation who have never known the value of commitment. There's so many who don't understand really what love is all about.

Oh, yes, feeling will come and feeling will grow, but commitment has to come first. If there is no commitment, your feeling is going to die because none of us are perfect. And people do things that are wrong and people say things that hurt and people act in ways sometimes that we don't even understand, sometimes even become irrational.

But if our love is not based on the commitment of Christ, then our marriages eventually are going to be in trouble. Jesus also gave us the pattern of completely disregarding himself. He came out of the Garden of Gethsemane and he said, Father, not my will, but thine be done.

Every decision that he made was for our benefit. It was not for his own. It was because you and I had a need.

And had he not died to himself, then you and I would be sitting here today living an illusion with a false hope. We would be in absolute despair once we came to the knowledge that the sacrifice was not paid for our sins. It's because God was able to find a man in his son who was willing to completely disregard himself and give of himself unreservedly that you and I can come into this house and worship today the way we worship and know that we're cleansed the way that God has cleansed us and we can love him the way he has loved us in return.

As men, we're called to make all of our decisions for the benefit of our wives and for our children. That's what a giving love is all about. Selfishness has destroyed so many marriages.

I have sat as a counselor over the years and I've seen so many people come in. And when you have trouble in a marriage, very often you have selfishness. Somebody who's sitting there saying, I have a right to my own life.

I have a right to this. I have a right to that. I have a right to my freedom.

I have a right to my sports. I have a right to anything that you can think of. There's such a destructive power in selfishness.

But men, there's such a power of God that's available to those who are willing to take that step and say, in all of my decision making as the head of my home, as the husband of my wife and the father of my children, I vow this day before God that I will make my decisions for the benefit of my wife and my children. I will put myself last. You see, we come to church and we hear the scripture that says that if we're truly a person of God, that we will consider everybody else better than ourselves.

But brothers, it's got to start in our homes. It's not just out in the workplace and in the church, it's got to start in our homes. It's a selfish man that will come in and demand his own way in his house and thus lose the confidence of his wife and provoke his children to anger.

Brothers, humble yourselves before God. God can do a marvelous thing in your home if you will just allow the Holy Spirit to bring you to a place of humility where you say, every decision that I make, I'm going to put myself last from this day forward. I won't go anywhere.

I won't buy anything. I won't do anything unless I know first it's to the benefit of my wife and it's to the benefit of my children. I will place myself last.

There is such freedom in that. There's such power in that. There's such a release of Christ in that.

To put yourself last and put your family first before yourself. It's a pattern that will begin to permeate every part of your life. It's a pattern that will become also part of your service in the house of God.

It's a pattern that will bear witness in your fellowship with your friends. It's a pattern that will allow God to take your life and use your life for his glory because you're not in anything and doing anything for your own gain and your own advantage. You're doing it all for the glory of Christ and for the benefit of those that God has placed in your hand.

We talk a lot of dying to self and taking up the cross of Christ but it has to begin in our home. If any man will come after me, Jesus said, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. And my brothers in Christ, it has to start in our home.

It can't start anywhere else. And thirdly, Jesus also gave us a pattern of forgiveness. Look at the book of Isaiah, please, chapter 50.

Isaiah chapter 50. Keep a marker in Ephesians 5 because we'll be back there later on. He gave us a pattern of forgiveness.

Isaiah chapter 50, verse 1. Thus saith the Lord, where is the bill of your mother's divorcement whom I have put away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you have sold yourselves and for your transgressions is your mother put away. In other words, the Lord is saying, I have not divorced you. I've not pushed you away from me.

Who can produce the paper of divorcement? But you have separated yourself from me. That's what the Lord is saying. And it's for your iniquities and your transgressions that you find yourself far away from me.

Now go to verse 5. I just, just stop there for a moment. There are hurts in marriages that are so deep that only God can heal these hurts. For the last three days as I've been praying and preparing this message, the Lord poured out upon my spirit how the pain of betrayal.

Now I've never been betrayed in marriage. And so aside from a sovereign touch of God, I would not really know the pain of that. But I've spent three days in agony, three days weeping, knowing that God put this thing upon my soul.

And God began to speak to me and said, if your wife betrayed you, would you forgive her? And at first I, I thought, I don't know if I could. There are certain betrayals that are so deep that are, that would hurt so much that it would not be humanly possible to forgive. And then the Lord just kept ministering to me and showing me his heart and brought me to the place where I could say it.

And even though it was only a, it was only really a battle in the realm of God's teaching me something, but brought me to the place where I could say, Lord, I would forgive. And I would forgive unconditionally because you forgave me unconditionally. It was the heart of Jesus.

There are so many relationships that are hindered because of unforgiveness. There are wounds today that God's speaking to that only he can take out of your heart. Only he can take it out of your life.

I don't, I'm not standing here with any trite answers for you, but I can tell you that it is possible in Christ Jesus to forgive those that have wronged you. There are some people that are here today. You're not able to release yourself to your marriage partner because of a betrayal that's happened in the past.

And you have said you're forgiven, but you've not forgotten. And because of that, there's, there's a lack of intimacy in your relationship. There are others here that you were betrayed by those that were in authority over your life, or maybe even in some past relationship you trusted, you released your heart, you loved.

And then the deepest, I believe the deepest wound of all happens in the house of your friends and how much more in the house of those that you love. And all of a sudden, one day somebody came, you didn't expect it. And the sword went into your heart.

You pulled back and you said, I will forgive, but I'll never forget. And you withdrew. And now you find yourself in a situation where you're not able to release yourself because you're not able to forgive.

It's a terrible battle, but Christ went before and he set the example for us as men and women. We see in verse five, in verse one, he said, it was your iniquities that separated you from me. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Have we not? Every one of us in this house today that now know the clothing of Christ, the covering of Christ, the love of Christ. We've had other lovers in our lives, have we not? God in his word counts other

lovers, the love of money, the love of fame, the love of success, the love of ease, the love of pride, the love of friends, the love of you name it. All of these things.

And even sadly to say, even time and again in the Lord's house, those that are called by his name find themselves going out the doors and in a moment of weakness pursuing another lover. And yet we come back into the house of God. And what do we find? Do we find in a bitter savior with his arms folded, pulling back and saying, I trusted you once, I'll never trust you again.

No, we find a savior with his arms wide open. The absolute humility of God just overwhelms me at times. We can come into his presence any time, no matter what we've done.

And his heart is wide open. There's something about Jesus. There's something about his heart.

He is willing to be smitten. He's willing to be bruised. Look in Isaiah chapter 50 verse five.

The Lord, he says, has opened mine ear and I was not rebellious and neither turned away my back, turned away back. Verse six, he says, I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. And I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

Oh, there's something about the depth of the love of Christ that you have to understand today in the spirit, or you'll never be able to fully forgive. We sinned against the Lord. And each one of us in this house could be justifiably accused of adultery in the sight of God.

Justifiably, he could, he could point to us as he does in the book of James and says, you adulterers and adulteresses do not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God. Is there anybody that can honestly say in this house that you've never been a friend of the world, never befriended the things that God hates and the things that crucified Christ that you've never reached out and embrace them and been a friend of these things? No, not one of us in this house, but not only did Jesus forgive us, but Jesus took our shame upon himself. He said, I, I, I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.

And I hid not my face from shame and spitting from some of the things that we have done. You and I, brothers and sisters deserve that somebody should spit in our face and slap us. We deserve it for what we've done a time and again to a holy God.

But Jesus didn't distance himself from us. As a matter of fact, he came down and he ran to where we are and he stood in the gap for us. And he said, whatever reproach my bride has brought upon my name, you slap my face and you spit upon me.

That's the pattern of love that Jesus has shown to us as his church. That's the giving that God calls the husband to give to his wife. There is no other pattern.

It's, it's honey, no matter what you've done, I stand not only beside you, but I stand in front of you. And if anybody will say anything to you, they'll have to speak to me first. And I'm not talking about aggressiveness.

I'm talking about, if there's somebody to have their face spit in, it will be mine and not yours. That's the love of Jesus for his church. An incredible love.

I can't fully comprehend it. I can't fully fathom it, but I do know I love it more every time I read of it. And every time God gives me a renewed understanding of it.

That not only did he pay the price for my sin, but he took my shame upon himself. Hung on a cross with a loin cloth. People passing by wagging their heads and railing on him.

Guards mocking him and putting a crown of thorns on his head and bowing the knee to him. Putting a robe on his back and ripping it off and tearing off the skin as it came off, as it had stuck to the blood that was on his back. Enduring all kinds of mockery and hardship just because of my sin.

Because my iniquities had separated me from him. And he was not willing to be separated from me. So he came and he died and he paid the price for my sin.

Husbands, love your wives. Even as Christ also has loved the church and gave himself for her. In Jeremiah chapter 33, you turn there, please.

Hallelujah. Verse 7. The Lord says, I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return and I will build them as at the first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me and I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me.

Can we honestly say that that's our portion in the house of God this day? And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them. And they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it. That's what the Lord is saying.

I'm going to bring healing into my house in the last day. Thus saith the Lord again, there shall be hurt in this place, which you shall say, you say shall be desolate without man, without beast, even in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate without man and without inhabitant and without beast. In other words, he's saying verse 11 again shall be heard the voice of joy, the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, praise the Lord of hosts for the Lord is good for his mercy and joy forever.

And then that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord for our cause to return the captivity of the land as at the first saith the Lord, the voice of joy, the voice of gladness will be heard once again. God is going to release. I believe with all my heart is going to release a wholeness in many marriage relationships in this house.

And the voice of joy will be heard again in your home, not only in the house of God and the voice of gladness. There'll be a voice of a bridegroom and the voice of the bride, not just the voice of the husband and the voice of the wife, but a bridegroom and a bride. There's a special relationship there that God is talking about.

And the voice of them that shall say, praise the Lord of hosts. The Lord is good. His mercy endures forever.

There'll be an understanding of his mercy. How dare we withhold his mercy from others when he has so freely given us forgiveness and born our shame and our reproach upon him. Can it be said about you today, husbands and wives that are in this house? Can it be said that your mercy endures forever? Can

your husband look at you? Can your wife look at you, sir, and say his mercy, her mercy endures forever.

My wife, my husband has the heart of God, the heart of Christ. Because of their love for me, I've been released. I can come into the house of the Lord and lift up my hands and lift up my voice and bring a sacrifice of praise and say the Lord is good.

His mercy endures forever. Also, back in Ephesians chapter 5, speaking again to the husbands, you know, there's a lot more instruction to the husbands than there is to the wives. Essentially speaking, the wives are told to submit unto the husbands and give him reverence and then everything else falls on the shoulders of the husband.

Verse 26 talks about, after saying in 25, love your wives as Christ loved the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. Men, you and I have the responsibility to be the high priest of our home. We have the responsibility to seek God, to spend time in his word, to admonish our children, to help our wives, to pray with our wives.

You see, God designed your wife to follow you, whether you know it or not. I know that women's liberation has gotten such a stronghold in this society, that there's been a loss of that understanding, but I believe that if women were honest here today, you would, you'd say that if my husband would lead me and if he loved me and I knew his love was unconditional, I would follow him because God designed you that way. You can't change the design.

You can rebel against it, but you can't change it. It's still in the heart. And husbands, God designed you to lead your family and to put in your heart a desire to be revered by your wife.

That means just simply respected by your wife, that she would acknowledge the position that God has put you in. And so you have a responsibility. We do too.

It says as in Christ that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word. I'm not talking about that we stand up and preach some thunderous sermon every night and order our wives and children to get in line, this type of thing. No, we, you try, I won't go very far if you try that.

You'll find a pretty empty house. But that we, we live this book and we walk humbly before God and present to our wives an example that they would feel comfortable in following and to our children, an example that they could say, I'm not talking about perfection. I'm talking about honesty before God, that if we make a mistake, we say so.

That if, if, that we just simply live our lives right before the Lord and spend time in God's word and seek God for our house. And God promises that our, our wives, if we would do this, the book of Psalms, he promises that our wives would be as, as, as a vine that grows on the sides of our house and our children would be like olive plants around about our table. In other words, the presence of the Lord, our wives would be fruitful and our, our children, even if they struggle for a season, but God gives us that promise that there would be, there would be a healing oil that would be part of their lives.

Now, another part of giving is understanding that we're created differently and have different roles. God has placed different instincts in, in, in women than in men. For example, with children, women are designed to respond to the needs of the children.

You see, God just simply made, made women that way. I remember when my two sons were younger, they would be out playing in the yard and they'd come in and they would whine and cry and whine. You know how it goes.

I couldn't make out a word they were saying. The two of them would come in and they would whine and cry. You know, they sort of half cry and half talk.

Moms know what that's all about. I couldn't make out a word that they were saying. And so after they would get it all out, then she'd say to them, well, you let him have the blue truck and you give him the green shovel.

And then you, you play over here and you do that. And Teresa would be able to totally analyze the situation and bring healing to that situation. And I'm sitting there like wondering, how did you get that out of that? I never heard a word that they were saying.

The end of side one. You may now turn the tape over to side two. There are certain cries that I was deaf to, yet my wife would hear that particular cry because they cry a lot when kids are small.

And she would hear that particular cry and just up out of her seat and gone, knowing something is wrong. I'm sitting there wondering what's the rush. I've heard this thing a thousand times before.

God made us differently. We're not the same. We don't think the same.

He made us with different roles and very often marriages run into conflict because people just fail to understand that we are not the same. We're not given the same role. We don't think the same.

Men think bridges, jobs, bills. Men think very logistically. Women think curtains.

I remember when I was a younger preacher, I remember coming home and I was out preaching and people were getting saved and are just filled with the fire of God and sharing my testimony and going all over the place. And I'd come home and walk in the old farmhouse and I'll just tell Teresa what was happening. And people were getting saved and filled with the Holy Ghost and God's kingdom was moving forward.

And right in the middle of all my sharing, she'd say, we need to get curtains on the window here. We need to put curtains over here. I remember one day getting so exasperated with her.

I said, listen, I said, people are going to hell all over the world. And, and, and you want to talk about curtains. And I just didn't understand that that was something that God had put in her heart until an older sister in the Lord one day sat me down and she said, brother, come on.

And I want to show you something. She opened the book of Exodus to chapter 26 and verse one, and it all begins there. It's when God wanted to establish a place for the ark and it's chapter after chapter, after chapter of instructions on how to make the curtains that were to go all around the ark.

She said, curtains are important to God. So guys, speaking from my great lifelong experience, if you want a happy home, give your wife money to get curtains. We're only one year.

I got to move on here, but we're only one year in our new home in New Jersey. And we have, we wallpapered the kitchen and we put up beautiful, what I thought beautiful curtains and everything was in

order. And only just a month or so ago or two ago that the wallpaper came down in the kitchen and the curtains came down.

And as, as, as best as I can understand, it's because it doesn't match the teapot or something like that. I'm not quite sure. But I have learned not to ask.

I, I, I suggested changing the teapot, but I got one of these looks like you just don't understand anything, do you? And so we're in the process of getting new wallpaper and new curtains for the kitchen. And what it does for me is it makes me very, very careful that I don't break the teapot in the future. Guys, I want to say something and girls do as well.

The Holy spirit is romantic. I want you to go to the song of Solomon chapter two, right before the book of Isaiah, the Holy spirit is romantic. There are all kinds of men, especially I'm going to just labor on the side of the men today, a little more than the side of the ladies, but I, there's all kinds of men that come home and say, I'm spirit filled and tongue talking and on fire for God and full of the Holy spirit.

And then they grab the newspaper and hide behind it all night and put their feet up on the coffee table and read the paper and snort and grunt all night. And there's, there's hardly an ounce of romance in them. If you're spirit filled, if the Holy spirit is within you, the Holy spirit is romantic.

There's no getting around it. The Holy spirit inspired the writer of the song of Solomon and the Holy spirit was talking about the romance between Christ and his church. That's what the whole song of Solomon is all about.

It's the love. It's the yearning of Jesus for his bride. You and I one day, when we come into his presence chapter two in verse eight, listen to this, the voice of my beloved, I want you as couples.

Now, as I read this to picture your husband or wife coming home at the end of a work day and see how this applies to your home, the voice of my beloved, behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a row or a young heart. Behold, he stand behind our wall.

He looked forth at the windows showing himself through the lattice. My beloved spake and said unto me, rise up, my love, my fair one and come away for low. The winter has passed.

The rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The time of singing of birds has come.

The voice of the turtle. That means the turtle dove is heard in our land. The fig tree puts forth their green figs and the vines with the tender grape.

Give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one and come away. When I asked you men, when's the last time you came home? All you spirit filled guys and said to your wife, arise, my fair one, come away.

Let's go for supper. Let's go out tonight. You've worked very hard this last little while and I just want to show you how much I love you and how much I care.

Oh, my dove that are in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see your countenance. Let me hear your voice for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely. Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines for our vines of tender grapes.

My beloved is mine and I am his. He feedeth among the lilies until the day break and the shadows flee away. Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bethlehem.

The Holy Spirit is romantic and you cannot justifiably say that you're enjoying the blessedness of being spirit filled if you don't know what it's like to be romantic in your relationship, in your marriage relationship. It takes, it's an attitude of heart and then as in everything else, we've got to lean upon the Holy Spirit and some of you are going to say today, God, Holy Spirit, break the pattern of lovelessness in my life. Break the pattern of being unromantic.

Lord, there's so many things that you have for me that I'm missing. There's so many things that you have for my marriage relationship that I'm not enjoying. God, break this and also too for single people that are here today.

You need to understand that the voice of your beloved is always at your door. He's always wooing. He's always speaking and saying, rise up my love, my fair one and come away.

He's always reaching out. He's always saying, oh my dove that are in the clefts of the rock and the secret places of the stairs, let me see your countenance. Let me hear your voice for sweet is your voice and your countenance is comely.

You have Christ and you have Christ alone at this particular point in your life and don't think that you're alone because he said, I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. He is after all your eternal husband.

He is your eternal bridegroom. He is the one that you're going to be betrothed to forever and ever and ever. All relationships here on this earth will one day pass away, but our relationship with Christ is eternal.

So in some respects, I suppose you are a step ahead. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

The sexuality of the Christian marriage, I believe is of a much higher calling than that of this world. This world brothers and sisters has sold us a phony bill of goods. There is a preoccupation with nakedness that God never intended to be part of the sexual relationship between a husband and his wife.

I want to show you this in Genesis chapter three, please. If you go back there, Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, having been created by God. And in verse six, it says, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, Genesis three, six, and that it was pleasant to the eyes and the tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat.

And the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons. You see, Adam and Eve were created by God. Adam and Eve were created by God to, for fellowship.

They were created to populate the earth. And until they fell, until they fell from the grace of God, they did not know that they were naked. And my personal belief is that God's ideal for the intimacy of marriage is other than the world would have us to believe.

Since the day in the fall of the garden of Gethsemane, there has been a preoccupation with nakedness. Would you agree with me? All you have to do is walk out of this building and down the street among fallen men, fallen women, a lusting after nakedness. You see it on billboards.

You see it on, if you watch television, you see it on television, you see it in magazines, an absolute preoccupation with nakedness, a distorted and a perverted view of sexuality and God's high ideal for the intimacy of sexual relationship in marriage. They did not know they were naked. And therefore God has a higher ideal for marriage.

The act of marriage is not to be the way the world has taught many, even to sad to say in the house of the Lord, many people have been taught by the world about sexuality. They brought into the house of God and brought into the marriage relationship. Uh, the, the thought that if you're not living or responding the way the world does that somehow in the house of God, that we're living a lower level or missing something.

But I want to tell you something. When you fully understand Jesus, when you fully understand the intimacy of marriage in the context of Christ and his church, then the deep realization will come upon your heart of how much the world has been robbed and how much they're really missing. If, if in our intimate relationship of marriage, all the only focus that we have is nakedness, or there's a high degree of focus upon nakedness, then you know, guys, what kind of a pressure that puts upon your wife, you know, what kind of a fear she will come to live under of growing old and going the way of all flesh.

When, when everything just begins to change it, we all use, lose our, our youthfulness and get older looking. And if your preoccupation is nakedness, if that's the only type of sexual intimacy, you know, or that's the greatest degree of your response, then do you realize the pressure that you put upon that marriage? That's why many Christian marriages, even in the house of the Lord, suffer divorce and infidelity and adultery because they've never, ever come to the place of understanding what true sexual intimacy is in the context of God's creation. Adam and Eve did not know they were naked.

Adam and Eve would have had a relationship one with another and nakedness would have had no part of it because they didn't even know. They didn't have the knowledge of it until they sinned. And that needs to get in your spirit.

There's a higher calling for intimacy in Christian marriage than anything that this world will ever advocate or ever be able to offer. And I fear sometimes in the house of God that so many people have been sold a phony bill of goods and get to the place where they have to partake in the things of the world in order to be able to experience any type of fulfillment, even in a sense of just carnal fulfillment, in the intimacy of their marriage relationship. In Ephesians chapter 5, again, verse 31, Paul says, For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and they too shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Remember again, the type and shadow for all aspects of marriage are given to us in the pattern of Christ and his church. There's something more in the relationship with Jesus and you and I than just our attractiveness or what we look like.

You understand, there's a heart-to-heart communication. And that's really the key to intimacy in marriage, in all aspects of marriage. It's learning to be one in heart with Christ and subsequently becoming one in heart with each other.

It's openness. It's honesty. It's forgiveness.

It's communication. That's what sexuality is all about. It's an ultimate form of communication.

It's the consummation of the rest of our lives. It's the expression of our commitment one to another. It's the expression of an open-heartedness one to another.

It's the expression of understanding that I am yours and you are mine. Every aspect of my life is open to you, every aspect of my heart. We're walking together in love and unity and forgiveness.

And sexual fulfillment is simply the result of selfless commitment and an open-hearted sharing and communication, just as in our relationship with Christ, where the two are no longer two but they become one. And that's God's design for marriage. Brothers and sisters, don't ever let yourself be sold a phony bill of goods or fall short of what God has for you in your marriage.

I would agree, if you refuse to forgive and will not have an openness and a communication, a heart-to-heart communication in that marriage relationship, then you will be robbed of true fulfillment in the intimate part of your relationship. But God didn't design it to be that way. Remember, you will always respond a certain way because we are in a carnal body.

But remember, God, through the Holy Spirit, has elevated us out of thinking and living like the world. We're not to be like the world. We're not to think like the world.

We're not to act like the world. We're not to even think for a moment that we're any lesser losing something because we're not in the world anymore. But Jesus has called us to a higher plane in every part of our marriage, a more fulfilling plane.

The world talks about sexual liberation, but I want to tell you, in Christ Jesus, there's a greatest liberation in every aspect of marriage that you'll ever know. Heart-to-heart intimacy, heart-to-heart communion, heart-to-heart, just a natural expression of what's been going on in our lives all day and all week. Beware of losing your intimacy with Christ and your marriage partner because of treachery.

That's a sin that the prophet Malachi in Malachi chapter 2 talked about. Just before the book of Matthew, please, Malachi chapter 2. He talked about the sin of treachery. Malachi 2.13, he talks to a people that are coming into the house of the Lord and covering the altar of the Lord with tears and weeping and crying out, but God says, I've got something against you.

In verse 13, Malachi 2.13, he says, And this have you done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears and weeping and crying out, insomuch that he regards not the offering any more, nor receives it with goodwill at your hand. Yet you say, Wherefore? Because the Lord has been witness against thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously. Yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant.

You see, especially men, I want to speak to you, running, you've got to in Christ, the Bible says that you can bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. And it's time to close the curtain on the theater of the mind. That means past experiences, things that you've seen, places you've been.

If you're going to have wholeness in your relationship with God and with your wife, there's time that we need to acknowledge the sin of dealing treacherously against the wife of our youth. And that could be men of any age that's looking lustfully at another woman, longingly, continuously. I'm not talking about a momentary lapse.

I'm not talking about just something where you're drawn away for a second, but you pull away because the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart. I'm talking about giving place to treacherous dealings in the heart. I'm talking about being in a position of intimacy with your wife, but in your heart and your mind, you're somewhere else.

And that goes for the women too as well. It's the sin of dealing treacherously against the wife or the husband of your youth. In verse 15, he says, And did he not make one? Yet had he the residue of the Spirit.

And wherefore, one, that you might seek a godly seed. Therefore, take heed to your spirit and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. Now, he's speaking in Malachi about the context of putting away in divorce, but putting away comes in stages.

It doesn't come just all at once. It comes because there's been a treacherous dealing in the heart. We've got to put these things away in the house of the Lord and say, God, this is the wife, this is the husband you've given me.

This person is the ideal for me, the best. This person is beautiful. Lord, help me to understand beauty in your perspective.

Help me to understand and see things the way you see them. God, let there not be treachery in my heart. And many people are guilty of this thing because of past relationships.

That's why I always encourage young people to stay pure before they get married, because they will not have to go through the struggle of getting out of their mind past relationships and things that they were involved in. And many of you know what that's all about. But I would say to you today, ask the Holy Spirit to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ and say, when I'm with my wife, when I'm with my husband, I shall not deal treacherously in my mind against them.

When I'm away from them, when I'm out in the streets, when I'm traveling to and fro, I shall not embrace treachery against the wife of my youth in my heart by lusting after another and causing a deep insecurity and fear to come into my marriage partner because they know that there's something not right in the heart. Beware of treachery. Single people that are here today, please also beware lest your longing for a marriage partner becomes treachery against the Lord.

Remember that the Lord is the partner of your youth. He is the one that you are betrothed to. And the scripture says, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you.

Psalms 37 verse 4, Psalmist David says, delight yourself also in the Lord and he shall give you the desires of your heart. Don't deal treacherously against the Lord by longing for a marriage partner more than you long for him. God won't withhold anything from you that you need.

Do you believe that today? If you really need it, God won't withhold. This is evidenced in the Garden of Eden. He had, he formed Adam for fellowship and he had Adam all to himself and God came down in the cool of the day and he had Adam.

If God was a selfish God, he would have just kept Adam all to himself, wouldn't he? I'm not sharing you with anybody else. But we see in Genesis chapter 2, turn there please, this will be my last book I turn to

except for Ephesians. In Genesis chapter 2 and verse 18, we see the unselfish character of God.

Here he has Adam for fellowship. He loves Adam. He comes down to commune with Adam.

And it's certainly the relationship with Adam is meeting a deep need in his heart. And in Genesis 2, 18, we see the absolute unselfishness of God. It says, and the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone.

I will make a help meet for him. It's not good. He saw a need in Adam's life.

And if God looks down today and sees a need in your life, if you will delight yourself in him, God will meet that need in your life. God will reach down, God will touch you, but seek first his kingdom, delight yourself first in him and let him, don't be looking this way and that way for fulfillment. Look this way.

And God will bring into your life the things that you need. And in verse 21, I just, I get it. I like this verse because it says, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam.

And he slept and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh thereof. And the ribs which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

He shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother shall cleave to his flesh, his wife rather, and the two shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

In other words, they were, they were, they were both exposed to each other. They were, there was, there was an open-heartedness. That's God's ideal for marriage.

And interesting just to note that I've often said at weddings before that Eve was not taken from a bone from Adam's hand as if she would have to be carried for the rest of her life. You know, she was not taken from his foot. She was not to be trod upon.

She wasn't taken from his head either to have to do his thinking for him for the rest of his days. But she was taken from a rib bone that was right beside his heart. She was intended by God to be loved, to be cherished as Christ loves his church.

And lastly, Ephesians 5, if you go back there one more time. Verse 22, wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. In other words, acknowledge that the position that God has placed your husband in is his choice.

Irrespective of what kind of man he is or what kind of decisions he makes, God has placed him there as your husband and as the head of your home. And as you would submit unto the Lord, or in submission to God, let's put it that way, he asks you to acknowledge the place that he's put your husband in. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and he is the Savior of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Now that means everything that is godly, everything that is lawful, everything that is according to the Word and the will of God. Wives, reverence your husband.

In verse 33, the scripture says, nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself. And the wife see that she reverence her husband. Reverence your husband.

Acknowledge the place that God has placed him in. Pray for him that God would change him and make him a godly man that you can follow. Don't nag him.

Let me just read this to you. Don't turn there. First Peter chapter 3, likewise ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands that if any obey not the word they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.

While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear, whose adorning let it be that outward adorning of plating of the hair, or let it not be rather that outward adorning of plating of the hair and wearing of gold or putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible even the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves being in subjection to their own husbands even as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord whose daughters you are as long as you do well and are not afraid with any amazement and are not afraid I like that with any amazement. Don't nag your husband.

We can't change each other. We can pray for one another. We can encourage one another and God can do the changing.

Hallelujah. Would you stand? No, don't stand. Don't stand.

The Apostle Paul says also in verse 21 we're to submit ourselves to one another in the fear of God. Understanding in the context of marriage that there are two people in that marriage relationship and it's a partnership. God has designed that relationship for wholeness.

He's designed it to be a type and shadow of he and his church here on this earth. Firstly I'd like to ask the married couples that are here today who would like to stand and reaffirm your vows one to another after hearing this word today. Would you please stand? All the married couples, husbands, wives, maybe you didn't plan on doing this today.

Maybe you could just grab your wife or husband by the arm and say honey we haven't done planned on this but let's do this. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

You're going to reaffirm today having heard this word your vow to your husband, your vow to your wife and I fully believe that when you go home today there's going to have to be some conversations. There's going to have to be some talk. I'm not going to invite people to come and weep at this altar today but there's going to need to be some reconciliation as God has spoken to some hearts today.

Going to need to be forgiveness. There's going to need to be some openness. I would just encourage you to try it if you've never done it before and watch when you walk it God's way what happens to every aspect of your relationship.

Now firstly men, would you take your wife by her two hands and just look her in the eye. Oh dear. Okay.

Hallelujah. Some of you guys are stiffer than cardboard but you're getting there. Men, I'm going to ask you to repeat this vow to your wife to reaffirm this vow after me and then we're going to do the same for the

ladies.

Say I and your name. I. Just look at your wife as you say this. Reaffirm my commitment to you.

Say your wife's name. Yeah, a little louder. As my lawful wedded wife, given to me by God, by the power of the Holy Spirit within me, I promise to love you as Christ loves me.

Please forgive me for the wrongs that I have done as I also forgive you. I love you. I will always cherish you and keep myself holy and only for you in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or for worse, until death do us part.

And now madam if you'll just look your husband in the eye and say these words. I and your name. Reaffirm my commitment to you in your husband's name.

As my lawful wedded husband, given to me by God, by the power of the Holy Spirit within me, I promise to love you as Christ loves me. Please forgive me for the wrongs that I have done as I also forgive you. I love you.

I will pray for you that God will strengthen you to be the man that I know He has called you to be. I will always cherish you and keep myself holy and only for you in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or for worse, until death do us part. Now you may kiss the bride.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. This is the conclusion of the tape.

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