

What is a Godly Marriage?

Rick Railston
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God is our loving Father. We know that. He is the Father of us all. And He gave us the institution of marriage and the blessing of family. That's a gift God has given us. He could have done it some other way, but He has given us the institution of marriage and the blessing of family that we might better comprehend His love for us. Because we know, as moms and dads, how much we love our children. And that gives us an indication of how much God loves us.

And also He gave us the institution of marriage and family so that it could be a training ground for us to better prepare ourselves and be prepared for being in the Kingdom of God because the Kingdom of God, after all, is a Family. It's going to be a Family. So God instituted family on this earth as a means of training us in the concept of family, how to get along as a family, how to nurture a family, how to train and teach a family.

And also, to emphasize the interdependence between a man and a woman, God did not create them as separate beings, as we all know. God created the woman out of the man. He could have done it differently. He could have made them two separate beings, but He chose not to to show us how interdependent men and women should be.

Now with that in mind, let's go to Mark chapter 10 and we're going to read verses 6 through 9 out of the New King James. This is all by way of introduction to the sermon. Mark 10 and we will begin in verse 6 of the New King James. [It's] talking about God creating male and female. Verse 6 Mark 10:

Mark 10:6. "... from the beginning of the creation, God 'made... (NKJ)

He did it. He designed it. He created it.

Mark 10:6b. God 'made them male and female.' (NKJ)

Now, He could have created a world of like beings. No male. No female. Just individual beings all alike, but he chose not to do that.

Verse 7:

Mark 10:7. 'For this reason [because He made them separate.] a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, (NKJ)

So that they would have their own separate lives. They should not live under the same roof. They should have a separate life. And so the man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to her. Verse 8:

Mark 10:8. *'and the two shall become one flesh'; (NKJ)*

Now, they do that physically, but it is also an indication that they should do that spiritually too, as we will see as we go through the sermon.

Mark 10:8b. *...so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. (NKJ)*

And mentally and spiritually and emotionally, they should also become one over time. It takes time. Verse 9:

Mark 10:9. *"Therefore [because God has made them separate, but yet joined them together,] what God has joined together, [men shouldn't] separate." (NKJ)*

Because God hates that separation, obviously.

And one of the saddest parts, frankly, of being a minister is knowing that there are married couples in the Church who hardly speak to each other. And you walk in their home and the tension is so thick you could cut it with a knife. And that's a reality, but God didn't intend it that way.

It doesn't have to be that way. And the good news is that marriage can and should be blissful. It should be a blissful experience every day. And marriage can and should be the most rewarding of all human relationships. The most rewarding of all is what it should be.

Now, obviously, Satan doesn't want that to happen. Satan is attacking the Church with increasing vigor (Stuart mentioned in the sermonette). Satan wants to destroy the Church. He wants to destroy God's people. And God has allowed this increased activity. And I think anybody with a brain and anybody with eyes to see can see that God has allowed Satan to attack the Church more vigorously in the last few years than He has ever before.

But God's purpose in allowing him to do that, releasing some restraint on him, the goal of allowing that is to prepare us to be the Bride. It's to prepare us by overcoming Satan's attacks (learning and growing and overcoming) so we can better be prepared to be the Bride.

And Satan is attacking, in addition to individuals in the Church, Satan is attacking marriages in the Church because if an entire family can be destroyed through attacking the husband and wife, children's lives can be altered; children's lives can be forever changed; children will not turn to God if Satan is successful in attacking the marriages. If he can destroy marriages (Satan), he can destroy the Church. And we have to be very careful about that.

Now, again by way of introduction, let's talk about the history of marriages in the Church. Because from the time I came in the Church, I've heard the ministry say back in the mid-sixties that marriages were the greatest problem in the Church.

They had more marriage problems, counselings, dealings with that individual problem, that singular problem within marriages than any other type of problems.

Now, for those of who weren't around in the 1950s and 1960s, the model for a marriage was that the man was the lord and master. And it was an era in the Church where there was a great deal of discipline, a great deal of order. And there was an emphasis on 1 Peter 3 and verse 6 where Sarah called Abraham "Lord" or "Master." And there was an emphasis on that in many cases way to the extreme. And in some cases, it became an ego trip or a power trip for the man. And a lot of men in the Church in those days loved this because they did, indeed, lord it over their wives and to an extent that God never intended.

But, then, as usual in human life, the pendulum swung all the way to the other direction in the 1970s, mid to late 70s, 80s, because in society, we had the Women's Liberation Movement. We had an increasingly liberal movement in the Church. And we had the Laodicean attitude in the Church. And so, within the Church and outside of the Church, there were women who were over-reacting to what had happened before. They were demanded their rights. They were competing with men. And in the Women's Lib Movement, I've read articles over the years saying that women believe that men and women are the same. And anybody with a brain knows that that's not true. Anybody who has ever been married knows that's not true. Men and women are not the same. They're not.

But anyway this whole attitude in the late 70s, 80s, 90s crept into the Church. And it seems like in the Church sometimes the only time we see the middle of the road is when we're in our car careening from this ditch and we pass over the center of the road to crash into the other ditch. Finding the balance in those decades was kind of hard to come by.

Now it's my observation that there are basically three types of marriages in the Church.

1. The first is where both really love each other, really serve each other, and are very happy. And that's the way it should be. That should be the majority of the marriages, the vast majority of the marriages in the Church.
2. The second type of marriage is where the couple started okay. They fell in love. They had the honeymoon. They established their jobs, family, and all of that, but over time, the marriage devolved into a level of tolerance let's say, but without a whole lot of warmth, without a whole of communication. And it just devolved into a kind of status quo, but not what God really intended.
3. And then the third type of marriage is where there is open bickering, open fighting, open disrespect, open hostility. And it's, frankly, just a miserable existence. Although, there are some people who like it that way. As somebody told me a while back, "If you mud wrestle with pig, you're both going to get dirty, but the pig loves it." (Laughter.) And there are some people that just love to fight. Obviously, one shouldn't marriage somebody like that. But frankly, I've seen mates in the Church treat strangers better

than they treat each other and that is sad. That is really sad. [It] should not be.

And in situations like that, it's easy to forget that God is watching. God is watching us as individuals. God is watching us as mates. And I believe God is watching us and asking the question (seeing the interaction in a marriage between two people): "If I make them a spirit-being, how would they treat one of My children in the Kingdom? If I make this arguing, fighting, yelling, screaming couple, spirit-beings, what would they do to My children in the Kingdom? And in that sense, marriage is a time of judgment. Marriage is a time of God watching us to see how we conduct ourselves when the doors are closed, the windows are locked. Nobody else knows what's going on inside the house—of course, except God. So, it's a time of testing and training in that regard.

So, what's the problem? As the man said, "The problem is not with marriage, but with you, Mabel." (Laughter.) "That's the problem." And what happens is, obviously, it's easy to blame the other person.

And the problem in marriages is with supposedly converted people treating each other as if God's spirit did not exist in them or in the house.

That's the problem. In other words, God's spirit is not there. God's spirit is not being exercised. God's spirit is not present in the relationship. People are not allowing themselves to be led by His spirit. And if we are to have successful marriages, that has to change. It just absolutely has to change.

And I'm here to say that marriage can be a continual delight where both parties can make the other's heart sing to where there is laughing, to where there are people actually singing because they have joy. There's kidding. There's joking. There's light-heartedness. There is love. There's tenderness. There's compassion. That's the way it should be. That's the way God designed it. And it can be that way.

And, as we get closer to the end-time—Stuart mentioned about watching and being very careful—as we get closer to that time, we need to ask ourselves the question, as we finish the introduction here. For those who are married in the room and out there behind-the-camera, we need to ask the question.

Is my marriage the way God would want it to be?

Is it the way He wants it to be? And, if it's not, then steps need to be taken to change that.

Now, for those in the room here who are yet to marry, hope to marry but are not yet either of the age or haven't found the right person. The question is:

Do I know how to have a Godly Marriage?

Because if I think about marrying, I had better know before I begin that journey what a Godly Marriage is all about so I have a framework or a foundation upon which to base a marriage.

And, so, we're here today to answer that very question: What is a Godly Marriage?

Now, we could have ten different sermons on it in different aspects and I'm going to try to get the overview in this one single sermon. But what is a Godly Marriage? We're going to have Five Points that, hopefully, can focus our attention in certain areas.

The First is absolutely the most important because if we don't have the First, the marriage will not succeed. The First Point is that:

I. A Godly marriage must be God-centered.

It must be centered on God. If God is not at the center of the marriage, if God is not the center of the individuals, the husband and the wife, its chances of succeeding greatly diminish. The marriage must be done God's way. If it's done any other way, the chances of it failing are tremendous.

And with Satan attacking God's people unlike in a way that he doesn't attack marriages in the world, if Satan wants to get at God's people, if God is not at the center, if it's not done God's way, Satan has an open door and chaos will result.

Now when we came into the Church if we came in married, we came under God's Law regarding marriage. If we were married in the Church, obviously, we were married according to God's Law within the Church. And so, therefore, it would behoove us to pay very close attention to what God says about marriage, if the marriage is going to be God-centered. Because if we're not going to follow God's Law and God's instruction about marriage, then what's the point?

Now, we're going to talk about women first and then men in this First Point that **it has to be God-centered**. And we have to recognize—I'll start speaking to women first. We have to recognize that God designed male and female. God designed husband and wife to the extent that He placed the husband as the head of the family as Christ is the Head of the Church.

Now, let's turn to Ephesians chapter 5. If you have a ribbon or a marker, you're probably going to want to put it there because we'll bounce back and forth from Ephesians 5.

But the point is that the wife, women, need to recognize that Christ and God placed the man as the head of the family. Now, man didn't ask for that. He [God] didn't negotiate with Adam about that, but that's God design. And we can't question that. And we'll see why He did that as we go through.

Ephesians 5, we'll begin in verse 22, talking to wives. He said:

Ephesians 5:22. *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Meaning: To have the same attitude in submitting to your husband as you would submit to Jesus Christ. Now, that's a big order! That's a tall command.

Going on, verse 23, now he tells us why.

Ephesians 5:23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: (KJV)*

To the same degree, to the same extent. Now, we're going to see this puts an enormous burden on the husband—a huge burden on the husband that the wife doesn't have. And so, there is more of a burden—this plan that God has given mankind... In the 50s and 60s, the husband said, "Well, I get a free ride. I'm the boss. I can do whatever I want." But God designed it so the husband has a greater burden as we're going to see.

Ephesians 5:23. *For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he [Christ] is the [savior] of the body (KJV).*

Now, why would he say that relative to men and women? Because he is saying, "If the husband is head of the family as Christ is Head of the Church and Christ is the Savior of the Church, then, therefore, the husband should be the savior of the wife." And what did Christ do? He died for the Church. He died for the Brethren. And the husband should have the same attitude as Christ did—dying for the wife, sacrificing for the wife.

Verse 24:

Ephesians 5:24. *Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (KJV)*

Women need to understand this. Now, why is this emphasis this way? Why would God do that? Because human nature doesn't want to submit to anybody. That's human nature. And women have a special burden placed upon them because they have to submit to their husbands.

Women should not enter into marriage unless they are willing to do that. If they go into marriage having some other thoughts about that, it's not going to work out. And we've seen marriages in the 70s, 80s, and 90s where the marriage becomes a competition between the husband and wife as to who wins and to who's in charge.

I had to deal with a situation where a couple was dating. And they weren't teenagers. They weren't in their twenties. They weren't in their thirties. They were dating. And the woman said, "Well, we're going to see who's in charge here." She told that to the man she was dating. And if that happened to me, I would run out of the room. I would never get close to that again, because you can see that a marriage would just be fighting and competition. It would be a

continual football game. Back and forth and back and forth and beating and pummeling and all of that if that's the attitude.

And this being submissive is contrary to human nature and it is certainly contrary to the world that we live in. Back in Christ's day or Abraham's day, there was no question. Women were brought up and taught to be submissive to their mates. But in this day, it is just the opposite. And so there is an extra burden on women today because you have to fight the culture. You have to fight what you see on TV. You have to fight what you see in newspapers in order to be a submissive wife to one's husband.

And women must be subject to their husbands not just when they agree. Not just when the husband does something that the wife agrees with. Or not when it's just convenient. The Bible doesn't say that. Or you don't submit just when you want to get something. So, therefore, you submit in this case to get something that you want. Not just when submission is pleasing for the moment.

And in some marriages this is actually harder because if the wife is smarter than the husband—and the husband should learn to marry someone who they're smarter than! (Laughter.) And I'm not making any accusations here at all anywhere. I can see I'm digging myself a big whole already. But the point I'm making is that if the wife is smarter than the husband, that puts an extra burden on her because if she sees "Well, okay. There's a better way to do this." And yet, she's supposed to be submissive. That makes it harder on her. And so, in that sense, a woman should marry a husband who is smarter than her because it's going to make that job a lot easier. Sometimes, women marry men that are not as smart as they because they want to dominate. They want to influence. They want to control. That's not a good idea, not a good idea.

But it is a test of character on the woman's part. God's testing your character to see if you will indeed submit. God is watching. Because if a woman doesn't submit in marriage, would she submit to Christ in the Kingdom? Would she submit to doing things God's way in the Kingdom? Or would she rebel and have a different attitude, a different approach and would want to fight? God's not going to allow anybody in His Kingdom who is going to fight, who wants to do it his own way.

Now, as I said, this puts an enormous burden on the man because He has to make sure that he makes godly decisions and not selfish decisions. He must make it easy for the wife to submit. If he makes it hard for the wife to submit, then that's puts a burden on her that she doesn't need. And if he causes his wife to rebel because of his stupid decisions or his attitude, then the blood is on his head and less on her head if he doesn't make it easy for his wife to submit. He needs to make godly decisions. He needs to make unselfish decisions, therefore, making it easy for his sweet wife to submit to him. And that puts a huge burden on the man.

Now, let's talk to the men. The one big Commandment, if you read Ephesians 5 and others, what is the one big Commandment and admonition from God? That

is "Men love your wives." Now, we're going to ask why in just a second, but we're in Ephesians 5. Look at verse 25. He says it directly.

Ephesians 5:25. Husbands, love your wives, (KJV)

That Greek word is *agapao*. "I don't want you to love her as a sister"— You can love her as a sister and you can love her as a friend and you should. But he says: "Love your wives with godly love." That's what *agapao* means. Love your wives as God loves His children.

He goes on to say:

Ephesians 5:25b. ...even as [the same love] Christ also loved the church, (KJV)

Christ loved the Church with a godly love. Men should love their wives with a godly love. And notice:

Ephesians 5:25 continued. [He] gave himself for it; (KJV)

Oh boy! What? What a concept! The husband is head of the family, but yet, he has to give himself for his wife just as Christ gave Himself and died for the Church. Now that is the big overall command for men.

He amplifies it in verse 28.

Ephesians 5:28. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. (KJV)

We're told to love our neighbor as ourselves, but here in marriage, men are told to love your wife as much as you love your own self, your own body.

Ephesians 5:28b. He that [loves] his wife [does love] himself. (KJV)

Why? Because, if you love your wife, you're going to have a happy marriage. It's going to be easier on you if you love your wife. If you give to your wife, if you serve your wife as Christ serves the Church, it's going to be easier on you in the sense you will have harmony, unity, compatibility, and mutual love and respect.

Verse 29:

Ephesians 5:29. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but... (KJV)

But what does he do to his flesh?

Ephesians 5:29b. ... [he nourishes his flesh,] [he cherishes his flesh], (KJV)

We all do that. We nourish our bodies and we love our bodies. We try to avoid accidents. We try to take care of our bodies. Of course, today in the world, people don't do that very well, but we should in the Church.

So, he [the husband] nourishes and cherishes the body, even as Christ, or even as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the Church.

So, again, look what Christ did to the Church. Fed the Church, protected the Church, took care of the Church, encouraged the Church, set an example for the Church. He's saying, "Men, you've got to do that for your wives every day, every hour, every minute."

Verse 30:

Ephesians 5:30. For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31) For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother ... shall be joined unto his wife ..., they two shall be one flesh.

32) This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33) Nevertheless let every one of you in particular... (KJV)

This means: as individuals.

Ephesians 5:33b. ... so love his wife ... as himself; (KJV)

Now, why does God say to the men— He says to the woman, "Submit." He says to the men, "Love." Now why does He do that? What's the reason? It's because men have difficulty demonstrating their love. We'll see that in just a second. Men, in general—I'm speaking in generalities—men have difficulty demonstrating love to their mate.

Men are good at a lot of things, but one of the weaknesses they have is demonstrating love to their mate. It is not in their nature. Now, it should be and it will be if God's spirit is incorporated and God's spirit leads them, but it is generally not in their nature. It must be learned. And it must be led by the holy spirit. Men have a lot of other strengths, but showing love and gentleness and kindness and tenderness to wives is not a strength that is given from the outset. It's something that must be learned and wives know that.

Sometimes we drag our knuckles over the ground and we go plowing through the roses. And we are goal-oriented and task-oriented. And we don't stop and smell the roses. We don't stop and say, "Thank you." We don't stop and show appreciation.

Men must demonstrate love to their wives. And they must demonstrate love to their wives as they are—as the women are. Not as you want them to be. In other words, to say, "Okay, I'll love you when you become the wife I want you to be." Unh huh. You married the person as they were. And so, you need to love them as they were and as they are.

And we should love them and show love to them not when it's convenient. Sometimes when you feeling good and happy and all, it's easier to show love, but when you didn't get much sleep and you're crabby and you're not feeling well, it's more difficult to show love. But God says, "Love your wives." He doesn't say, "Not only when it's convenient to you and I understand." No.

We should demonstrate love to our wives not just when we want something. Or not when we want to get something. We should demonstrate love to our wives not just when she is pleasing you, but at all times. And we should demonstrate love to our wives not just when we're feeling good, even when we're feeling bad.

And so, women are to submit. That's the major instruction. And men are to love and show love to their wives.

But both have to do something. There is a critical verse here in Ephesians 5 that I've seen particularly men read right over. And that's in, let's go to verse 20 and just get the context of Ephesians 5. It says:

Ephesians 5:20. *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (KJV)*

This is the preamble to talking about husbands and wives—giving thanks for everything. For mates, for love, for marriage, for family, but notice verse 21.

Ephesians 5:21. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. (KJV)*

Then after that Paul starts talking about men and women. But he says [in] the preamble the overriding characteristic is that we "should submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The Greek word for "submitting" is Strong's #5293 and it's the Greek word *hupotasso* (*hoop-ot-as'-so*). And it means "be in subjection to." Now, he goes on to say, "Wives be in subjection to your husbands." But he's saying here, "I want you to be in subjection to each other."

And he says, "You better do it in the fear of God." Now, let's look at the word "fear." That's Strong's #5401 and it is the Greek word *phobos* (*fob'-os*). That's where we get the English word "phobia." [If] people have phobias, they're constantly afraid of something. Zodhiates says the meaning of this particular—phobia has several different meanings. But in this case, the meaning is "a deep sense of accountability to God and Christ."

So what this verse tells us is that the man needs to submit to the woman. The woman needs to submit to the man out of a sense of deep accountability to God and Christ for doing it Their way. And then he (Paul) goes on and talks about men and women in more detail.

In other words, both parties in submitting one to another, they should fear to undermine one another. They should fear—I mean absolutely *phobos*, fear—to criticize one another behind their back, fear to hurt or betray their mate in any way.

And they should submit to one another from the standpoint, as we're going to see down the road, it's out of love. You want to make your mate happy. You want to make your mate's heart sing. In that sense you submit to one another so that that can happen. That's at the core of a happy marriage.

This means that, all the verses here in Ephesians 5, it means that we should take these verses with utmost seriousness because it says, "Submit to one another in the fear of God." And woe on us if we don't do that!

If we truly have *agape* love, it will always seek the other's benefit. The husband will always seek; every decision he makes will always be for the benefit of the wife. And the wife in submitting to the husband, it will always be done in benefit to him, to serve him for his good and his help.

And that is exactly the same that God does for us, because God does everything for us for our good. God does not do anything for our destruction or our hurt. God does things for us and allows things to happen to us for our good. Everything God does for us is for our ultimate benefit. Even trials! They're for our ultimate benefit.

And, so therefore, if we submit one to another, everything we should do for our mate is for their ultimate benefit. Not only to make this physical life a wonderful life, but also with the Kingdom of God in mind. "Everything I do for my mate is to help them be in the Kingdom of God and not be a stumbling block." Not throwing Claymore Mines in front of the husband's or the wife's path as they walk toward salvation and try to blow the road up!

God does everything for our benefit. And mates should do that for one another. That is the First Point. That is the main principle that **Marriage has to be God-centered**. If it's not, then everything starts falling apart.

The Second Characteristic of a Godly Marriage is where:

II. Each mate is loved, respected, and honored.

It goes both ways.

Back in the 50s, the men just were stressing obedience. The ministry stressed obedience. Some—I have notes from sermons and I just cringe. The whole thing was be obedient, but never talking about loving your mate, honoring your mate, respecting your mate.

Respect is earned. It's not given. On a human level (We're going to see in just a minute, an office has respect and that is commanded.), but respecting humans, it comes by earning it.

Understand this.

Men and women are equal from the standpoint that God offers salvation to both.

No prejudice either way. They are equal in that regard.

However, God designed men and women to have different roles in a marriage. God designed men and women to have different characteristics in their life—who they are in their heart, in their innermost being. He designed that for a reason. And, as a result of this plan of having two separate beings—one coming from the other so there is that [interdependence]—what God did was He said, "I'm going to give some of My characteristics to the woman. I'm going to give some of My characteristics to the man." And the reason He does that is He gives the characteristics to the woman that best suit her role that He has in mind. He gave some of His characteristics to the man to best suit the man's role that He had in mind. God is not cruel in that sense. He says, "I want you to do a certain job. I want you women to have this role, men to have this role. And I'm going to give you My characteristics to best suit you for the role I have in mind for men and women in a marriage."

And unlike Women's Liberation that says, "Men and women are alike," as I said, anybody with a brain knows that men and women are fundamentally different. God designed it that way. It's part of His Plan. We're going to talk about the differences now. I'm speaking in generalities, but it is true in general. There are some exceptions, but it is true in general.

- Men think.
- Women feel.

That's the biggest difference between men and women. Men think and women feel.

Men are blessed because of the role as the head of the family. They are blessed with a mind that's a linear-thinking mind [and] that is a goal-oriented mind. You go from "A" to "B" to "C" to "D".

"I'm going to accomplish this. My mind is focused on this. Get out of my way because I've got to get this done."

That is a prime characteristic of a man's mind.

God also gave him the ability to plan. Men are thinkers. They plan in advance. They plan what they're going to do that day. They plan every step of the operation.

Dorothy was getting on me this morning—not getting on me, but—she says, "Why do you put your—" She just says, "Well, you're arranging your vitamins in a certain way." And I did. And I do it unconsciously because I said, "If I pair these vitamins together, I can take the whole bunch with fewer sips of water." (Laughter from women in the audience.)

Now see, that would never enter a woman's mind. It would never enter her mind. But in a man, you're thinking about efficiency of action, how you can do certain things. You do it in business; you do it in manufacturing. And men's minds think that way.

And women, their minds are off somewhere else while they are taking their vitamins. That's a difference between men and women.

- Men are more aggressive generally.
- And obviously, men have greater strength generally.
- Women, on the other hand, are blessed for their role—mothers, wives with compassion. They have compassion that men can't even approach.
- They have tenderness.

You look at a mom with her little baby. There is a tenderness there that men... You put a baby in a man's arms and it looks like you just put an alien from Mars sometimes. They just don't know what to do about it. But you put a baby in a woman's arms and it's the most natural thing in the world. And she knows exactly what to do. It's in their nature.

Compassion, tenderness; they have emotions that men hide or that men don't even have. They have emotions.

And they have an appreciation of beauty that men don't have.

I remember when Dorothy and I were dating. I was tromping through the grass and she said, "Stop!" And I stopped. And she said, "Look down." And these little flowers that are about the size of two pencil leads and I was stomping all over them and she had noticed them. I had never noticed things like that in my life!

And yet, there is an appreciation for beauty. Men, we're dragging our knuckles through the flower bed and that's just the way God designed us.

Now, I'm going to read something humorous from a columnist Dave Barry. I don't think he's writing now, but his columns are just hilarious. And he was a nationally syndicated columnist and this appeared in our local newspaper on November 23 of 2003. He's talking about the differences between men and women. I'll just read a couple of paragraphs. He said:

Another difference between men and women involves the brain part called the cingulate gyrus.

And there is a portion of the brain called the cingulate gyrus. He says:

This brain part is the sector where the emotions are located. In women, it is a structure the size of a mature cantaloupe.

(Laughter from men in audience.) He goes on to say:

... containing a vast quantity of complex, endlessly recalibrated emotional data involving hundreds, perhaps thousands of human relationships. Whereas in men, it is basically the size of a cashew filled with NFL Highlights.

(Laughter from women in audience.) And that says it all! Then he goes on to say:

Some women (and here I am referring to my wife) can share as many as three days worth of feelings about an event that took eight seconds to actually happen.

(Laughter.) And he says:

We, men, on the other hand, are reluctant to share our feelings in large part because we often don't have any.

(Laughter from women in audience.)

And you see this in a humorous way sums it up of the difference between men and women.

And in a Godly Marriage, it is where **each one appreciates the other** for who and what they are. They **respect** each other for who and what they are. They **honor** each other for who and what they are. And they **love each** other for who and what they are. That's the essence of this Second Point.

And the key is: Over time, as the decades go by in a good marriage, the man begins to take on the characteristics of the woman. The woman begins to take the characteristics of the man because they learn from each other. And you see older couples in their seventies or eighties. Over time the hormones change and diminish in both and they begin to look more alike. And they begin to act more alike in a good marriage. They complete each other's sentences. They think each other's thoughts.

We were driving over here today and I said—(She brings a thermos of coffee.) And I said, "Honey, you ought to have some coffee." And she was said, "I was thinking exactly the same thing."

You just have this sense that you know what's on the other person's mind. And so, over time what God wants us to do—we're separate individuals; woman made from the body of the man, but God gives us different characteristics—and what He wants us to do is to come together—just like we should come together in the image of Jesus Christ.

Christ is here. We are way down here. You have the man over here with his characteristics, his cingulate gyrus being the size of a cashew, and the woman

over here, the one with the size of a cantaloupe. And what He wants us to do is to come together but also come in the image of Christ. I mentioned this at the Feast. And so what we do is we get closer to Christ. If Christ is here and we're here, to get to Christ we have to go in this direction. The woman is over here and Christ is here; she has to go in this direction. Well, guess what? As we get closer to Christ, what happens? We get closer to each other. That's the way it should be in a marriage.

So we should recognize the differences. We should appreciate them and we should learn from them. And they shouldn't be a source of conflict. They shouldn't be a source of putting somebody down.

Back in the early days of the Church, it was presented in several sermons I heard (From people whose names if I mentioned, you would understand, you would recognize.) that the woman's characteristics were inferior to the men's characteristics. And that is not the case at all! God gave some of His strengths—God doesn't have strengths. He is ultimately strong. But God gave some of His characteristics to the woman and some to the man so that we can learn from each other.

Now, let's understand that we must **respect each other's right to have a happy marriage**. The wife has a right to have a happy marriage. The husband has a right to have a happy marriage.

And the husband's right should be that:

- He is supported by his wife; he is respected by his wife as one God holds accountable for the family.

It's an awesome responsibility. Ultimately, God holds the man accountable for the state of the family because he is head of the family. Ephesians 5 and look at verse 33, the last part of verse 33. We read the first part earlier. He said:

Ephesians 5:33b. ... let the wife see that she respects her husband.
(NKJ)

So, that is her job. The word "respect" is Strong's #5399. It's two numbers different from the one we read earlier about fear. But this word is *phobeo* (*fob-eh'-o*). And it has two meanings: to be afraid (English word phobia). But Zodhiates says about the other meaning, "it means to *morally* fear or morally reverence or morally honor," this word "respect." That's why it's translated "respect." The wife needs to **honor** or **respect** the husband.

Now the problem is sometimes husbands behave in a way that diminishes their wives' respect for them. Because why? Husbands are imperfect. We make mistakes. We get in bad attitudes. We get in snits. We get our tail in a knot, whatever it might be.

And then, the wife could say, "Well, I'm not going to respect you," because of the example of the husband. My advice to women is, in this regard, is to overlook

the human and the human and the human frailties because we all sin; we all make mistakes; we all make errors in judgment; we all get in bad attitudes to overlook that and respect the position and respect the job that God has given the man, ultimate responsibility.

And I think the older we get, the more we realize "I don't want all that responsibility." When you're young and full of vim and vinegar, you can do anything, but as you get older, you realize your weaknesses and your faults and your sins and the fact that we don't measure up. And it's an awesome responsibility. It only can be accomplished by us following God's holy spirit and the lead of His spirit.

So husbands have a right to be respected and supported. God called the woman to do that.

The wife's right is:

- To be supported and protected.

God made men stronger. God made men the head of the house. If you're head of the house and you don't protect your wife; you don't support your wife; shame on you! If you don't put your wife's interests ahead of your own, shame on you!

Look at 1 Peter 3 and verse 7. Peter's talking to husbands and he is telling them, "Boy, you better **honor** your wife. It's a command. You better do that." 1 Peter 3 and verse 7, the wife has a right to be **supported**, and **honored**, protected. He says:

1 Peter 3:7. *Likewise, [you] husbands, dwell with them [meaning your mate, your wife] according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, (KJV)*

And we men have to ask ourselves, "Do I really do that? How often do I do that? How often do I honor my wife?"

1 Peter 3:7b. *... as unto the weaker vessel, (KJV)*

We'll talk about that in a second.

1 Peter 3:7 continued. *... as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. (KJV)*

And He is saying, "Husbands, if you don't honor your wife, your prayers are going to be hindered. Unless you shape up and start honoring your wife and using *agape* love in dealing with your wife and putting her interests ahead of yours, I'm not going to listen to your prayers the way you want me to listen to your prayers." They're going to be hindered somehow.

The Greek word for "honor" is the Greek word *time* (*tee-may'*) and it is Strong's #5092. And it means "to esteem to the highest degree."

We have to ask ourselves, "Do I esteem my wife to the highest degree?"

It also is translated "precious." And if you really love your wife, your wife is precious, this wonderful human being that is precious to a man, precious to a husband. And we have to ask ourselves, "Is my wife precious to me? Do I esteem her in the highest degree?" If not, better work on it.

And he says here "the weaker vessel." Now, back in the 50s and 60s, it was said in many cases that she was weaker in every way. The implication was she was inferior to the man in every way. Not true.

But "the weaker vessel" is Strong's # 772. And it's the Greek word *asthenes* (*as-then-ace*). Zodhiates says it means in this application "without strength or powerless."

Now, if she is submitting to her husband, then she is powerless in that regard, in the sense that she submits to him as the one who makes the final decision. Goodspeed, in Goodspeed's translation, Moffatt's translation, just says "weaker sex" in the sense of physical strength. So, the wife is not powerless in an overall sense, but when she submits to her husband, then, she gives up a certain amount of power to him because he makes the final decisions. In that sense, God gave the wife certain characteristics and makes her weaker than the husband, obviously in physical strength; sometimes in maybe leadership ability, or as I've mentioned before planning and thinking ahead and all of that.

Now if we honor one another and we respect the wife's right to be protected and supported and the husband's right to be honored in the sense that he is head of the house and respected in that way, if we do these things, then we become blameless before God. God can't point and say, "Now, you didn't do that. You are to blame." And none of us wants at the end of the day to stand before God and God say, "You're to blame. It's your fault."

Look at Philippians 2 and let's read verses 14 and 15. We're told in this—this is not necessarily referring specifically to marriages, but in this application, this principle applied to marriages, it gets pretty heavy here when it says in verse 14 of Philippians 2, it says:

Philippians 2:14. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: (KJV)

Well, applied to marriage, we should do that without grumbling and muttering and actually arguing.

Verse 15:

Philippians 2:15. That [you] may be... (KJV)

In other words, you don't dispute; you don't murmur:

Philippians 2:15. That [you] may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, (KJV)

So, God can't rebuke us, pointing His finger at us.

Philippians 2:15b. ... *in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation [Much more so today than back then.], among whom [you] shine as lights in the world; (KJV)*

Now how much more should we obey this verse in a marriage, as opposed to friends or acquaintances or people in the Church? How much more should we do this in the marriage?

So, the Second Point is that **we need to respect and honor each other because if we do that, it causes agape love to deepen**, if we respect and honor each other.

This leads us to the Third Point of a Godly Marriage. And this is where, a Godly Marriage is where:

III. Repentance and forgiveness are present on both parts and in the minds of both parties and their actions.

Nobody tries to get even. Nobody tries to get back. Nobody tries to take vengeance.

We are both able to say to each other, as husband and wife, "I was wrong. I am sorry." Pride has no place in a marriage. And if somebody screws up, they need to say, "I'm wrong and I'm sorry."

What did Christ say? We won't turn there, but in Matthew 7. "You better learn how to take the 2 'x 4' out of your eye before you look at your mate's eye to take the speck out of your mate's eye." How much more should that apply in marriage? That was a general principle, but we need to apply it specifically in marriage.

Before we start trying to take vengeance or getting back or getting even, we'd better look at ourselves and look at our faults and remember our sins. We all sometimes do in our marriage, sometimes we do something that's annoying to our mate or we do something that's provocative to our mate. And if we are on the receiving end of that, before we lash out, we had better remember our own sins. We had better remember our own faults. We should never try to get back or get even.

1 Peter 3 verses 8 and 9. How much more should this apply to a marriage? 1 Peter 3 verses 8 and 9, I'll read it out of the NIV. 1 Peter 3 verses 8 and 9:

1 Peter 3:8. *Finally [he says], all of you, (NIV)*

Now, apply this to a marriage.

1 Peter 3:8b. ... live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.
9) Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this [end] you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.
(NIV)

We should never return evil with evil or insult with insult in a marriage. It should never happen—ever happen!

And Christ said in Matthew 5, we won't turn there. You know the Sermon on the Mount. What did He say? He said, "You've heard an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But remember He said, "**But I say unto you that you don't resist evil.**" He says, "Do not resist evil." And He says, "If somebody smacks you on one cheek, turn the other cheek too." How much more should this be done in a marriage? No yelling. No screaming. No not speaking for a week, going through the house in silence in a snit. That should never be done in a marriage. Never!

Godly love should overcome all of this. Let's go to 1 Peter 4 and verse 8. We were in chapter 3 a minute ago. This is a quote of Proverbs 10 and verse 12. Peter is quoting it now and telling us in the New Testament Church, the following:

1 Peter 4:8. And above all things have fervent [love] among yourselves:
(KJV)

How much more in a marriage?

He says, "for love." The King James says "charity." That's the Greek word *agape*.

1 Peter 4:8b. ... [love] shall cover the multitude of sins. (KJV)

The Greek word for "cover" simply means to cover up or hide, as you would put a blanket over something to hide it from view.

Jamieson, Fawcett, and Brown, their commentary says:

... so as not harshly to condemn or expose faults; but forbearingly to bear the other's burdens, forgiving and forgetting past offenses.

And I'll have to say my mother remembered my dad's offenses from day one. Never forgot them and never got over them. How would you like to live a life like that?

How much more in a marriage should we forgive and forget? And love covers a multitude of sins.

So, no matter what the backgrounds are between a man and a woman, no matter what the differences are (the educational differences, the personality

characteristics), all can be overcome if we exercise God's spirit. If we use God's spirit, it can all be overcome.

The Fourth Point, in a Godly Marriage it is where:

IV. Each determines to change himself or herself to be the mate God wants them to be.

I'll say it again. A Godly Marriage is where **each determines to change himself or herself to be the mate God wants them to be.**

We have to ask the question: "When there's a problem between a husband and a wife, how do you handle it?" Do you accuse the other person? Do you strike back? Do you justify the self?

Or, if there's an issue, do you first look at yourself and see "What have I done? What is my part in the problem? How can I change to make the marriage better?" rather than throw it all at the other person. We all need to admit that we can be wrong and that we are part of the problem.

We won't turn there, but 1 John 1 and verse 8; Romans 3:23 says the same thing. "If we say we have no sin," what does God say? "We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us," if we say we have no sin. We must be able to admit we're wrong.

And in marriage counseling, I can't tell you the roadblocks you get when one person refuses to admit they have any problem. There's just this stubbornness that they are not part of the problem. It's the other person's fault.

If there is a problem, we must look at ourselves first. And men, as the leader, as the head of the family, should take that lead and apologize first, and apologize for his part of the problem. If he's the leader, he should do that.

It's important to understand that **the only person we can change is me.** We can't change our mate. We can't change anybody else. **The only person we can change is me.**

And the problem is many women, historically, marry men thinking they're going to change them. It doesn't work. It just doesn't work. "Well, if he loves me enough, he'll change. If he loves me enough, he'll be the way I want him to be." It doesn't work. And so, let's understand that **the only person we can change is ourselves.**

We're told to what? Grow in grace and knowledge. Well, growth equals change. Look at little kids. They grow. They change. If we're going to grow, we must change. And we have to admit the fact that we need to change and we need to apologize and say, "I'm sorry."

We need to determine also that we should be a mate that our other mate can love and respect. We have to behave in a way that our mate would love and respect us.

Notice, let's go to 1 Corinthians 7 and verse 16. Now, this is talking about specifically men and women who are married to mates who are outside the Church, that have not been baptized, not converted. But how much more should this apply in a marriage? 1 Corinthians 7 verse 16, it says:

1 Corinthians 7:16. *For what [do you know], O wife, (KJV)*

In this context, it's referring to the wife.

1 Corinthians 7:16. *For what [do you know], O wife whether [you shall] save [your] husband? [Or] how [do you know], O man, whether [you shall] save your wife? (KJV)*

And if we behave in a way that encourages honor and respect from our mate, then we set an example that they would want to follow. And if it is a godly Christian example, then we're setting an example for them to follow so they can be in the Kingdom. And a woman could set a tremendous example—love, kindness, gentleness, forgiveness, compassion. Men can do exactly the same thing.

And we don't want to be a stumbling block to our mate being in the Kingdom of God.

And it says here, "Women can save the men; men can save the women from the standpoint of their example." So God is watching to see whether or not we will set a godly example in our marriage. So, that's the Fourth Point. Marriage is where we **each determine to change to be a mate that God would be pleased with.**

The Fifth and Last Point: A Godly Marriage is where:

V. Each is dedicated to sacrificing themselves for the benefit of their mate.

They sacrifice. We read earlier in Ephesians 5, he said, "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church and He gave Himself for it." We should do that. Both of us—both husbands and wives should do that. It applies to both mates.

"Am I willing to give up something I want for the benefit of my mate?" That's the ultimate love.

Christ did not want to die. He said, "If this cup can pass, please make it pass." He didn't want to do that. And that's an example of the ultimate sacrifice.

Romans 12 and verse 1, we're told to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. And we need to do that for each other. Are we willing to sacrifice what we want for the benefit of our mate? Because that is what Christ did for the Church.

We need to get our minds off of ourselves and the satisfaction of the self and focus on the satisfaction of our mates. And if both do that, it can be a wonderful, wonderful relationship.

When I was courting Dorothy, her dad Tommie Tucker told me (I've mentioned this before), he says, "A spoiled wife is a happy wife." He was chiding me. And Dorothy's mom, Gunhilde, heard that and she turned it back and said, "And a spoiled husband is a happy husband." And they had a good marriage. They had a very good marriage because they understood that.

And we need to understand that. Let's go to 1 John 3 and verse 22. We don't want our prayers hindered. We want God to listen and to act. And this is the key for God to listen to our prayers and act on our prayers. Notice what it says. 1 John 3 and verse 22:

1 John 3:22. *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, [WHY?] because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. (KJV)*

Now, if our goal is to please God and God has given us a mate that we—in the husband's case are responsible for or in the wife's case, she is to submit to—then, shouldn't we be doing things that are pleasing in our mate's sight, just as we do things that should be pleasing in God's sight?

We read earlier in Ephesians 5:21, "Submitting yourselves one to another"—trying to please one another.

Philippians, let's go to there real quickly, Philippians 2 and verse 3. I'll read it out of the New King James. We have read this several times recently, but let's read this in an application of marriage, in a context of marriage. Philippians 2 and verse 3, Paul is saying to the Church in general, but let's apply it to husbands and wives. He says:

Philippians 2:3. *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition... (NKJ)*

Nothing in a marriage should be done out of selfishness.

Or, he says, "conceit," thinking "I'm better than you." But he says:

Philippians 2:3b. *... but in lowliness of mind [humility] let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJ)*

How much more should we do this in a marriage? Esteeming the other better than ourselves; willing to sacrifice for the other person.

Let me read you just a couple of sentences out of a book called The Ten Laws of Lasting Love. It was written by a man named Paul Pearsall. And he summarizes this concept beautifully. He says:

Marriage is designed primarily for giving rather than taking.

And sometimes people enter into marriage to get and to take. Women sometimes marry for money. Men sometimes marry for looks or sex or whatever it might be.

Marriage is designed primarily for giving rather than taking. It is meant to be a permanent union between two unselfish people.

"A permanent union between two unselfish people."

If you fight for yourself, only you can win. When you fight for your marriage, you both win.

[This is a] very fundamental concept and right down the line Biblically. He's just putting it in different words.

So, let's conclude by asking [some] questions. Think now.

Would I want Christ to treat me the way I have treated my mate?

Would I want Christ to lose His temper with me?

I wouldn't want to suffer that!

Would I want Christ to put me down and criticize me?

Would I want Christ to yell and scream at me?

Can you imagine Christ yelling and screaming? And how you would feel?

Would I want Christ to gossip about me behind my back?

And especially:

Would I want Christ never to forgive my sins and never to forget my sins?

Would I want that? I don't think anybody, any of us, would want that.

On the flip side of that:

Would I want Christ to love me?

Or would I want my mate as Christ does?

Would I want Christ to love me at all times?

He does. And so we should treat our mates the same way.

Would I want Christ to be kind and gentle with me?

Absolutely!

Would I want Christ to be patient with me despite my sins and despite my faults?

Absolutely! Well, shouldn't we do that with each other as husbands and wives? Be patient, forgiving, kind, gentle, supportive, encouraging.

We should treat our mates the way we want Christ to treat us. We've got to get that through our heads.

We should treat our mates the way we want Christ to treat us.

And some people forget in marriage that God is watching our marriages; God is watching our marriages as part of His judgment process on all of us. Because our marriages are a litmus test of our conversion; our marriages are the scorecard of how close we are to the Kingdom of God.

Marriage is the ultimate practice field for being in the Kingdom of God—two people in very close contact with all the ups and downs in life, with all the interactions, with all the disappointments and the trials and the troubles and all the joys and happiness. It is a practice field. It is in essence a pressure cooker in that sense. Pressure cooking cooks food faster. It's a microcosm of the Kingdom.

And God watches and judges us to see how we behave in our marriages because it will give Him the clearest indication of how we will behave in the Kingdom of God. And if we can learn to treat our mates in a godly way, then guess what? God knows that we will treat His children in the Kingdom in a godly way. And He is giving us the opportunity to demonstrate that right now in our marriages.

So, let's understand what a Godly Marriage is. And let's apply it and seek it and work for it every day of our lives.