

Two Great Purposes of Marriage - Session 3

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes that the primary purpose of marriage is to conform individuals to the image of Christ through understanding God's sovereignty and navigating conflicts.

Duration: 57:36

Scripture: Romans 8:28-30

Topics: "Marriage"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life of grace. He encourages both men and women to embody grace in all aspects of their lives, including parenting and relationships. The preacher shares a personal anecdote about his old car and reflects on the expectations he has for himself as a servant of God. He also highlights the need to rely on God's power rather than our own efforts and to seek His guidance in all things. The sermon concludes with a reminder that the gospel is central to the Christian life and that marriage and family should be viewed as opportunities for personal growth and transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

Well, it's a great privilege to be here again this morning. And I appreciate the pastor, the pastors here, and appreciate the announcement this morning about giving to the ministry, but let me make a few clarifications. I have a salary from HeartCry.

I receive no honorariums for my preaching. And I receive no royalties for my books. So if you give today, it's all going to a mission.

It's called HeartCry Missionary Society. But if you're here today, you are not in any way promised an extra blessing if you give to anything. If you're not giving to your local church, please do not give a dime to anything that we're doing here today.

And one of the things about HeartCry that I just wanted to mention is, it was started, most people believe, in order to support missionaries around the world, and that's what we do. But the primary reason for starting HeartCry was actually based upon the life and ministry of George Mueller. He started an orphanage in Bristol, last century or more than that, 19th century.

But the ministry was, his purpose was to show the world that God would meet all the needs. If he never made his needs known, that God would meet all the needs of the orphans. And he had a series of things, of convictions, that they would never share their needs, that they would never manipulate God's people, that they would never ask for money.

And over his life, some estimate that about 10,000 orphans were taken care of. Well, for the last 20 years, it's been the same with HeartCry. We don't raise funds, we don't make our needs known, we don't send out newsletters saying we would do this if we just tell people what we're doing.

And in all these years, it has not been about the faithfulness of men in prayer, it's been about the faithfulness of God, even when men were terribly, terribly weak. And I can tell you something, that He is a God in whom you can trust for everything. But, I must warn you also about something.

You will only see the miraculous hand of God to the degree you cut yourself free from the arm of the flesh. God doesn't come around just to help us. He comes around to save us.

And that's a very important point. To make all your needs known to Him, but at the same time, repent of seeking to do things in the power of the flesh. Alright, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank You for this day. Thank You for Your kindness to us. And I pray, dear God, that Lord, You would take away all confusion of mind, that You would give us clarity of thought.

Dear God, You would help us to communicate Your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen. Alright, well, last night, you came here thinking you were going to be in a marriage conference, and you ended up being in a gospel conference.

Because, to be honest with you, everything in the Christian life is about the gospel. It is about our loyalty and our devotion to the person of Jesus Christ. And apart from that, apart from that, everything else, let me just say it this way, is rot.

We must focus upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, having said all that last night, this morning we're going to look at some things about marriage. Some very important truths.

Well, let's start. I want us to go to the book of Romans. The book of Romans chapter 8. I'm going to read to you what I believe is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible with regard to marriage.

Romans chapter 8, verse 28. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.

And these whom He predestined, He also called. And these whom He called, He also justified. And these whom He justified, He also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things if God is for us? Who is against us? Now, you may say to yourself, Brother Paul, again, this passage has nothing to do with marriage. No, this passage has everything to do with marriage. And this is one of the great points I want to bring to you.

That if you just learn a few principles on how to do marriage, or a few principles on how to do family, yet you do not have the foundations of Christianity laid correctly, then everything falls apart. It's like taking a

wall that's about to fall over and just taking some whitewash and painting it, or taking some plaster and putting over the bricks. Nevertheless, although it is beautiful, you're going to have a wall that falls.

So you need more than just a book on marriage to have a good marriage. What do you need? Are you ready? Systematic theology. Systematic theology.

Because my marriage, the strength of it, will be determined on how well I understand the attributes of God. The strength of my marriage and family will be determined on how well I understand God's sovereignty. His mercy.

His redemptive work in Christ. His continued work in the believer in sanctification. His providence over everything.

You see, everything in my marriage is held together, not by my knowledge of a few principles, or not because I've read some really good books on ten ways to do marriage. My family is held together because of what I believe about God. About God's work.

And about God's providence in my life. A lot of times when people have, and this is why I love and respect so much my pastor. People have problems about marriage and they come to him and they expect him to start talking about marriage.

And when they come to him, he starts talking to them about their view of God. What do they think about God? What do they know about God? And then about their view with regard to the atonement. And then about justification and things like that.

And you know, it doesn't take long before the people begin to see the problem in my marriage, the problem with my children, the problem with everything is that my foundation is entirely faulty. Now here, this beautiful passage tells us one of the greatest, if not the greatest, other than the glory of God, one of the greatest purposes of marriage. And what is it? That through my marriage to a specific woman, and through that woman's marriage to me, we will be made conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now I want to give you a few things that often times I hear when someone comes in, when a young man comes in and tells me he's in love. A young man walks into my office and he has that look on his face. And he says, I'm in love.

The first thing I do is I hit him with a two before. I found that's just a very, very good thing to do. I don't know why, it just seems to have an impact upon them.

And I mean, rear back and hit him hard. Don't use a pine board. Go for oak.

Pine will break. But a lot of times what I'll do is I'll ask him. I'll say, okay, okay, what do you mean? Why do you want to marry her? And what is the answer? Well, you know, you know, sometimes they try to play the spiritual card.

Well, you know, she's just so spiritual. But a lot of times they just go ahead and tell me the truth. Well, she's beautiful.

I go, well, what else? Well, she's beautiful. I like being around her. I feel good when I'm with her.

I can talk to her. I just feel like she completes me. I just feel like I just when I'm with her, it's just it's right.

It's what what I need. And so I sit there and I go, okay, now, so that I know that I'm understanding you. Let me process what you're saying and then share it back with you.

Is that okay? Well, sure. I sit there for a minute, I think, and I go, so what you're telling me is you want to be with this girl because she meets all your self centered idolatrous desires. And he goes, no, that's not what that's not what I mean.

And I said, but young man, that's what you said. That's what you told me. You want to be with her because she's beautiful.

Okay. What happens when she's not beautiful? Or what happens when someone else comes along? That's more beautiful than she is. And they will.

So what are you going to do? You can do it. 70% of all the other men do. What are you going to do? When she's no longer that.

And you say that you can talk to her. Oh, you can talk to her. You go on all night talking to her.

What's going to happen? Young man, when you can't talk to her, as a matter of fact, you can't talk to her so much that she complains about you not talking to her. Does that sound familiar? Wives. And what's going to happen when, when someone else comes along that you can talk to a lot easier than you can talk to her.

Because, oh, they will. They'll come along. Whether it's a bank teller.

Or a secretary. What's going to happen? You see, is that what marriage is really all about? That I met someone that really makes me feel good. Really, really just.

Rocks my world. Completes me. You see, one of the reasons why people get so depressed in marriage is because they have these goals about marriage that aren't realistic.

And when I read a lot of these marriage books, I see the same thing. Some of these guys ought to simply stop writing about marriage. Because I don't think they're being truthful in a lot of ways.

Now, marriage, yes, is wonderful. And can be very good. And solid.

And all these things. But I want to tell you something. That's not really putting our finger on the pulse of God's plan for marriage.

What is God's greatest good? What is His *sumum bonum*? His greatest good in all things that He does. What is it? That we be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And so, if you're married to a woman or a man, that is this splendid, splendid Christian, almost perfect in all their ways, that continues on with you for 50 years, without failure, without flaw, well, praise the Lord.

That's a wonderful thing. You married the right person. But also, if you're married to a person who's completely the opposite of that.

Completely the opposite of that. What I don't want you to think is this. I married the wrong person.

There's conflict. There's struggle. Our personalities clash.

They're either not Christian, or they are Christian, but they're not as fired up as I am. Or they're just as fired up as I am. They just express it in a completely different way.

But there just seems to be conflict in every corner. And when that happens, you think, I married the wrong person. No, you didn't.

No, you didn't. See, here's what it comes down to. God knows exactly what you need in order to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now, you've got to ask yourself a question. Do you want what God wants, or what you want? He knows exactly what you need. Let me give you an example.

There was a seminary student, and his wife couldn't bear children. And she finally gets pregnant, and she has a miscarriage. Then she finally gets pregnant again, and she has a miscarriage.

And on the night of that second miscarriage, he has to go to the pharmacy. So he goes outside. He turns on the car.

And the radio happens to come on. And it announced right then, some radio station, about some woman who was famous for her immoralities. A famous singer.

Just absolutely famous for her indiscretions. She was having her second child from a second mate, or whatever you would want to call it. And he got angry.

He said, God, there's your daughter in there. My wife. She loves you with all her heart.

All she wants is to have a child, and to raise that child in the fear of the Lord, to honor you. And you will not give her a child. But here's this woman who hates you.

Who applauds everything that's against you. And she has two children. How can this be right? He goes to the pharmacy.

He comes back. Now, this is a very, very strict, sovereign grace seminary. It's not a charismatic seminary I'm talking about.

But God does move, folks. He comes back, and he pulls into his designated parking lot. And when he gets ready to pull into his parking spot, he sees somebody standing there.

A fellow student. And he's like, you know, you're in my parking space. He said, no.

He said, why are you here? The student looked at him and said this. You listen to me right now. God knows exactly what you and your wife must pass through to be conformed to the image of Christ.

You see that? He knows exactly the mate you need so that you might be conformed to the image of Christ. You did not make a mistake. Something didn't go wrong.

There's a purpose and a plan. Every person in this building could split up from their wife or their husband, and if they searched long enough, they would find someone who was more compatible as far as the secular world sees it. That's why these silly Christian dating things and everything are so sick.

I hate them. Why? Because they're doing something totally contrary to what God's seeking to do. You tell me exactly what you want, and I'll find her for you.

I'll find him for you. So that there is this perfect compatibility. Perfect compatibility does not for the most part usually lead to people being conformed to the image of Christ.

I work with, when I had more time, I made wooden hunting bows. And you start off, after you cut the thing down with a saw and you split it with an axe and you let the wood dry out, you take a horse rasp. Now, I don't know if you know what a horse rasp is, but they're about this big, and they're not something that you use to do fine work with.

With a horse rasp, you can go over a piece of wood one time and it just shaves off some serious wood. You can go over your finger too, it'll shave off some serious skin. It hurts, it's rough, it's coarse, it's conflictive, but I can take that thing and shape a bow so fast.

Where you take a piece of sandpaper, you'd be working all day and you wouldn't accomplish anything. If I can take that horse rasp, I can take off a pound of wood in a half hour. Now, I am not saying, again, that marriage is always supposed to be conflictive or that there's not to be any compatibility.

No, I'm not going to that extreme. I'm not saying that. What I'm trying to tell you is this.

Is that sometimes when you look at people who do conferences about marriage or you read books from guys who write books about marriage, you look at that and you go, oh gosh, I wish I had a marriage like theirs. Well, maybe the reason why they're so good in speaking about marriage and writing books about marriage is because they have to struggle just like you and they're clinging to Christ and they learn things in Scripture that help them grow in their victory. The problems, the conflicts, the personality differences, everything, it's all designed.

It's designed for a purpose. For you to be conformed to the image of Christ. Now let me ask you, what would you rather have? Conformity to Christ or a perfect storybook marriage? And if you choose perfect storybook marriage, congratulations, you're an idolater.

You're an idolater. Conformity to the image of Christ. I can't remember where I read this, so I'm always afraid to quote it, but it's so good and I've been looking for it.

I mean, the Puritans, if they sat down and wrote a track, it was like 300,000 pages long. So sometimes I read stuff and I don't mark it down and I never can find my way back. There was a group of men like that and they were all in a meeting.

It was a pastoral meeting. And I don't know what celebration it was or something, but they were all kind of going around and giving thanks to God for their wives. Many of them spoke and just said glorious things about their wives and everything else.

And then the meeting finished and one brother was there and he realized one of the pastors was sitting over in a corner and he knew that the man's wife was notorious. Was notorious for the difficulty that she caused him. I mean, public difficulty that she caused him.

Fought him tooth and nail in everything that had to do with marriage, with ministry. And he went over and he says, oh brother, what an indiscretion, how foolish of us. Why did we do this? Praising all the virtues of

our wives and what a blessing they've been to us and here you sit.

We know how much you struggle with your wife. I'm so sorry. And that preacher looked at him and said, no brother, I have more cause to praise God for my wife than all you men put together.

Because don't you know, it is through all this conflict, all this fire, all this trial, all this hardship that God has used every bit of it to conform me to the image of Christ. To make my heart into something it could have never been. It could have never been except through a person like her.

Now, I'm not giving an excuse for sin. I'm not saying that marriage is just a battlefield. I don't feel a young person don't run away from marriage because of what you're hearing right now.

But my whole point is, it's like I said, sometimes I'm sitting up on a panel and I'm hearing all these men wax eloquently and I've got two options. One is to think, man, they really do have perfect marriages and I need to step down from this panel or there's not enough being said here. There's not enough being said.

Marriage is wonderful and we can see Christ in our marriage and I can see Christ in mine. Yet at the same time, there are conflicts. Two sinners living together in the same house.

And through that there is the opportunity to see our sin, to see our selfishness and to grow into the image of Jesus Christ. And so I see that as one of the great purposes. So if you're here today and you have one of these astounding marriages that just is pristine, never a conflict, well, praise the Lord.

But if you're sitting here right now and you go, I don't even know if my spouse is saved or there seems to be conflict in the house all the time, praise the Lord. That is what you need. But also realize this, your spouse isn't the only one that has the problems.

Wives, it's not just your husband. It's not just his lack of conformity. And husbands, it's not just your wife's lack of conformity.

God put both of you together because He knows that both of you need to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Do you see that? It's so important. And when you young men and you young women get married, you need to realize that, I've told people this so often, young people, I said, look, I have been all over the world, I don't know how many times.

I have seen all the things I ever dreamed of seeing, done everything I've ever dreamed of doing. But there is nothing more wonderful, nothing more wonderful than a wife and a family, than a wife and children. Nothing more exciting, not going down the Amazon or being in the Himalayas or riding an elephant through tiger territory.

None of that, none of that can compare to one morning getting up with a family, with a family. Preaching to 10,000 people cannot be compared to one day of doing devotions with your wife and your children. So it is wonderful.

But go into it knowing that the purpose of this is to make me like Jesus. Now, I want to share with you something about God and I don't want you to get mad at Him because that is a very foolish thing to do. Because if you do get mad at Him, it is just because you are unwise and short-sighted.

God, according to this text, is sovereign over everything. He is sovereign over the life of the believer and He is sovereign over that life of the believer before they become a believer. And He is sovereign over your

life before the world was even created.

And He will be sovereign over your life until the end and there will be no end. He is sovereign over everything. And although when we sin, it is our sin, it is not caused by Him, He does not create, He does not make evil, He does not tempt people to do evil.

When we sin, it is our sin. And yet at the same time, He is even sovereign over that. Because some of you might say, well, that is true, but I married a person and it was disobedience because it was an unbeliever.

Yes, that is your sin. And yet at the same time, He is sovereign even over that. To use that to conform you to His image.

Now, here is what I want to share with you. God has given you a mate that is strong in all the areas where he or she must be strong so that you are not tempted beyond what you can bear. He has given you a mate with certain qualities that make your marriage possible.

And He has orchestrated those qualities. But also I want you to see something that is even more important. God in His sovereignty has given you a mate.

And you know what I am talking about. He has given you, let me put it this way. There are certain things that you want in marriage that are so, so very important to you.

And there were certain things you wanted in a mate that were so, so very important to you. And the mate that God gave you fails in some of those areas that are most important to you. God did that.

God did that. Why? So that you would learn to be conformed to the image of Christ. When I think of the person of Jesus Christ, when I think of Him, this is what I think about.

Grace. Grace. I think of mercy.

I think of unconditional love. Now let me ask you a question. If you are to be conformed to the image of Christ, what should be some characteristics of your life? Grace.

Mercy. And unconditional love. Now let me ask you another question.

How can you learn unconditional love if you are married to a person who meets all the conditions? How can you learn mercy if you are married to a person who never fails you? How can you learn to show grace if you are married to a person who always earns the best? You see, there is a sense in the Christian life in which we are striving to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. There is another aspect in the Christian life in which we are falling short of that goal. Oftentimes, when we are very serious about piety and being perfect as our Father is perfect, it can lead to a hardness, a sense of a demanding spirit in which we are striving ourselves and we are expecting everyone else to strive.

We are desiring this perfection and we expect everyone else. But it seems to be we are a lot more lenient with ourselves when we fail than we are with those who fail around us. And one of the things that has to mark our homes, our marriages, in the midst of the conflict at times, in the midst of the fighting at times, in the midst of the conflict of personalities and all sorts of things, what has to define our marriage and define our life with our children is unconditional love.

That I or my wife respond in such a way as to demonstrate how Jesus Christ responds to our sin now that He has made atonement for it. There is a brother named Norm Wakefield. I don't know if you know him, but he is a friend of mine.

He teaches on marriage. And he taught me something a few years ago that I thought was amazing. He said, Now, Paul, I am married to a godly woman.

Godly woman. He said, But I will go out and preach and she will be home, you know, with the kids or whatever and I am on this long journey preaching. And I preach and let's say that it was a special meeting.

I mean, God came down. People were converted. Marriages were helped.

People, you know, when I left there they were singing. It was great victory. God really used me.

He said, I can count on the fact that when I get on that plane and I fly home and I get in my car and I drive to my house. He goes, This is what I expect. Here comes God's champion.

I have prayed all week. I have studied. I have preached.

God has saved people. Here comes God's champion. And I expect to arrive at the door of my house with my wife throwing open the door, hugging me.

Here comes the evangelist of God and my little children throwing flowers at me. And he goes, You know what I get? Just the opposite. I open the door.

My wife turns around and says, Well, it's about time you got home because there are some kids in here and I have got them locked in the back room. And you go in there and stop slacking as with regard to being a father and a husband and you get in there and you do something and then mow the yard. And he goes, I get so mad.

I think, How can you? I have been fighting the devil. You don't know what it takes for me to preach. You don't know what this costs me.

You don't know. And I come back and there is no flowers. There is no candy.

There is no nothing. Now, he said this. He goes, You know what? We are seeing some idolatry revealed, aren't we? Unmet expectations.

We are seeing some idolatry. But here is the bigger picture. He said this and it just amazed me.

He said, My wife loves the Lord. She does. And he goes, You know what? And listen, I will fight you on this so don't disagree with me or disagree with me afterwards and then we will fight.

He said, You know what? God could give my wife grace because she is a child of God. He could give her grace at that moment to open up that door, to hug me, to not barrage me with the problems of the week, to take me into the living room and say, How did it go? And you know, lavish stuff on me and stuff. He could give her grace to do that.

But he doesn't. Why? He said, First of all, to reveal the idolatry in my own heart of what I expect. But secondly, he is giving me an opportunity at that door to show my wife how Jesus Christ, having made atonement for our sins, how Jesus Christ would respond to her sin.

He is giving me an opportunity to demonstrate grace, unconditional love, and mercy. But when I'm full of self and unmet expectations, my response is sometimes not that way. It's, You did not do for me what I expected, so therefore you will pay.

Do you see that? In our marriages, there are wonderful times. There are such wonderful times. There should be.

And there is a cohesiveness. There is a sense of, Man, I know this is the person I'm supposed to be married to and I delight in this and I wouldn't want anyone else. But in the midst of that also, there's all kinds of conflict and you shouldn't think that just that conflict is just the devil working and there's no purpose whatsoever.

What's going on there is the revealing of the true nature of our heart. How do we respond? You know, people in America at least don't talk much about fasting, do they? I guess there's a reason for it. We have Ryans and Ruby Tuesdays and all these different places.

So people don't talk about fasting much. And people don't understand fasting. And fasting has many, many purposes.

But there's one purpose of fasting that is often overlooked. Let me explain it to you and I'm going to show how it has to do with marriage and conformity to Christ. Someone who doesn't have a good diet, eats a lot of processed food, drinks Cokes and everything, when they fast or try to fast, the first day they think they're dying.

Their stomach is cramping and they're dizzy and then it goes on another day and they know they're about ready to call the ambulance. It goes on the third day, they think they're literally going to drop dead. What's going on there? You're not starving.

It's just toxins coming out of your body. That's all it is. All the impurities from the garbage you've eaten is coming out of your body.

Your mouth feels like metal, everything else. And that just tells you right there you need to change your diet. But here's what happens.

Even when you eat right, the first three days of fasting are difficult. And my wife has this thing, okay, dad's going to fast, let's all go on vacation and leave him. Okay? Because the first three days, it's like, there ain't nothing spiritual about this.

Now, if you meet me on that third day, and the third day, after the third day, when you get to the fourth day, guess what? Things start changing. It gets easier. But on that third day, it's usually horrific.

And so if you meet me coming down the aisle, and you say, hello brother Paul, I'm probably going to say, you know what, you're ugly and your mother dresses you funny. I mean, I am not going to have the one, you know, alright, so I say that to you and you're kind of offended. And then I think about it, about an hour later, after church, and I come back and I say, look, I am so sorry.

Look, I'm sorry for what I said. I'm just not myself. Have you ever done something like that? You've said something really bad or you've had a bad attitude and you've come back and you've said to the person, look, I'm just not myself today.

I'm going through such trials or I got a headache or I'm just under the weather so bad that I'm just not myself. I'm sorry. It's just the opposite.

You see, when you take away my food for three days and I'm on that last day where the toxins are coming out and everything and you meet me and I look grouchy, I look like Godzilla, exponentially grown, you're seeing the real me. When everything's going wrong and I'm hurting inside and hurting outside or passing through a trial, a horrific trial, or someone's accusing me of something or attacking on the internet or something like that, and I just look miserable and pitiful and either depressed or mad or angry or aggressive, I can't say I'm sorry. I'm just not myself today.

Actually, you are now seeing the real Paul Washer. What's happened? All the comfort that made me look good, do you see that? Everything's going good today. I feel good.

Had a good meal. Everything is great. Even my enemies are writing nice stuff about me now.

It's a wonderful day. That's not the real me you're seeing. You're seeing a person propped up with makeup on because everything's going right and all my expectations are met.

But when you take that away and I'm miserable inside and out, then you're going to see my real personality. And what's that have to do with marriage? Everything. I've seen a few guys who really, at least in their own mind, they were perfect husbands.

I mean, dude, they'd sit and listen to other men talk about things and they'd go, I just don't understand. You know, I mean, why is it so hard? I mean, I love my wife. Please, I'm not trying to be vain or profane or vulgar or anything, but I just look at them, okay, let's look at this.

Your wife gets up every morning like four in the morning to prepare you a breakfast for three hours. All right? She has a PhD as an astrophysicist. She looks like a supermodel.

She was voted the homeschooling queen of 2015. The thing is, he's not really that great a husband. It's just that he's got a really great wife.

And everything you're seeing about him a lot of times is just propped up because he's getting everything he wants. But it's when things in our life, and I can say the same thing for a woman, you know, you're married to a guy who looks like Superman and he's, you know, teaches homeschool and he does all this other stuff, does everything perfect. It could be that it's not that you're so great a Christian, but that God's just favored you in this sense with a really good person.

My whole point is this. It is many times in this conflict that we hate that the real us is revealed. And in being revealed, it gives us an opportunity to humble ourselves before God, to repent of our sins, and to seek greater conformity to His image through the renewing of our mind in the Word of God.

And that's what it's really all about. My goal should not be to be a great husband. My wife's goal should not be to be a great wife, or for both of us to be great parents.

I can't see any direct admonition in the Scriptures with regard to that. But our goal should be to be conformed to the image of Christ. And the more that my wife and I are conformed to the image of Christ, the better spouses we will be, and the better parents we will be.

Another thing that's very important is this with regard to conformity. And I'm sorry for jumping around. I'm trying to cram like 20 sermons into one.

People say I can't even introduce myself until the fourth sermon. I mean, it takes me a long time. Here's another thing that's very important.

Many times conflicts in marriage arise. The husband says, you're not like Christ, or the wife says, you're not like Christ. And oftentimes what they're saying is this.

You're not like me. And here's what I want you to see. It and husbands, this is very important.

We are not to conform our wives to our own image. And wives, you're not to conform your husband to your own image. You're not to do that.

It's more like a bicycle wheel. If you take the axis on a wheel in the center, and then you have the wheel going around it, and you have the spokes going to the axis, do you notice that the spokes never touch one another? And the direction of the spokes is not toward one another. But the closer that the spokes come to the center of the wheel, the closer the spokes come together themselves.

And that's what I want you to see. In marriage, it is not to make my wife like me, make her personality like me, make her expression of Christianity like mine. But it is for me to grow into the image of Christ, and to help her grow into the image of Christ.

And as we are both growing into the image of Christ, we become more like one another. That's the goal in the church. Not that everyone become like me, or I become like everyone else, but that we all become more and more like Christ, and to the greater degree we're like Christ, we have a greater degree of unity.

Because here's something else that you'll need to see that's very important, especially if you're in the ministry. You can have two people in a marriage, and one of them is converted, and one is unconverted. You can have two people in a marriage in which one is converted and truly growing in Christ, and one is languishing in immaturity at this moment, or has even made some steps back.

You can have that. You can also have two people who truly love their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And you say, ah, that's the goal, because when that happens, then there will be no conflict or differences.

You're wrong. You can have two people who genuinely love the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet the expression of their Christianity is quite different. And if your wife is different than you in the way that God made her, and called her, and her giftings, and everything else, and you try to bring her over to you because she's not spiritual, until she becomes like you, or your husband's not spiritual until he becomes like you, or some image you have of what a super husband is supposed to be, you're going to have conflict even though both of you love the Lord.

My expression of Christianity is quite different than my wife's. I'm preaching. I'm going out.

I'm doing things. You could see me at times handing out tracts. You can see me doing stuff.

You can see this expression of me, and if you just look at that, you're going to say, man, he's on fire. My wife, you're not going to see it that way. You're going to see hidden things, and you have to look for them, like the home.

And people say, well, you know, your husband is teaching. Do you teach alongside of him? She goes, no. Someone's got to take care of the children.

Someone has to take care of the home. And then there's these relationships she has, not just with believers, but with unbelieving women, in which, no, she doesn't walk in the first day and read them their rites, but builds relationships with unbelieving women so that they can come to understand who is this Jesus. Do you all know what, like, MMA fighting is? Have you heard of that? You know, where the two guys, they get in the ring, the cage, and they fight one another? Well, my wife, right now, is building a relationship with a lady who was Rookie of the Year last year in MMA.

Yeah. A fighter. Goes in there and beats other women up.

She needs Christ. Or the other lady, in which you look past all the tattoos, because there's a person in there that God made. Do you see what I'm saying? A completely different expression.

And I can tell you, I've sinned against my wife. I can. Because there's been times when I've listened to her teach in a small Bible study or something, and I go, Girl, man, you can teach.

You can flat out teach. You need to be like, you need to be doing conferences. You could do conferences like I teach the men, you teach the women.

Nope. What do you mean, nope? You're really giving? Nope. That's not what God's called me to do, at least not right now.

It's not what I... You see what I'm saying? Trying to make her into my image instead of letting her be her own image. And then, ladies, you need to understand something, you know. I've seen so many women.

I'm submissive to my husband, and I am going to make him exactly like he needs to be through my submission. He's going to do it or die. Because they have this image of what their husband's supposed to be, and he just doesn't... Man, they've been reading those homeschool books and everything else, and he's just not... He's just not lining up with that.

You need to be very, very careful. Here's a good rule. Correct your husband, or the time you spend correcting your husband must be to the degree of the time you spend on your knees praying for your husband.

And the same way with your wife. Before you think, well, I'm going to spend an hour lecturing her on what she needs to do, spend an hour in prayer talking to God about what she needs to do. Because sometimes you'll go to God, and you'll say, God, this is what she needs to do.

And God will go, no, I'll tell you what she needs to do. You don't tell me what she needs to do. I'll tell you what she needs to do because she doesn't belong to you.

She belongs to me. And if it's not clearly written in the Scriptures, you stop trying to conform her to your image. And the same way, ladies, with your husbands.

And let me tell you this, with regard to conformity to the image of Christ, with regard to raising your children, and I can say this because I've done it right sometimes and because sometimes I have done it wrong and I have failed. You cannot fight fire with fire. Your children are impatient with one another.

You cannot win the battle by being more impatient with them. They're raising their voice and not treating each other right. You think you're going to fight fire with fire? You're going to bully them? You can't fight fire with fire.

You fight sin with righteousness expressed in love, mercy, and grace. Let me give you a final example. If I come home one day, and I mean I've had a bad day, and I come home and my wife takes care of the house and does all these different things and everything, but I come home one day and the house is a mess.

There's no food. I mean everything just looks like wrong. The bed's not made.

I'm like, Chata, we need to have a talk. You know, I'm like, I'm not in a good attitude. And I come in there with a bad attitude and she comes back at me with a bad attitude.

The fight is on. And I feel justified. But if I walk in there one day and I've had a bad day and I walk in the house with a bad attitude and I say something a little bit short or I say something that I shouldn't have said, and she turns around and she acts like Christ.

She acts like Christ. What happens? I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed.

I go outside. I go to my barn. I got that too before.

And I just sit back there and beat myself in the head with it for about four or five times. Walk around the barn, do it again, beat myself in the head and then go back in the house crawling and apologize. Do you see? Ladies, men, has fighting, demanding, demanding your rights, has it ever worked? Have you ever won by outfighting your husband or outtonguing your husband? Have you ever won by bullying your wife? It may look like it, sir.

You're the head of the house and you run everything and she's going to submit, but you haven't won her heart. You've just bullied her. And lady, you haven't changed your husband.

You've just made him so weary of your nagging that he'll give in to anything. But the way to do it is mercy, is grace. But then even when we try to do that, sometimes the flesh pops up.

You walk in and the dishes aren't done. And you go, I'm going to go over there and do the dishes. And it's not because, you know, I just want to be like Christ.

I just want to do the dishes. No. You want to do the dishes so she can come down, see the dishes were done and feel bad that you had to do the dishes.

No. It is living a life of mercy. And you need to recognize this.

You live with a sinner. A person who still sins, though redeemed. And that your life is to respond to their sin in a way that doesn't do anything but gospelizes them.

Washing your wife in the water of the Word doesn't mean you sit her down in a chair and lecture her for an hour a day on submission. Washing her in the water of the Word means that your whole life is a reflection, a manifestation of the gospel. So that she begins to see through you and her failure the unconditional love of Christ, the mercy and the grace of Christ.

And believe you me, I am not teaching this to you because this is what I do every day. I'm teaching this to you because it's in the Scriptures and it's what I strive for. It's what I want to be.

A man of grace. And for you, lady, a woman of grace. And for you, parents, parents of grace.

Yes, there is discipline and there is teaching and there's all these other things, but there's a sense of grace in every part of our life that overwhelms people. Well, I promised I said I'd finish with that but I lied. I'm going to say one other thing.

A few years ago, I had to take my car in for inspection. My children don't even want to ride with me in my old Jeep because it looks so bad. It's a pretty pitiful looking thing.

But I love it. They call it the red tomato. And I take it in for inspection and I come back an hour and a half later when it's supposed to be ready.

It's not ready. So I come back an hour and a half after that. They say it's ready.

Yeah, we did it. I pay them. I drive home.

I turn on the blinker and I notice the blinkers aren't even working. So how did they inspect my car? So I take it back and I prayed because these men are unbelievers. I took it back and I prayed and I said they already knew that I should have been mad because it wasn't ready when they said and then now I'm bringing it back because they haven't inspected it at all.

They lied to me. So I came back, drove my car in there and I said you know, I could just see them. There were three of them standing there.

Just their faces got pale when I drove the car back in. And I came out and I said hey guys, how are you doing? They're expecting me to pull a gun probably and shoot them. And I said how are you doing? They said fine.

I said hey, man, I so appreciate that you did my car and everything but I think you may have missed a few things. There's some things here that I want you to look at. And I said this isn't working and this isn't working.

I said you know you guys inspect so many cars and I know it's just hard sometimes. And I said and I'm just going to wait here and you guys just take as long as you need. They were literally blown away.

They go in and everything and they do it. And then I said now I paid you but you had to do extra work on my car so do I need to pay you again? And when I said that, one of them went like this. Just put his head down.

And then he looked up at the other one and the other one just kind of and I said is it all working now? And they said yes sir, it's working. I said thank you so much. Thank you.

They were blown away. They knew I was a Christian. They knew I was a preacher.

They were blown away. And I felt so full of joy while I get in my car and I start driving home and it was one of those moments where bam! In one second God just goes you, you hypocrite. You can show that much mercy to a group of unbelieving men.

You can show that kind of kindness. You went out of your way for hours sought to show Christ to them. Can you do that to my daughter? Can you do that to the children that I gave you? I'm not impressed.

Now I know I didn't hear a voice or anything but it's just one of those moments where you know you've been caught. You've been caught red-handed. Sometimes I think wives, literally when I've talked in marriage conferences and counseled people, I have wives and husbands that have said the same thing and it's this, I just wish my husband would treat me like he treats strangers.

I just wish my wife would treat me like she treats strangers or even young people. I wish my parents would just treat me like they do treat other kids. And I want you to think about that because there's a sense in which this is true.

At least it is in my life. Maybe I've just come to a perfect church in Cincinnati where no one needs to hear this. But we can be so beautiful sometimes to strangers and then our own flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

It's really sad. When you look at that and you know, I don't care if I... Yeah, okay, let's mark it down. I don't watch the bad movies and I don't dress this way and I don't do this and I don't do that.

Yeah, but you miss these kinds of things? You've missed it all. You've missed it all. Just showing grace.

Showing grace. I come from a long line of fighters. I mean, fight you at the drop of a hat.

Christianity doesn't work that way. You don't bully. You don't beat down.

You win by the grace that you demonstrate. Let's pray. Father, I pray, Lord, that you would please use this.

This thing that I've taught, Lord, in my own life. Use it. In the life of my family.

In the life of every man here. In the life of every woman here. In the life of our families.

Grace, Lord. Grace. To demonstrate grace.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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