

# The Glory of a New Covenant Marriage

by Zac Poonen

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*A New Covenant marriage is a marriage where the Holy Spirit has taken away the hardness of the heart and made it soft, leading to unity and love.*

**Duration:** 40:16

**Scripture:** Matthew 19:6, Mark 10:27, John 13:34, Ephesians 5:25

**Topics:** "Christian Marriage", "New Covenant"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the significant difference between Old Testament and New Testament marriages, highlighting the impact of Christ's coming on the unity and love within marriages. It discusses the hardness of hearts leading to strife and division in relationships, contrasting Old Testament marriages marked by fighting and divorce with the call for unity and love in New Testament marriages. The message stresses the need for a soft heart, endless forgiveness, and a servant-like love in marriages, drawing parallels to Christ's sacrificial love for the church.

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## Transcript

And what brings the division is the coming of Jesus Christ. But many Christians, they read the Bible as if Old Testament and New Testament are the same. But that is not true.

The coming of Christ brought a tremendous difference like day and night for mankind. And so, there should be a tremendous difference in marriages in the Old Testament, marriages in the New Testament. When God first made Adam and Eve, in Genesis chapter 1 and 2, He made them one.

They had perfect fellowship with God and perfect fellowship with each other. But then Satan came and brought a division between them. And that division has been there from Genesis chapter 3 right to the end of the Old Testament.

You never read of any married couple in the Old Testament that were really one with each other. But Jesus said concerning marriage, in Matthew chapter 19, verse 6, they are no longer two. They are one.

That was God's original plan. But if you read the Old Testament, even of the great men of God, they were in the Old Testament. Their marriages were not like this.

They would fight with their wives. Many of them divorced their wives. God didn't want that, but He allowed it because the people's hearts were hard.

You know, they asked Jesus here in verse 7, why did Moses tell them to give a certificate when you divorce? We read in verse 7, why did Moses tell them to give a certificate when you divorce? Moses allowed you to divorce your wives but it was not like that in the beginning. What did Jesus say? In the Old Testament, husband and wife would fight, argue with each other, quarrel. And when it gets too bad, divorce also.

In the Old Testament, some people like David and Abraham had more than one wife. Not only that, people like David and Abraham had more than one wife. So the marriage in the Old Testament was very different.

For one reason, the hearts of husband and wife were hard. Jesus said, He has now come to make them one. Then why is it, we find today, most Christian marriages are exactly like those Old Testament marriages.

Why? Particularly in western countries, so many Christians are divorced. Here in India, we may not hear so much divorce among Christians. But there is no fellowship.

Hardened hearts bring strife and division. And many times, the only reason husband and wife stay together is for the sake of the children. I want to say, every such marriage is an Old Testament marriage.

Even if they call themselves Christians, they are Old Covenant marriages they have. A New Covenant marriage is not meant to be like that. Because the Holy Spirit is to come and take away the hardness of our heart and make it soft.

How is a prophecy like that in the Old Testament, in Ezekiel chapter 36? Where the Lord says in this New Covenant, verse 26, Ezekiel 36 and verse 26. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you. And I will remove this hard heart of stone and give you a soft heart of flesh.

All arguing, quarreling, raising your voice at each other is a proof of a hard heart. You examine your own life. Ask the Holy Spirit to take away that hard heart and give you a soft heart.

But most Christians don't do that. They blame their partner. The fault is with my husband.

The fault is with my wife. But most Christians don't do that. They blame their partner.

The fault is with my wife. The fault is with my husband. They blame the other person because of the hardness of their heart.

As soon as Adam sinned, his heart became hard. How do we know that? Immediately he blamed his wife. She is the cause of my sin.

Since that time, the entire human race has followed that practice. Do you blame your husband or wife for anything? Do you raise your voice and get angry? Do you complain, grumble, murmur? You don't divorce, I know. But I am sorry to tell you, yours is an old covenant marriage.

But I am sorry to tell you, yours is an old covenant marriage. You haven't entered into the freedom that Jesus Christ earned on the cross. Because your marriage hasn't been a Christian marriage.

Even if we call it a Christian marriage, the word Christian has become, lost its value. Just like the rupee has lost its value. 60 years ago, or at least 55 years ago, when I rode my scooter, I used to pay 80 paise for 1 litre of petrol.

Do you believe that? It's true, I could fill my 5 litres in my scooter for 4 rupees. But the rupee has gone down in value so much, you have to pay 100 times more today. That is the meaning of devaluing.

The same thing has happened in marriage. Sorry, in the meaning of the word Christian. The word Christian had a very high meaning in the acts of the apostles.

But it has gone down. More than 100 times, more than a million times. Let me read to you the first place where people were called Christians in the acts of the apostles.

Acts 11, 26. The last part of that verse. Who were called Christians in those days? The disciples of Jesus Christ were called Christians.

And if you want to know who is a disciple, Jesus explained that in Luke chapter 14. One who loves Jesus more than his father and mother and wife and children. Anyone who loves a human being, even his wife, more than Jesus is not a disciple.

And secondly, one who is willing to die to himself everyday, that's a disciple. And one who loves Jesus more than all his earthly possessions. That's all in Luke 14, 26 onwards.

So, if you fulfilled that, you were a Christian. But today, who is a Christian? Like I told you, the price of the rupee going down. Today, a person born in a Christian family is a Christian.

They are no different from any other religion. You go to the prisons and there are as many murderers, Christians as in any other religion. There are as many crooks in business as Christians as in any other religion.

And then there are some churches that say, we must be born again. But in some churches, they say, you must be born again. They say, accept Jesus into your heart.

Some people say these few words within 2 minutes. Lord Jesus, I am sorry for my sins. You died for me.

Come into my heart. It's not even 2 minutes, 1 minute. And the pastor says, ok, now you are a Christian.

You are not like other Christians now, you are a born again Christian. But this so called born again Christian's marriage and his home is just as bad as the other nominal Christian's home. So even the word born again has got so devalued now.

To come back to what the Bible says, the disciples were called Christians. I don't care who you are, which church you go to. Even if you come to CFC regularly.

If you don't love Jesus more than every human being. More than your wife and husband. You are not a disciple.

Secondly, this is more difficult. If you don't love Jesus more than your own self. And your pride and your dignity.

Which gets hurt when somebody gets angry with you. You get upset because you feel your wife is not respecting you. Or your husband is not treating you properly.

And you get angry. And say strong words. Let me tell you what no other preacher will tell you.

Whatever type of devalued Christian you are, you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ. And you cannot have a Christian marriage. You will have an old testament marriage with two people with hard hearts.

You can know much more than people in other denominations. But that is all in the head. The heart is still hard.

And thirdly, you don't love Jesus more than all your earthly possessions. You are not a disciple. You can have a reputation in a church.

You can be a pastor, leader, elder, anything. But you are not a disciple. The disciples were called Christians.

And when the disciples come together, they have a Christian marriage. That's the only type of marriage which can be called a Christian marriage. But like I told you of the devaluing of the rupee.

The word disciple is also devalued now. So if they want to have a, you or they or anybody wants a Christian marriage. They must first become individually disciples.

We must first become each other's disciples. When many people hear this, they may think that this is a very difficult word. I will tell you.

This is not a difficult thing. To live this life is an impossible thing. That is why you need the Holy Spirit.

As long as you think it is difficult, you will keep striving. And that's what some people do. They say, I want to have a little better marriage.

But when the day comes in your life, when you discover it is impossible, then you will seek the power of the Holy Spirit. Then you will have a Christian marriage. That is always God's way.

In the Old Testament, God told Abraham, I'm going to give you a son through whom I'm going to bless the world. He first tried himself. And he produced a son called Ishmael.

He said, Lord, please let this one be the son. No, God said, this is all your strength. It will not work.

Finally, it came to the place where both husband and wife could not have a child. It was impossible. Then God said, now I'll give you.

Then the promised Isaac came. The same thing Jesus taught the disciples in the New Testament. It's the last miracle that he did.

It says all the disciples went out fishing. Jesus said, try. Go ahead, try.

Try, try, try. They are all expert fishermen. Seven, eight hours, no fish.

They come to the end of themselves and say, it is impossible. In the beginning, they said, it's getting difficult. Then they said, it's very difficult.

Finally, by early morning, five o'clock, they said, impossible. And then Jesus came. And filled their boat with more fish than they ever got in their whole life.

It is the same message for your marriage. As long as you think, with a little more effort, with a little bit of struggle, you are going to have a better marriage. You cannot change your hard heart, no matter how much you try.

What did we read in Ezekiel, the Lord says, I will give you a soft heart. And it's when a person becomes desperate. And says, Lord, I am desperate to have a new covenant marriage.

Where the hardness is gone. Where the grumbling and complaining and the anger and bitterness is gone. Where 365 days of a year, I will never raise my voice at my husband or wife.

Where 365 days of a year, I will never raise my voice at my husband or wife. You say that is impossible. Do you know what Jesus once said? The things that are impossible with men, are possible with God.

Mark 10, verse 27. These are the words of Jesus. Is it possible to have such a marriage, where 365 days of the year, your heart is soft and not hard? Is it possible for here, Anbu and Mano, to have such a marriage? With their own effort, with men it is impossible.

But not with God. For all things are possible with God. So that is the most important thing they must recognize.

To say, Lord, we want a new covenant Christian marriage. Not an old testament type of marriage. The type of marriage where Jesus said, it is like the father and the son are one.

The husband and wife are one. You know, there is a picture used of marriage in the New Testament, which was never used in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, they just signed a certificate and they got married.

In the Old Testament, they just signed a certificate and they got married. They lived together. But in the New Testament, it says here, Ephesians 5, The husband is the head.

The wife is the body. It is never possible in an old covenant marriage. It is only possible when the Holy Spirit fills husband and wife.

When they are humble enough and they really long to have this type of marriage. Think of your head and your body. Do they ever fight with each other? No.

The body is so happy with the head, the head is so happy with the body. Never. You know, my hand has never slapped my face.

Never. And you say, really? What about your hand? Has it ever slapped your face? That is head and body. That is the picture in the New Testament of husband and wife.

You can try. You will not succeed. When you say it is impossible, Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit.

Give me the power of the Holy Spirit everyday. Power to die to myself. Power to love you more than everything.

No. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who thirst for that. I will tell you why many of you have not experienced such a marriage.

Because you believe the devil's lie that it can never become better. You believe the devil's lie that it can never become better. It will always be like this.

You blame each other. The husband will say, with such a wife, how can I ever have peace? The wife will say, with such a husband, how can I ever have peace in the home? As long as you blame each other and don't believe that God can do miracles Let me tell you the sad thing. That even after you listen to this message, you will be the same tomorrow and for the rest of your life.

But if some of you take this message seriously, Say, Lord, I acknowledge my marriage has been like that till now. I really want to have a Christian marriage from now. Where my wife and I are like the head and the body.

Like Christ in the church. Just like Christ is the head of the church. That we can be together as husband and wife.

So when it says we have to love one another, It's not only the husband who has to love the wife like Christ loved the church. That's written here. The husband must love the wife like Christ loved the church.

In Ephesians 5.25 But do you know the Bible says also that the wife must love the husband like Christ loved the church. Many people don't know that verse. That is in John chapter 13.

Verse 34 I give you a new commandment. That you love one another, wife and husband, as I loved you. So, husband must love the wife like Christ loved the church.

The wife must love the husband as Christ loved the church. John 13.34 is very clear. Both have to be like Jesus Christ.

Both of them. Husband must be like Christ, wife must be like Christ. So when we think of the love of Christ for us, What do we see there? In the love of Jesus for us, there was a cross on which he died.

He did not just tell us from heaven, I love you, I love you, I love you. That's what these Christian psychologists tell people. Call up your wife many times and tell her you love her.

That's not what Jesus did. That is all human psychology. Then there are other people who say, go give a lot of gifts to your wife or husband.

They will feel happy. Jesus did not send us gifts from heaven. He did not just say, I love you, I love you, I love you.

His love was shown in his dying. Because of his death, his love was shown to us. Because of his death, his love was shown to us.

That is Christian love. That leads to a Christian marriage. Most people's understanding of love is from the cinema.

All those love songs and all that. What you don't know, is that those actors and actresses who are singing those love songs are all divorced and left their wives and marrying somebody else. They are singing like that only to make money, that's all.

Don't be fooled by that. Real love is in Jesus Christ. Real love is only in Jesus.

The love that was shown to me was because of the cross. That is why he died. This is a wonderful verse that they have chosen here.

When Jesus died, that enmity he put to death the enmity. When Jesus died, that enmity in the flesh was put to death. That hardness that makes us get upset and angry and fight and quarrel that acts selfishly towards the husband and selfishly towards the wife only thinks of your need and not the need of the other person.

Jesus put that to death when he died on the cross so that we can become one body. Husband and wife. So that is the first thing.

I want to say to both of you. Between both of you there must always be a cross on which you die. You must die to yourself in your relationship with each other.

The second thing is that in Jesus' love for me there was a constant forgiveness. All of you who are believers can say that. Did Jesus ever get tired of forgiving you? Did he ever say you asked me forgiveness one thousand times, no more? There is an endless forgiveness in Jesus' love for us.

So if husband and wife are to love each other like Christ loved there must be an endless forgiveness. Any number of times. Seven times a day or seventy times, seven times a day I can forgive at least seven or seventy times.

Immediately ask for forgiveness. Be quick to forgive. A person who has a soft heart will do that easily.

When your heart is hard you don't ask forgiveness. And when your heart is hard if the other person asks forgiveness also you don't show your forgiveness. You don't talk to that person.

You show that you are angry. My dear brothers and sisters why do you want to live forever in this old covenant marriage? Do you know that Jesus has come? Do you know that the Holy Spirit has come? Why are you living in the Old Testament? Enter into the new covenant. Forgive one another.

Forgive one another. Number three. In the love of Jesus for me He was always ready to serve me.

He said I did not come here to be served. I came here to serve. In Indian culture it is only the wife who serves the husband.

That's not Christian culture. In Christian culture both will serve one another. Jesus washed His disciples' feet on the last day of His earthly life.

He was always serving, serving, serving. That's how He showed His love for us. By dying for us forgiving us and serving us.

Never stopping. Through the power of the Holy Spirit. So my dear brother and sister you can have a marriage like that.

You have the tremendous privilege of hearing these truths in CFC. You have the tremendous privilege of hearing these truths in CFC. You don't have to live like these old covenant marriages that we see among so called born again Christians.

You don't even have to have these old covenant marriages that so many CFC people have. Be different. Be different.

Be an example. Don't look down on others. Don't say, Lord I thank you that my marriage is better than others.

No. You are not living a married life to show other people. You are living it for the glory of God.

Not to show other people what a happy marriage you have. But so that the devil cannot accuse you before God saying what a useless marriage those two Christians have. I am always concerned about that.

Lord, I don't want the devil to say one thing about me or my marriage. I don't care how much I have to die. How much I am willing to die to myself.

I am willing. I hope this will be a new day in many marriages. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

Have you heard something impossible? Good. Then you are ready. Now you only need to believe that God will do a miracle in your life.

But you must have a thirst to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I pray a thirst will start in your heart today to have a spirit filled married life. And that thirst will never die until you see that really in your marriage.

Heavenly Father, we pray that this will be true of many many marriages from today onwards. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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