

## The Purpose Of Marriage – Part 2

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Okay, this is the second part of the sermon on marriage. Last time we talked about five differences between men and women and the fact that God gave some of His characteristics to the man, some of His characteristics to the woman. And we determined that marriage involves the coming together of two fundamentally different people to create a union. And we found that the husband and wife are to become one flesh. That's means one, if you look at the Greek, it means one in mind and one in character.

Then we asked the question, "Why did God do it this way?" which leads to the purpose of marriage because one purpose is that these two very different beings come together and learn from each other to be like God and to be like Jesus Christ. And, then in that very close long term relationship, they have the opportunity to exercise God's holy spirit so that these two different beings can make a happy and a fulfilling and a successful union.

So in part 1, I said that we learn lessons in marriage that we otherwise would not. And that's absolutely true, but I do want to emphasize that marriage is not the only way we can learn those lessons because single brethren can learn lessons by being single. Just as married brethren can learn lessons by being married. And we'll talk about single brethren in future sermons.

So, now let's get to part 2. We want to ask and answer two questions: (1) what does God want us to learn from our marriage; and (2) how to solve marriage problems God's way. Not the world's way, but God's way.

So the first part: What does God want us to learn in our marriage? We're going to talk about three things.

Now, Ephesians 5 is the primer on marriage. So if you have a marker or a ribbon in your Bible, you might want to put it there because we're going to be coming back to Ephesians 5 and we're going to be going through Ephesians 5. So, as you're going there, let's talk about the first lesson, the first of three that God wants us to learn.

**The first one is: In marriage we are to learn to put our mate first, to put our mate ahead of us.**

Now, let's go to Ephesians 5. Look at verse 21. It says it very clearly.

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

Submitting to one another. Now the Greek word for “submitting” is Strong’s 5293. And it is the Greek word “hupotasso” (hoop-ot-as’-so). And in English it’s “h-u-p-o-t-a-s-s-o” and it means the following. It means *to subordinate, to obey, to be subject to or to submit yourself unto*.

In other words, what hupotasso means is that you’re putting your mate ahead of yourself. You’re considering their wants, their needs, their desires, what is best for them.

But this verse says that we have to do it in the fear of God. Now that Greek word for “fear” is a very strong word. It’s Strong’s 5401 and it means “phobos” where we get our English word “phobia” from. And “phobos” means *alarm, fright, terror, be exceedingly afraid*.

So this tells us that if we don’t submit to one another, if we do not do that, there are going to be serious consequences. And we have to do so because we are afraid, terrified of getting at cross purposes with God Almighty and what might happen as a result of that. But, obviously, this is something we should be doing all the time anyway.

So let’s go to Philippians 2 and we’ll read verses 3 and 4. Single brethren can benefit and do benefit from these same scriptures. We should all be doing this all the time. I’ll read it out of the New King James. Verse 3:

***Philippians 2:3.*** *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, ...*  
(NKJV)

In other words, if you have selfish ambition and you’re conceited, you will put yourself first. It says, “do nothing with the motivation of putting yourself first.’

*3b) ... but in lowliness or mind let each esteem others better than himself.*  
(NKJV)

*4) Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others.* (KJV)

And some translations say, “the interests of others.”

Now how much more so does this apply to a marriage, where the husband and the wife look after each other, look out for each other and are concerned that they put the interests of their mate ahead of their own?

Now, let’s go to 1 Peter 5 and see another scripture that amplifies on this. Again, it’s something that all of us should be doing as Christians. 1 Peter 5 and we’re going to read verses 5 and 6. And it’s talking about submission one to another. 1 Peter 5:5, it says:

**1 Peter 5:5.** *Likewise, [you] younger, submit yourselves [to those who are older]. [And he says, Yes (notice this)], all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: ... (KJV)*

Same Greek word—hupotasso.

*5b) ... for God [resists] the proud and [gives] grace to the humble.  
6) [He says,] humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he [can] exalt you in due time. (KJV)*

So, how much more so in a marriage should we be subject to one another? To be submissive to one another and serving and helping and satisfying one another, looking out for one another, doing what is best for the other person?

So you see, since man is the head of the family (and we'll cover this in just a minute), he has to take the lead in doing this. He has to set the example of putting his wife first. And it's a burden on him. Believe me it is a burden to make decisions that are best for the wife even though they go contrary to what he might want. But if it is best for the wife, if it is best for the family and the union, then he should make that decision in her favor even if it is something he would rather not do or he would prefer something else if it is in her best interests.

And Dorothy added this. She went through my notes. I asked her to look them over and she added this. "And the wife shouldn't whine when she doesn't get her own way." There's a balance there, obviously.

When we put the other person first—we humble ourselves and put the other person first—tremendous blessings come from that act. And if it's done over and over, day by day, week by week, month by month, decade by decade, the blessings God flows upon that union are just tremendous—if we do that, if we really are serious about it and do that. And we're going to find and you will find if you put this in practice that making your mate happy and fulfilled will make you happy and fulfilled.

So the first thing we learn from marriage is to put the other first, to put the mate first.

**The second thing that God wants us to learn from marriage is that wives are to submit to their husbands.**

Let's go back to Ephesians 5 and we're going to read verses 22 through 24. This is very clear. It is unambiguous. It says:

***Ephesians 5:22.*** *Wives, submit to your husbands, ... (NKJV)*

Again the same Greek word, hupotasso, that we read in verse 21. "Submit to your own husbands," but notice this. This is the manner in which a wife is to do that:

22b) ... as to the Lord. (NKJV)

Meaning: Wives are to submit to their husbands in the same manner as they submit to Jesus Christ. Verse 23:

23) *For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He [Christ] is Savior of the body. (NKJV)*

Now the clear implication here, as we will amplify as we go on, since Christ is savior of the body, savior of the Church, the husband should put himself in a position to be savior of his wife. In other words, he would sacrifice his life for his wife. Going on verse 24:

24) *Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ [in the same manner that the Church is subject to Christ], so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything [all things]. (NKJV)*

Now we ask the question. "Why this command? What's the point? What's the purpose of it?" Well, first we have to understand that all of us have to learn as human beings in God's Church, we have to learn to submit to higher authority. We all have to do that.

Let's go to James chapter 4 and verse 7. This is referring to all Christians in every way. This is the same Greek word, hupotasso, that we read in verse 21 and 22 of Ephesians 5. James 4:7, notice what it says.

**James 4:7.** *Submit yourselves therefore to God. ... (KJV)*

All of us have to submit to God, that ultimate authority. And it says, "Resist the devil." If we do that, the devil will flee from us, but we must submit to God. All of us must. Then notice over in 1 Peter chapter 2 not only are we to submit ourselves to God, but we are to submit to the ordinances and the laws of men. 1 Peter 2, we're going to read verses 13 and 14. It says:

**1 Peter 2:13.** *Submit [hupotasso again; submit] yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake [for Christ's sake]: whether it be to the king, as supreme; (KJV)*

Or we could say the President of the United States or the Premier in Canada, whatever. Verse 14:

14) Or [not just to the king] *unto governors, as unto [those] that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. (KJV)*

All of us have to submit to higher authority.

And, as an aside, men in their jobs learn that they must submit to their bosses and must submit to their supervisors. And, of course, working women learn the same thing. It's

sad to say, but in the Church over the years I've known of a few men who have never been able to hold down a job. They go from one job to another job to another job. And you look deeply into that, you find out that primarily they can't hold a job because they cannot stand having somebody tell them what to do. They always know better. They disrespect those over them and they either get fired or they quit.

And my point is, as here in James 4:7 and 1 Peter 2: All of us have to submit to higher authority—God first, then those of the laws of the land and those in government positions in those laws. We all have to prove to God—all of us, men and women—that we will humbly submit to higher authority.

The problem today in today's society, perverted as it is, is that women are taught just the opposite. The women's liberation movement has done great harm. And it has taken women from sweetness and humility to hardness and in your face. We've all seen it and there are these fanatics that just change, they want to change the nature that God has given to women. And that women's liberation movement has spread through the media, spread through education, higher education especially. And, as a result, there is this war going on between men and women. It happens in the workplace. It happens in marriages. It happens in society.

You see God says that women are to learn to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. This is very serious. When women are told, "You have to submit to your husband as you submit to Jesus Christ" that is extremely serious. And Christ, you see, is learning about the wife in this process. He's learning about the wife. He's learning that as she submits to her husband, so she submits to Jesus Christ. And, if she resists the husband or fights the husband, then Christ is learning and He's saying to Himself, "Well, hey, if she's fighting her husband and the commands are clear, then what would she do in the kingdom? What would she do if I gave her eternal life?" And so, in that sense, wives are being judged today by how they submit to their husbands because that is an indicator of how they would submit to Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Now, that does not mean, however, that a wife should submit to the breaking of God's law just to be obedient to her husband. That does not mean that she should submit to evil, to unrighteousness. She should not submit to carnal behavior. There are limits there, obviously.

The command for the wife to submit to the husband is no excuse for the husband to lord it over the wife. And that was a great transgression in the Church in the '50s and the '60s and the '70s. I know of some men who were attracted to the Church because of that singular thing. They were attracted to the Church because then they could become dictator in their home and their wife had to obey under fear of the lake of fire. And they took advantage of that and they lorded it over their wives. I think all of us have seen it. Anybody, who has been in the Church for a few decades, has seen that.

But Christ said, "That's not the way to do it." That is not what He intended. Look at Luke chapter 22 and we're going to read verses 25 and 26. Now Christ is talking to His

disciples. He is not specifically talking about marriage, but this principle applies especially to marriage.

**Luke 22:25.** *And he [Christ] said unto them [His disciples], The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; ... (KJV)*

Meaning: the people that are underneath them.

*25b) ... and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. (KJV)*

But notice this.

*26) But [you shall] not be so: ... (KJV)*

Don't do it that way!

*26b) ... but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that ... [serves]. (KJV)*

Don't lord it over your wife. Don't take advantage of that. Do you want to be a good husband? One of the best ways to be a good husband is make it easy for your wife to submit. Don't make it hard. Make it easy for her to do that.

And let me tell you. Wives who can cheerfully submit to an imperfect man develop a special kind of character. They really do and that will stand them in good stead as we march toward the Kingdom of God. Submitting to an imperfect human builds exceptional character.

So, the second point that God wants us to learn in a marriage is that: Wives should submit to their husbands.

**The third thing (we'll only cover three as I said) is that husbands are to learn to love.**

Now what a concept! Husbands have to learn to love? Let's go back to Ephesians 5 and see that. We're going to read verse 25 and then 28 and 29. This wouldn't be here if there wasn't a problem.

**Ephesians 5:25.** *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for [her], (NKJV)*

What this tells us is that husbands are to love their wives in the same manner that Christ loves the Church. Christ obviously was willing to die for all of us, to die for the Church. Husbands should have that same kind of love. Verse 28:

*28) So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. (NKJV)*

And we're going to see that when you love your wife, it will come back to you. Just like when you love anyone. If you extend God's love out to another person, it will come back to you in their love toward you. And that is especially so in a marriage because of the close proximity and the length of time people are married. Verse 29, he says:

*29) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, ... (NKJV)*

Meaning we take care of our bodies. You see the guy standing in front of mirror, flexing his muscles. He's proud of his body; he's taking care of his body. What Christ is saying is, "Take care of your wife just as much as you take care of yourself." And he goes on to say:

*29b) ... just as the Lord [takes care of] the church. (NKJV)*

Now again, why this command? We talked about the women why, but why does God do it this way? You see men are wired differently, as we talked about last time. Men are wired as conquerors. Men are wired to be very competitive. Men are competitive in athletics. Men are competitive in their careers and career advancement and excelling in certain areas.

I can remember reading the autobiography of Chuck Yeager a few years ago. He was the air force pilot that first broke the sound barrier. And many scientists of the day thought that that was impossible. It was a barrier. If a plane tried to go faster than the speed of sound, it would disintegrate.

And he crept up to the speed of sound on several flights and then finally punched through. So when it was confirmed, he said the mach meter was above mach 1, meaning above the speed of sound, and they heard the sonic booms down on the ground and they told him he had broken the sound barrier.

Do you know what he said? Two words—"What's next?" Because men are wired to face the next challenge and many times don't sit and just relish in the limelight. They want to pursue what's next. And men too often view marriage in that same light. It is one more thing to be done.

But the fact is that men view marriage as a challenge. And once they're married, it's overcome and then they're on to the next thing, whatever it is. And once married, you see then they put that behind them and then they're off to a career. They're off with hobbies or toys or whatever it might be. Over time in a marriage, husbands can neglect to love their wives, to take care of their wives, to nourish their wives, to generate love in that marriage and to demonstrate love in their marriage because their mind is off on something else. It's on to the next challenge.

Men must learn to love their wives at all times. Not when it's convenient. Not just when they feel like it. Not when they want to get something from their wives, but at all times husbands need to love their wives. That's why this command exists.

Now, let's go to 1 Peter 3 and verse 7. Peter talked about submitting in chapter 2. Let's look at chapter 3 now. He's talking to the husbands. He says:

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

Notice what he says.

*7b) ... giving [honor] unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, ... (KJV)*

Not that she is inferior. It means that God has given that muscular strength, size and all to the man. That's all. Nothing to brag about.

*7 continued) ... giving [honor] unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; ... (KJV)*

Marching down the road to salvation together, he says.

*7 continued) ... being heirs together ... that your prayers be not hindered. (KJV)*

There is a lot in this verse!

The Greek word for "honor" is Strong's 5092. It's pronounced "tee-may" and it's spelled "t-i-m-é" like the English word "time". And so timé means *a value*. Look at your wife as a value. And it goes on *by analogy, esteem, especially of the highest degree*. The husband should esteem his wife to the highest degree. Another meaning is *precious*. A husband should view his wife as something precious, as a gift from God.

When Dorothy and I were dating, I looked up the name "Dorothy" in the Webster's Dictionary at the time. Names have meanings. And the name "Dorothy," means *a gift from God*. And it just blew me away when I read that, but our wives should be precious to us. We should esteem them very highly.

And what this tells us in the latter part of the verse where it says, "that your prayers be not hindered," this says that a husband's prayers can be hindered if he is a bad husband. If he is not treating his wife properly, if he's not honoring and esteeming her, God is saying, 'Hey! You're not doing your part. You're not doing your job. I am not going to listen to your prayers.'

I was counseling a while back and the husband was whining that God doesn't listen to his prayers and it was about another matter. And he was being a bad husband. And I



said, "Duh! Look at 1 Peter 3 and verse 7. Put the two together and see what's going on here. Maybe if you were a better husband, you're prayers would be answered."

You see husbands should care for and protect the wife just as Christ cares for and protects the Church, protects His Body, each member in particular. Let's go back to Ephesians 5 again. Let's look at verse 26 and 27. We stopped off in verse 24. Verse 26 says:

***Ephesians 5:26:*** *that He [referring to Christ] might sanctify and cleanse her [meaning the Church] with the washing of water by the word, (NKJV)*

Sanctify means to *put in a right standing with God*, and to do what one can to put the wife in a special category in the sense that she is set apart for a holy purpose unto God and a husband facilitates that. Verse 27:

*27) that He [referring to Christ] might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle of any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (NKJV)*

The Church should be holy and without blemish.

The husband should have this same attitude toward his wife. He needs to create an atmosphere in the home where she can be holy, where she can be without blemish, and an atmosphere in the home that aids her in becoming the Bride of Christ. It's the husband's responsibility to have that atmosphere in the home that facilitates her being in God's Kingdom.

You see Christ never ignores the Church, never neglects the Church, His Body. Now we know in the parable of the sheepfold in John chapter 10, we're told that the thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy. And Satan wants to steal and kill and destroy all of us. Now when he is attempting to do that, do you think Christ might come to our rescue from time to time? I'm sure in the kingdom we're going to look back and Christ is going to say, "I saved you here and I saved you there." Remember He told Peter that "Satan wants to sift you as wheat"? And He said, "But I have prayed for you and that's not going to happen."

Now Christ has that attitude toward all of us. Husbands need to have that same attitude toward their wives. The husband should take care of the wife better than he takes care of himself. And if the wife sees that, then it makes it easier for her to obey. If the wife sees that the husband loves her, is willing to sacrifice himself for her, it makes it easier for her to submit. And it increases the love between the two.

So, let's summarize these three that we've just learned today, lessons that God wants us to learn from our marriages. One of the best scriptures to summarize that is Colossians chapter 3 and we're going to begin in verse 15. We'll read verses 15 through 19 and then 23 through 25. Colossians 3:15, Paul says:

**Colossians 3:15:** *Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, ... (KJV)*

Now, Paul is going to tell us how in just a minute, in just a few more verses, but notice:

*15b) ... to the which also [you] are called in one body; and be ... thankful. (KJV)*

We are called to have peace in the Church, in our marriages. Verse 16:

*16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the [Eternal].*

*17) And whatsoever [you] do in word [and] deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, ... (KJV)*

Do everything to please Christ, to follow His admonitions and His commandments.

*17b) ... giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (KJV)*

Now, verse 18, notice. Now he starts telling us how to have peace, especially in a marriage.

*18) Wives [if you want to have peace], submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the [Eternal]. (KJV)*

Then he admonishes the husbands.

*19) Husbands, love your wives, and [don't be] bitter against them. (KJV)*

Don't take out your frustrations on your wife. Don't take out your disappointments on your wife. So again, wives are to submit; husbands are to love.

Verse 23:

*23) And whatsoever [you] do, [the King James says,] do it heartily, ... (KJV)*

The Greek means *to do it with all your heart, everything you have.*

*23b) ... [whatever you] do, [do it with all your heart], as unto the [Eternal] and not unto men; (KJV)*

We're not here to please men.

*24) Knowing that of the Lord [you] shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for [you] serve the Lord Christ.*

*25) But he that [does] wrong ... (KJV)*

Now we're talking about marriage here.

*25) ... he that [does] wrong shall receive for the wrong which he [has] done: ... there is no respect of persons. (KJV)*

And the context is marriage. When we have done wrong in a marriage, we need to fess up and we need to change. We are being judged now on the quality of our marriages.

**Now that leads us now to the next big point: How do we solve marriage problems God's way?**

We're going to cover some points. We're going to cover five of them actually, but these points, if applied, can also prevent problems in a marriage. Or for our single brethren, they can help you with your relationships with others in the Church and, frankly, out of the Church.

Some unknown author once said, "Marriage is a beautiful thing, but it's a mine field." And that is true. That is absolutely true because if you're not careful, things can quickly blow up. I think I mentioned this joke a while back. The wife says to her husband, "Do I look fat?" Okay, you're in the presence of the mine field. You're about ready to step on a mine. Now, the husband thinks to himself, "Do I look stupid?" Ha-ha. So things can just blow up. Without even thinking, things can blow up. That's what the man means by marriage is a mine field.

But the fact is Satan wants to prevent us from being in God's spiritual family. Remember the thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy in John 10:10. Now Satan can do that. He can keep us out of God's spiritual family by destroying our physical family by attacking the cornerstone of the family, which is marriage. And if he can get us to blow up our marriages and behave carnally in our marriages, he can keep us out of the Kingdom of God.

Now, think back for a minute when you first got married or when people do first get married. They're madly in love. They spend as much time as possible together. They talk incessantly with one another. They put on their best face possible when they're dating and courting. And they try to do whatever pleases the other person. That's how it starts.

Now, the problem is over time things can change. Husbands and wives can take each other for granted. They can become distracted over time with children, with jobs, career, pursuit of outside interests, and their minds get off of the marriage and they're on to other things. They can become selfish over time. And both can forget what attracted them to each other in the first place over time. They no longer put on their best face. And when trials and disappointments come, too many times they take out their frustrations on their mate. Their mate becomes the "cat that gets kicked" out of frustration.

Just as an example, one example: This thing about “mid-life crises in men” and to a lesser extent women, it is true. It is very true. It’s my observation that somewhere between ages forty-five and fifty-five men come to the realization that they’re getting older. They look back at their dreams and their hopes and their wishes when they were in their twenties. And all of a sudden they look at themselves and they’re say fifty, and they haven’t realized their dreams. They’re not making as much money as they wanted to. They don’t have the job they wanted. They don’t have the home they wanted. A lot of things didn’t turn out the way they wanted and this leads to frustration. Sometimes, too many times, the men take out that frustration on their wives.

And, as I told one man—we were counseling about this and I said—“You are destroying the very thing you want. You want love. You want affection. You want compassion. You want understanding and by your behavior to your wife, you’re destroying the very thing that you want.”

Let’s go to Proverbs 18 and verse 19 and see this in relation to a marriage. Proverbs 18 verse 19, I will read it out of the New Living Testament because it puts it very well. It doesn’t change the meaning. It’s not corrupted in any way. It just puts it very profoundly. Proverbs 18:19.

***Proverbs 18:19.*** *It is harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars. (NLT)*

Now, how much more in a marriage does that apply? Offense, hurt. And the result is that, if there is enough of that over time, both parties, husband and wife, lose love and lose respect for each other because one or both is not behaving as a Christian. And over time they drift apart. They lose love and they lose respect.

And it takes months, years, even decades to get into the situation. It just happens gradually over time and Satan is behind the scenes provoking and prodding and pushing. Then they come for counseling, which I’m thankful they do, but they come when things get desperate rather than coming maybe ten years earlier or five years earlier.

And over the last few years Satan is more active than ever before in society as we well know, but in marriages. Satan is trying to blow up our marriages in the Church. He’s trying to divide the husbands and the wives. He’s trying to provoke them to disrespect each other. He is trying to provoke them—and does—for them to be outright mean and nasty toward each other, to become very carnal in their relationship and to prevent them from exercising God’s holy spirit in the relationship and to prevent them from inviting God into the marriage. Satan wants us to push God out of the marriage. Then he’s got us—we behave carnally.

Think about this. How can we claim to be Christians; how can we want to teach others in the world tomorrow if we cannot make our marriage work? And I think the answer is: If we can't make our marriage work, we're not going to be in the kingdom. We're not going to be in the world tomorrow if we can't make our marriage work. That's why God is judging the Church now—to see the quality of our marriages. How willing are we to put ourselves second and somebody else first?

But you see the solution to this, the solution to marriage problems is very, very simple. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 11:3 to see a fundamental principle about Christianity. Too often people like to overcomplicate things. Whether it's doctrine, whether it's solutions to problems, things get overcomplicated. That's the world's way. 2 Corinthians 11:3. Notice Paul ties this in to Adam and Eve and marriage.

**2 Corinthians 11:3.** *But I fear, lest by any means, ... (KJV)*

Satan is going to use any means.

*3b) ... as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, ... (KJV)*

The word "subtilty" in the Greek means *craftiness, deceit*.

*3b) as [Satan] beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in [Jesus] Christ. (KJV)*

It is simple. The principles and answers to marriage are simple, but they are hard to do. They are hard to execute. Why? Because they go counter to human nature! God and Christ are asking us to go against our human nature and to do something else and that is to show love, kindness, goodness, gentleness and all the fruits of his holy spirit.

**So, let's start with the first step in solving marriage problems. We need to realize that I am part of the problem.**

When there is a marriage problem or a problem in the marriage, both people, husband and wife, have to realize that each one is part of the problem. I have never seen it in marriage counseling... And I was thrust into marriage counseling as a young lieutenant in the air force. Didn't want to. Didn't know what I was doing, but I was thrust into it because I had so many young airmen under me in the squad room. And starting at this time and to this very day, I have never seen a marriage where one was 100% wrong and the other was 100% right. One had a black hat on; the other had a white hat on—never happens. Never happens!

And you see you cannot solve a problem unless you admit you have a problem. And that's why this first step is we need to realize that if there is a problem in the marriage, I'm part of it. We have to take ownership of that.

Remember the situation with David and Nathan? The whole thing with Bathsheba and David was deceitful. He committed murder with Uriah and all that went on with that. And this went on after Uriah's death and David married Bathsheba. About a year, nine months later David thought God winked at it. David thought that because of his position as king that God just cut him some slack.

And David went on with his life until Nathan walked into the court. All the courtiers were there. David's appointees were there. And Nathan stepped up—you remember the story—and told David a story about a very wealthy man with lots of flocks. He had a visitor come and he wanted to kill one of the lambs for dinner that night to present to the visitor, but he wouldn't take of his own flock. So he went to one of his poor employees that worked on the land. And this man had one lamb. And this man treated that lamb as if one of his own children. And his children treated the lamb as part of the family. And the lamb slept in the same house. And that lamb was cherished, but this wealthy man took that lamb, killed it, dressed it and offered it to this visiting man, dignitary, whoever it was.

And you see David, when he heard that, was outraged. And he said, "That man needs to die." And Nathan said very simply, "You are the man." You can read that in 2 Samuel 12. So, when David heard it, what did David do? What did he do? Notice—we won't turn there, but he said, "I have sinned against the Eternal." David admitted his sin, admitted he was part of the problem. In fact, he was the majority, the vast majority of the problem. He didn't point fingers at somebody else. He said, "It's on me. I have sinned." Notice Psalm 51 and verse 3 and we'll read the beginning of verse 6. Notice what he did. The first step is to admit and realize that we are part of the problem. Psalm 51:3, David says:

***Psalm 51:3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: ... (KJV)***

"My transgressions," not somebody else's.

***3b) ... and my sin [not somebody else's] is ever before me. (KJV)***

The beginning of verse 6:

***6) Behold, [You desire] truth in the inward parts: ... (KJV)***

And part of that truth is "I am guilty. I am part of this problem."

When problems arise in a marriage, the first thing we need to do is find out "Am I the cause of the problem? Or am I part of the cause of the problem?" But it's sad, many marriages have degraded to the point that the mates don't care anymore if they make their mate unhappy or if they hurt their mate by words or deeds. They just don't care anymore—sad situation. That should never ever happen in a marriage in God's Church.

Let's go to Romans chapter 12 and we're going to begin in verse 14 and then jump to verse 17. Now this is not talking specifically about a marriage, but I'm here to tell you that this applies even more so in a marriage. Romans 12:14, notice what it says. Paul says:

**Romans 12:14.** *Bless [those] which persecute you: bless, and curse not. (KJV)*

And if your husband or wife is on you, notice this: "Bless those who persecute you and don't curse." Verse 17:

*17) Recompense to no man [no human] evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

*18) If it [is] possible, as much as [lies] in you, live peaceably with all ... [Especially your mate!].*

*19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, ... (KJV)*

Never try to get back. Never try to get even.

*19b) ... avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto [anger]: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, [says] the [Eternal]*

*20) Therefore if [your] enemy [is hungry], ... (KJV)*

Your enemy now.

*20b) ... if [your] enemy [is hungry], feed him; if [he's thirsty] give him [something to] drink: for in doing so [you shall] heap coals of fire on his head.*

*21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (KJV)*

How much more should this be practiced in a marriage? It should be practiced every day in a marriage.

When I do get into marriage counseling, I start by talking with each one individually, not together, each one individually. And I'll ask each one, "What do you think the problem is? And what do you think your part of the problem is?" The vast majority of the times, too often what I hear is what the other person's fault is, what the other person's sins are. They might talk a sentence or two about themselves, but then it's quickly onto the other. So, they go on for a while and then I ask again, "Look, that's not what I'm asking. You're talking about your mate. I'm asking about you." And they say, "Oh, well." And then comes out some benign thing."

Let me give you an example. About ten, fifteen years ago at the Feast one time, I was talking to a man who was having some problems. And he had been married four times. And he had failed four times. So we started talking and he launched into a monologue for about an hour. And he went through each of his four wives telling me all of their faults, all of their sins, all of their shortcomings. And I patiently listened. I asked a few questions. And after about an hour I kind of looked at my watch and I said, "You know

one thing strikes me here. You spent the last hour talking about the faults of all of your mates. You've had four marriages and four failures, but you haven't said a word about you and what your part in these four marriages, what your part in the failure of these four marriages was."

And all of a sudden, he stopped and he kind of looked up. We were outside and he looked at the sky and rolled his eyes around and scratched his head and thought for a while. And he was silent for about a minute. When you're sitting counseling across a table from each other, a minute is a long time. I was watching him. I just figured this could be interesting. And he said, "Well, I guess I spent too much time at work."

And I kind of did a double take and I said, "You've been married four times. You've had four failures and the only thing you've done wrong is you spent too much time at work?" I told him flatly, "I just don't believe that. That's just not true. You need to go back and rethink this whole thing."

And you see the problem of denial is an enormous problem in a marriage where one mate just denies, denies, denies and doesn't accept responsibility for their part of the problem in a marriage. That's why 2 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 5 is in the Bible. Let's go there, 2 Corinthians 13:5. Notice what it says. We go here at Passover time, obviously, but put this in context with a marriage because we are being judged in our marriages.

**1 Corinthians 13:5.** *Examine yourselves, ... (KJV)*

Not examine your mate! Examine yourselves. And what do you examine?

*5b) ... whether [you] be in the faith; ... (KJV)*

Whether you are even converted, whether you're even exhibiting the fruits of God's holy spirit—"whether you be in the faith." He says:

*5 continued) ... prove your own selves, ... (KJV)*

That means *put to the test*. Test your own selves to see if you're in the faith.

*5 continued) ... [Don't you] know your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, [but if He's not], you [are a reprobate]? (KJV)*

And you see that is all the more important in a marriage because we have to examine ourselves to see to what degree we are the problem and to see if we are exercising God's spirit. Is Christ in us and that is showing in a marriage or are we just totally carnal? We've got to admit that "I am part of the problem," and then get to work on it.

**Now that leads to the second point—and this is something that is just absolutely fundamental: Only you can change you.**



Only you can change you. And the problem is by focusing on your mate's problems and shortcomings—I've heard it said, "Well if he would just stop saying this," or she says "If he would stop doing this." All that does is deflect looking at the self. Putting it all on the other person. Deflect looking at the self. And what they're really saying is, "If my mate will change, then we'll be okay. All marriage problems will be solved if my mate changes."

But the point is you can't change your mate. You can't change anybody except yourself.

The husband can say, "Well, she doesn't love me. She's selfish. She never accepts my authority." Well, okay, the husband is head of the family. He should lead by example. And if he will fulfill his requirement, then he can ask God to change his wife—God to change his wife, not him—that his prayers be not hindered. If he is fulfilling his requirement as a Christian husband, then he can ask God with all confidence to change his wife.

Because, outside of ourselves, we can't change anybody. You can put a gun to somebody's head and they'll tell you whatever you want to hear. They will do whatever you want when the gun is at the temple. Now if you pull the gun away from the temple, they will go right back to the way they were because the threat is gone and because if you ask somebody to change against their will, they're not going to do it. They'll change temporarily to get out of trouble, but they won't make it a permanent change. That has to come from God and God's holy spirit.

The only one I can change is me—can't change anybody else. Even as a Church pastor, I can't make anybody change. I can help. I can advise, but they have to make the change through God's holy spirit.

Let's go back now to Ephesians chapter 4. We're going to read verse 22. This is what we have to change. I'll read it again out of the NLT. Ephesians 4:22, notice what it says. Strong words.

***Ephesians 4:22.*** *Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. (NLT)*

We've got to throw it off. We've got to get rid of it. We have to change.

You see all we can do is change ourselves in a marriage, thereby, setting an example for our mate. And hopefully that example, then, would encourage the mate to change. We can't force it, but it would be setting up an environment in the home that if we change, the mate can see the change and that would encourage the mate to change. But this only comes through exercising God's holy spirit. And if your mate sees Christ in you instead of the old carnal, nasty person, if all of a sudden the mate starts to see

Jesus Christ in her husband or his wife, that encourages them to change. It encourages love and it encourages respect.

So the second big point is that: We have to realize only you can change you.

**The third point, third out of five, is that: We need to be quick to repent and apologize when we do something wrong.**

Be quick to repent and apologize. What did David do when he was confronted by Nathan? He was a year in denial, nine months in denial. And, yet, he said “My transgressions, my sin is ever before me. I acknowledge them.” He was quick to repent and apologize.

We need to quickly apologize for what we see as our part in the problem. We need to learn to admit our faults to our mate. Let’s go to James 5 and verse 16. This applies to all of us as Christians, but it applies even more in a marriage. James 5:16 says:

**James 5:16.** *Confess your faults one to another, ... (KJV)*

How much more in a marriage should we do that?

*16b) ... and pray one for another, that [you] may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [avails] much. (KJV)*

How much more in a marriage should we do this—confessing our faults one to another?

We have to talk and not turn off. You see when a mate doesn’t meet our expectations, the carnal reaction all too many times is the one on the receiving end nags, accuses, gets angry, criticizes. And then the reaction of the other mate is to become defensive and either fight back or shut down. Then you have a stalemate. Nobody’s talking to each other. Nothing gets solved.

God tells us how to break this barrier. Let’s go to Matthew chapter 5. We’re going to read verses 23 and 24. We quote this scripture often in solving problems within the Church between brethren, but how much more so should this scripture apply in a marriage? And I’m going to read it as though it applies specifically to a marriage.

**Matthew 5:23.** *Therefore if [you] bring [your] gift to the altar, and there [remember] that [your mate] has [something] against [you];  
24) Leave ... [your] gift before the altar, and go [your] way; first be reconciled to [your mate], and then come [back] and offer [your] gift. (KJV)*

And anybody who has been married for any length of time knows that through the tone of voice, through body language, through silence, you know when you have offended your mate, when you’ve caused the mate to be hurt in some way. And so, Matthew 5 says, “Stop what you’re doing, go to your mate and reconcile.”

Now let's go to Matthew 18 and verse 15. Again, we're going to apply this to our mates. Matthew 5 is when you sin against somebody else. Matthew 18 is when somebody sins against you—your mate. Verse 15 of Matthew 18:

**Matthew 18:15.** *Moreover if your [mate] shall [sin] against [you], ... (KJV)*

What do you do? Nag? Criticize? Whine? Complain? Throw things?

*15b) ... go and tell him [or her] the fault between [you] ... alone: ... (KJV)*

Go privately and just say, "Look, you hurt my feelings. This is what you said. It just cut me to the quick."

*15 continued) ... and if [your mate] shall hear [you], [you have] gained [your mate]. (KJV)*

How much more should we do that in a marriage? And when we do these things, we see that maybe I'm more of the problem than I thought I was or that I was willing to admit.

And it's been my experience in this situation, "Be quick to repent and apologize," the key is to pray together. Whoever is at fault grab the other by the hand. Go into where you say your prayers. Kneel down and pray to God. And when your mate hears a tearful apology before God—an acknowledgment of what you've done and a tearful apology—it will melt a hardened heart. It will melt a hurt heart. And the husband has to take the lead in doing this because he is head of the family. To go in and pray together and acknowledge one's sins and faults, be quick to repent and quick to apologize.

**The fourth point is: We have to learn again (I say "again" because in the beginning it was so); we have to learn again to honor and respect one another.**

We have to learn to honor and respect one another. Now respect is not given. It is earned.

And we've all seen that sadly in the last decades in the Church of God. I wish ministers would learn this example. Just because you have a title doesn't automatically mean that you are to be respected. One has to earn it through one's deeds and through one's words.

But this applies in a marriage. It applies to a husband and wife. Let's go to Ephesians 5 again. Look at verse 33.

**Ephesians 5:33.** *Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife ... as himself; and the wife see that she reverence ... (KJV)*

That's the King James. The New King James says, "respects" her husband.

Now the Greek word for "reverence" is 5399 and it's the Greek word "phobeo" where we get our English word "phobia." This is a different word than is in verse 21 and verse 22. Zodhiates says for the wife to "*Morally, to fear, reverence, and honor*" her husband.

Now it says "Men are to love their wives as themselves." And I've seen men not love, not respect, not honor their wives. Bark at them in public. Criticize them in public. And again, there is no excuse for a man to be overbearing or harsh or do this. Rather, they should be very protective of their wives. And I've seen, on the other side, too many women openly criticize and make fun of their husbands in public. That's a sad thing when you see that and you hear that. I don't want to hear that, but I've seen it too often. It's a scary place for a woman to be relative to verse 33—scary place. You see if both do that in public—man barking at the wife, woman making fun of the husband—what happens behind closed doors? What goes on behind the scenes when nobody's looking except God?

We have to learn and relearn to focus on the things that brought us together in the first place, to focus on the positive aspects of our mates. And it's so much easier for a wife to love her husband if he demonstrates daily that he loves her more than he loves himself. It makes it very easy for her to love him.

And when a mate sees you become more like Jesus Christ, it is so much easier to respect and honor the mate when you see Christ in them because you are honoring Christ by honoring them and putting them before yourself.

**The fifth and final point here of how to solve marriage problems or to avoid marriage problems: Never do anything for your mate's harm.**

Never do anything for your mate's harm. We know that God—we've talked about this many times—God never does anything for our harm. We won't turn there but Romans 8 and verse 28. "All things work together for those that love God," because God does whatever is best for us to assure that we will be in His kingdom. We should do the same for our mates.

I don't know if you've heard of Steven and Cokie Roberts. Cokie Roberts used to be a correspondent on one of the big networks years ago. They co-write a column in the newspapers. We get it from time to time. By all accounts they have a very good marriage and so they wrote this together. Notice what they say:

You can tell the health of your marriage by the number of tooth marks on your tongue. These come from biting down hard and avoiding the impulse to be hurtful or cruel in the name of candor.

Notice this last sentence:

Words never said don't have to be taken back or explained away.

We learn to keep our mouth shut at the appropriate time.

And in these end-times there is a gigantic problem in the Church, in society, and particularly in our marriages. We won't turn there, but we know the scripture. "In these last days, perilous times shall come for 'humans'" [It says "men," but it means humans] "shall be lovers of their own selves." (2 Timothy 3) That is the defining characteristic of this end of the age. And selfishness is at the core of marriage problems. Selfishness is at the core of causing problems with our mates because I've seen so many marriages get into trouble because it becomes a battle of who is in control. They forget what the Bible says and they're fighting about who is in control. Great conflict. Constant conflict. Constant tension in the marriage. Where to go? When to leave? It's a battle. What to spend money on? That's another fight. Who gets the final word? Another fight. Who gets the last word? Constant tension and fighting and conflict.

Rather they should expend effort on making their mates heart sing—making their mate happy and fulfilled. And you see the only way to be truly happy in a marriage is to make sure the other one's life is a joy in Jesus Christ. I say a "joy" because of possessions or physical things, but to make sure your mate is happy and fulfilled in the joy of Jesus Christ.

Let's go to 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 19. Paul is talking here about what his joy is as an apostle, as a teacher, as a pastor, but this should apply even more so in a marriage. So apply 1 Thessalonians 2:19 in a marriage. So, Paul is saying:

**1 Thessalonians 2:19.** *For what is our hope, or [our] joy, ... (KJV)*

We could say, "What is the husband's hope or joy? What is the wife's hope or joy?"

*19b) ... or crown of rejoicing? Are not even [you] in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? (KJV)*

So what this tells us is that in a marriage, the biggest joy is to see your husband or your wife becoming more like Jesus Christ every day, to know that they're wading down the right path to salvation, and to know you're helping them do that by your behavior.

So let's summarize solving problems in a marriage.

Remember Satan wants to prevent us from attaining entrance into God's Kingdom. That's his primary goal and he is attacking the core of the family—marriage.

Now remember in marriage problems, to forgive it just takes one. We can unilaterally forgive anything, but to reconcile (to bring a husband and a wife back together), to reconcile, it takes two. Both must want to solve marriage problems. And too often I see where one is eager to solve and the other is sitting there like this: "Don't want to talk

about it, don't want to deal with it." It's all her fault. It's all his fault. Both must want to solve marriage problems. And the marriage will fail if only one is making the effort. Both have to make an effort.

So we need to determine to change our own behavior that causes marriage problems. Then put the past in the past and move on toward becoming more and more like Christ in our individual lives. Again, knowing that only we can change ourselves.

Let's conclude now. Let's go back to the beginning—the purpose of marriage. The brief answer is that two very different people learn together to be like God, learning from each other. That's only possible through God's holy spirit. Let's go to Colossians 1 and verse 27. If this doesn't happen, there is no hope. There is no hope for a marriage. There is no hope for salvation if this doesn't happen.

**Colossians 1:27.** *To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; ... (KJV)*

It is a mystery. It was a mystery to the Jews before. Then God called the Gentiles, but this is the mystery.

*27b) ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (KJV)*

If Christ is not in us, if we are not becoming more and more Christ-like, if we're not exhibiting the fruits of God's holy spirit, there is no hope. And so, that is our job—to learn to be like Christ, learn to be like the Father, learn from each other in a marriage.

Now, let's go back to a final scripture, back to Ephesians 5. We're going to read verses 30 through 32. Notice what it says.

**Ephesians 5:30.** *For we are members of his body [Christ's body], [we are members] of his flesh [Christ's flesh], and [and we are members] of his bones [Christ's bones].*

*31) For this cause [because we are members of the body of Christ] shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. (KJV)*

We found out in the first sermon on this that means *one in character, one in mind.*  
Verse 32:

*32) This is a great mystery [Paul says]: but [I'm talking] concerning Christ and the church. (KJV)*

And then, drawing an analogy to marriage. You see Christ was willing to die for the Church. We won't turn there. It's in Philippians 2 verse 8. He humbled Himself unto death for all of us. The mates, each mate (husband and wife), should be willing to do

that for each other—to die for each other and to sacrifice for each other every day. Living sacrifices as we're told.

We need to do to each other what we want Christ to do to us. It's so simple. How do I want Christ to treat me? Kindness, gentleness, longsuffering, mercy, patience, love? Well, if we want Christ to do that to us, we should do that to each other.

Marriage is a tremendous learning tool because you have two very different people in close proximity for an extended period of time. And there are challenges every day. There are mine fields every day, but there are opportunities every day to exercise God's holy spirit. There are opportunities every day to behave like Jesus Christ and to treat your mate as Christ treats the Church—wonderful opportunities every day!

But it can only happen if God is at the center of the marriage. It can only happen if we exercise God's holy spirit. That's the only way it will happen. And, you see, as I said at the beginning, God judges each mate as to the quality of the marriage. Is the marriage a God-centered union? Are both the husband and the wife putting God at the center of their lives? Or is the marriage two carnal, selfish people fighting to determine who is going to win? Which way is it? It has to be one or the other.

But the good news is that if two people come together in a marriage as different as men and women are from each other and they use and exercise God's holy spirit, there is no marriage problem that cannot be solved. None! I don't care how bad it is, how horrible it is. If both have and use and exercise God's holy spirit, any marriage difficulty can be overcome by doing to your mate what you want Christ to do to you. And so, if the marriage is God-centered, if it's God-centered and God's spirit is exercised, it will be a very good marriage. So, let's all work on our marriages understanding that we are being judged now by the quality of our marriages.