Section: Doctrine of Man

**TEACHING NOTES for Lesson 24 (March 15, 2023)**

**“What is Marriage” Question 29**

Pastor Joshua Kirstine

**Pray**

**Q29. What is marriage?**

Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union designed to be faithful and last until the couple is separated by death.

**“**Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together”

Church , you must first see with me that **Marriage is God’s design and doing.**

**The Author of Marriage is God**

Let’s turn to Genesis chapter 2 together and spend some time there to help us lay a biblical foundation for God ordaining marriage and what he intended it to be.

[**Genesis 2:18-25**](http://bible.logos.com/passage/esv/Genesis%202.18-25)Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for  him.” **19**Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. **20**The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam  there was not found a helper fit for him.  **21**So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22**And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23**Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”  **24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.** 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

**Here we see that God is the one who ordains marriage and therefore God is the one who defines marriage.**

Both of these are so important and so let’s start with the fact that God ordains or decrees marriage.

In other words, **Marriage is God’s creation and therefore it exists for his purposes and is to be done by his guidelines.**

It is important that we stand on that point because our modern day secular sinful culture is quick to say otherwise!! So much so that in our generation we have witnessed a formal attack on the definition of marriage claiming it to be many things and for many people it is not.

Church the critical point of undeniable clarity we must see here is that, **Marriage is an institution created by God, not man, and therefore, the terms of it and purpose of it are set by God, not man.**

This is God’s creation therefore we who are created do not get to choose how we are governed or how things are to be. We are ALL under the mandate of the creator. He gets to tell us how this creation will work. **WHY?** Because it is His creation. Because it all belongs to Him and exist for His glory.

**Marriage is Ordained and defined by God.**

It is not man made or man governed. It is God made and God governed.

One of the cool ways we see God ordain Marriage is how he ushered in the first marriage.

Listen to verse 22 again.. **Genesis 2:22** “And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and *brought her to the man*.”

Notice that God did not hide her & make Adam seek her out.

God made her; then He brought Eve to Adam.

God took the role of being the first father to give away the bride to her husband.

This sweet tradition in our marriage ceremony has a tone of important symbolism for God’s design for headship and the symbolism of a new family beginning with marriage.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

The man and the woman formally leave their role in the family of their parents to form a new family, this is done in the act of marriage.

Now, Because God is the one who designed and decrees marriage he is the one who defines it too!

Jesus drives this home when he says in **Matthew 19:4-6** “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Jesus is quoting God’s definition of marriage found in Genesis 2:24 and saying this is what God ordained marriage to be. It is not negotiable.

**The Definition of Marriage**

Now that we are clear on the origin and authority God has over marriage, let’s look closer at the definition of marriage.

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

See with me that this verse is the foundation of our answer to question 29.

**Q29. What is marriage?**

Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union designed to be faithful and last until the couple is separated by death.

Now, we have to slow down consider the absolute uniqueness of a marriage relationship in that a man and a woman make a vow a covenant to unite until death do them part…

and **God binds that vow or covenant into a one-flesh union…**.Into a relationship and bond like no other.

Now, in God’s definition of Marriage there is a depth and beauty that I have found most people truly never have understood until better fleshed out. What is good news about this is as they begin to understand it better, it opens the door for amazing new depths in their marriage.

This is my hope for us, this is my hope for you.

In my many years of teaching on and counseling people in marriage I have essentially seen there are **2 contradicting views of what marriage is.**

**One is contrived by common man and one is God’s clear design for marriage.**

**Let me show you the first version that I have found many naively hold to.**

**I like to call it …**

1. **Togetherness:**

It goes like this.. Two individuals fall in love and then get to a place where they think.. I can’t imagine life without you. So let’s solidify our relationship so we can be together for the rest of our days.

**The unique point of clarity here is that the couple see’s themselves as “two individuals” who are longing to be together in marriage.**

The problem with this view is that it is not what God designed marriage to be.

I will clarify what I mean by that in a moment.

But see with me how this breaks down. What often ends up happening when you see marriage as two individuals trying to be together is that in your sin, one or both of you values your individualism more than doing what is necessary to thrive in keeping your togetherness working.

While you truly work hard to stay together and be close, in reality it becomes a kind of “roommates with benefits” kind of relationship. **WHY?** Because you still see yourselves as two individuals who are eforting to be together. But when that effort weens or your selfish desires flex you really live separate even though there might be ways or times you come together.

Some unavoidable factors that chip away at a “togetherness” view of marriage are:

* Everyday frustrations of life happen.
* The newness of your “togetherness” wears off
* Boredom happens
* Opportunities to be lazy or selfish creep in and become regular practice
* Fights go unresolved.
* Sin is not confessed of repented of..
* Hurts are not addressed and healed.
* Or the pursuit of sin and or something new draws one or both of you away.

The view that we are two individuals who are efforting to be and remain close or together is not sustainable when all of this is haunting you day after day, year after year.

So you do your best to keep close and to try to make it work. **Does this Sound Familiar?**

 Maybe you have experienced this or seen in others or your parents’ marriage.

We see it all over.

**Surveys show that a large number of people are unfulfilled or unhappy with their marriage!**

I think this is largely due to misplaced foundational view of what marriage is. It doesn’t matter how hard you are working at it if what you are aiming to do is wrong or short sided.

**The following story helps make my point…**

Christopher Wren, who designed St. Paul’s Cathedral in London (one of the world’s most beautiful buildings), wrote about the reactions of construction workers who were asked what they were doing.

Those workers who were bored and tired responded by saying, **“I’m laying bricks” or “I’m carrying stones.”**

But one worker, who was mixing cement, seemed cheerful and enthusiastic about his work. Asked what he was doing, he replied, **“I’m building a magnificent cathedral.”**

Again, one of the main reasons I think many people get down and out in their marriages is their understanding of what marriage is **( the togetherness view)** leaves them with a fundamentally faulty view of what marriage really is meant to be.

If you are trying to use a toaster as skate board it is going to make for a frustrating day of skating.

But If I learn to use a skate board to skate and a toaster to make toast. Life is a lot better, right?

We must slow down and really come to understand what God has designed marriage to be.

Because it is not like anything else. What God does when he makes two become one is so key to really beginning to see the depth and the framework of what marriage is meant to be.

I have found most people still see their marriage as two individuals who are committed to be together. And if that togetherness doesn’t work out then their cling to their individualism says they can just move on and or try again.

So, hopefully you can see with me why we are so desperate to really want to understand the unique way God designed marriage to be. I like to call it: **ONENESS!**

**Oneness:**

**Listen to God’s definition of marriage again in…**

**Genesis 2:24**  Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**Again listen to Jesus words in the Gospel of Mark about this..**

**Mark 10:6-9** But from the beginning of creation, ‘*God made them male and female.’ 7 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.’*

So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

**God has JOINED them together.**

**They are not just working to be or stay together. When we really see God’s definition of marriage rightly we see that they are no longer individuals but now something different.**

**The Two have BECOME ONE!**

**In this is the key! We must get this.**

God made them…. He made them Male and Female. He made two become one.

In this he lays the construct for a family and for procreation. This is the only way children are made.

Marriage is only between one biological man and biological woman. Not many but one.

It cannot happen between a man and a man or a woman and a woman. That is not marriage.

God made them distinctly male and female. He made their bodies to engage and procreate only as male and female.

All of man’s efforts to redefine marriage outside of God’s creation ordinance is futile and in the end it is simply not marriage despite what mankind wants to call it.

God’s is the one who designed and defined Marriage.

Let me say it again so that we are so very clear:

To call homosexual or multiple spouses, **marriage** is to completely reject and deny the Creator’s unique, precious and precise design for ONE biological man & ONE Biological woman to become one.

It doesn’t matter what the state or culture calls it.

It doesn’t matter what the popular vote on the matter is.

Mankind does not hold the rights to rewrite or redefine what God has defined in his Creation ordinance nor are we to embrace that line of thinking in the name of peace or tolerance or love.

It is not ours to change and in the end we are not loving those who think it benefits their life to go there with them. We cannot honor God or tell the truth to those we love and at the same time embrace manmade definitions of marriage and or man’s effort to justify multiple partners or homosexual engagement.

The gender God makes people is not up to interpretation or feelings or whatever we want it to be.

He made mankind male and female and when one man and one female unite into a ONE Flesh union… listen carefully, their uniquely different but complementary genders, are united together by God into a one-flesh union.

Jesus says, they are no longer Two but one. That means they are not two who have come “TOGETHER” trying to be two who do life together. He says, they are no longer two.

**They are ONE!** See with me that, in God’s economy, in God’s eyes, in God’s design, He doesn’t see two individuals trying to be together but two who have become one in marriage.

In togetherness, the view is still two individuals who are working hard to faithful remain TOGETHER. But in our sin we still act as two individuals. This is why it breaks down.

We need to see it the way God does. You are no longer TWO BUT ONE.

This is the supernatural thing God does in a marriage even though there still is two people.

There is a bond; a uniting that God does that makes it something very new.

This is why the most central and vital part of any wedding is the Vows and **where are the vows declared? At the wedding alter.** (no matter if the wedding is outside or inside, wedding vows are said at the wedding alter)

**Have you ever really thought about why we call it a wedding alter**?

An alter is a place of death.

That doesn’t seem to go with the white dress and the lights and the pristine thing a wedding often intended to be.

But it is an Essential part of making a wedding actually a wedding. **WHY?**

Because it is exactly what is happening when God makes two become one.

When you decide to become one with another person, You are laying down your individualism.

You are saying, I no longer will act as an individual demanding my own way but instead I will be one who is a part of every part of my spouse’s life. While surely you are unique and distinct in who God made each of you to be and while you surely still are two separate people, the supernatural thing God does in bringing you together requires that you see you are no longer two but one.

A way I have found it helpful to understand this is a little morbid and weird but it is the only way I can help us see the uniqueness of the bond and the permanency of it.

**\*\*Surgically united**

Marriage is Not Togetherness.. (Hands in fist held together)… but Oneness.. (Hands intertwined)!

This is so potent and amazing when see it correctly and then live it out correctly.

**Genesis 2:24** Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

**Do you see, God is the Surgeon?**

God is the one who in each marriage ordains and performs a uniting called “*one flesh”*.

Man does not do this. God does. And it is not in man’s power to destroy.

Jesus is clear in this when he says, “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate*.”

God receives the vow or the covenant both the man and the woman make and in his power joins them as a husband and a wife into a one-flesh union. *God* does that. No one else can do that.

No one else can bind two into one. No one else is the author of Marriage.

That is why so-called homosexual marriage is not Marriage.

It is outside of the construct of the creators design.

It lacks the necessary recipe for marriage to be marriage.

So people can think it is and call it marriage but fundamentally in the end it is not.

The world does not get this and sadly much of the modern church or those claiming to be Christians lacks a full or right understanding of this. Which is one of the reasons why marriage is treated so casually and often never lived out to the fullest God intends it to be.

This is one of the reasons marriage in world and often in the church is not seen as the miracle or wonder it is. But this is where we must go. We must press into God’s word to see most clearly not only what Marriage is but why God gave it to us and how we make it thrive.

**Turn with me now, to one of the most important and thorough passages God gives us in scripture on marriage.**

**Ephesians 5:22-33**

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

**The Purpose of Marriage**

**Did you hear the connection Paul makes all the way through it?**

Marriage is patterned after Christ’s covenant commitment to his bride, the church!

In other words, when God created and ordained marriage he wasn’t just thinking about Adam and Eve and he wasn’t just thinking about mankind’s need or enjoyment of life long companionship…

No, He was designing a template that all of creation would know well, a template that would point to the testimony of Christ and His bride, point to the eternal covenant of the eternal marriage. He would use marriage as a huge testimony of the Gospel. This is what we must see today.

Now, Paul acknowledges there are layers or aspects of marriage that are a mystery to us.

For example, what God does to make two one who are still two but now one in his divine economy.

But, Paul is going to say something very critical in verse 32. He says, “This mystery is profound”

What mystery?

Paul helps us understand it better in the next verse and what he says blows up most people’s most central view of the purpose of marriage. He says, “I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

This is in reference to the fact that **Christ obtained the church by his blood and formed a new covenant with her, an unbreakable “marriage.”**

**The ultimate purpose of marriage is that it exists for God’s glory.**

More specifically, ***it exists to display God and the gospel.***

**Now, if we slow down for a moment to think about the bigger picture of why we are here and what is the ultimate purpose of the days God gives us under the sun it is to glorify God!**

**1 Corinthians 8:6** yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

**1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

**The Word of Truth Catechism says in..**

**Q 15. Why did God make us?** God made us to glorify Him, so that His glory would be known and praised.

**With this in view, What would make us think that Marriage exist to serve another ultimate purpose than His Glory?**

Pastor John Piper says it well when He says,

Marriage is patterned after Christ’s covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church.

And therefore, **the highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display.**

**That is why marriage exists.** That is its greatest God given purpose.

The covenant of redemption made before creation drove so much of God’s creation and it’s purposes and we see here that it drove the design and purpose of a marriage between man and woman unto a high and holy aim..

So, as we saw in our first sermon, marriage is the **doing** of God and today we see that marriage is for the **display** of God.

It is designed by God to display His glory in a way that no other event or institution does.

Christ won the church by his blood and formed a new covenant with her, an unbreakable “marriage.”

So marriage is like a metaphor or an image or a picture or a model that stands for something more than a man and a woman being committed to love.

*Think about it for a moment:*

**Anything that you and I try to make just for the temporary… is sin.**

**–Why? because It ignores God!**

-If our marriage is only for you and your spouse for the here and now.

-If it is just for love and pleasure and companionship.

We miss having eternal eyes for what God is doing that is bigger than just you and me in our marriage.

Marriage is special because it points to, it gets to model, it shows in practical everyday ways the intimacy that we (the church- the bride) & Christ (the groom) have forever because of the Gospel.

🡪It is another way we get to show the redemptive work of Jesus & show that it is Good NEWS!

Another theologian says it this way: “As God made man in His own image, so He made earthly marriage in the image of His own eternal marriage with His people”

(Daniel Montgomery and Timothy Paul Jones speaks of it this way in their book, Proof)

The story of the ultimate marriage that all marriage in this creation is to point to, goes like this..

God the Father is the loving father who chose us personally and specifically before time began.

God is Son is the Bridegroom who accomplished everything necessary to win the heart of His beloved bride. When maiden Israel was enslaved, God rescued her from every oppressor. He said, : I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.” Exodus 6:7.

They he carried her off into the wilderness and joined himself to her by exchanging vows. (Ex 20-24).

**Deuteronomy 7:6-7** says

…The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

Now, What God did for Israel was a foreshadowing of what he as preparing to do for **true Israel**, His elect, his bride, the church.

This means, Long before the forbidden fruit stained our first parents tongues, God the Father, planned for the Bridegroom, God the Son, to do what Adam failed to do.

The Son would go to war against his bride’s oppressor and ultimately grind the serpents skull into the dust. (Genesis 3;15, Revelation 12:1-9).

Then, In God’s perfect time, the long awaited bridegroom, invaded human history through a Jewish peasant’s womb and while Satan tried to thwart the plans of the redeemer, the wedding would go on.

The bridegroom gave up his life for His love so “that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **Eph 5:26-27**

In God’s grace, the Spirit awakens enslaved sinful hearts to the irresistible grace of God and each of His elect, in God’s perfect time, say “I do” to covenant with Christ in marriage.

In this they give up their lives to joyfully honor Christ as Lord and to follow Him the rest of her days until the marriage feast is ordained to happen and forever enjoyed in Holy Heaven.

**Ephesians 5:31-32** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

The 16th century reformer, Martin Luther, once pointed out speaking about salvation,

“Christ and the soul became one flesh and if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage- indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but a poor examples of this one true marriage”

Luther also said, “Who then can fully understand what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here is the rich and divine bridegroom, Christ, who marries this poor, wicked harlot and redeems her from evil and adorns her with all this goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that Right standing in Christ, her husband, whom she may boast as her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and she will say, if I have sinned, my Christ has not sinned and all that His is mine and all mine is his” as the bride in the Song of Solomon says, ***“My beloved is mine and I am his”***

Church, we must first cherish our most important marriage.

Our wedded union in oneness with Christ who saved us while we were nothing but unfaithful and unworthy of His love and sacrifice to make us his beloved.

We must see God’s purpose in this creation is to make much of His gospel and glory.

We must see God’s purpose for marriage is way bigger than love or life lived together, or children.

It is designed to be a very unique and personal picture of the gospel.

In this we must fight our flesh that wants so much just to make it about us and what works and what we want it to look like.

Please see with me: Your Marriage, ultimately exist, not for you but to GLORIFY and magnify GOD!

**Ephesians 5:31** This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

What this means is…

Fulfilling your life long covenant to your marriage vows is not mainly about staying in love or remaining happy. It is not dependent on how it’s going or how faithful or present your spouse is.

Keeping your marriage vows is about keeping the covenant made before God that displays ***God’s never ending covenant with his people. The bigger story you are telling with your marriage is about another marriage. A marriage that changes everything and is worthy of all of creations attention and wonder.***

When we say in our marriage vows, “Till death do us part” or “As long as we both shall live”, this is a sacred covenant promise, the same kind Jesus made with his bride when he died for her. The only difference is our earthly marriage’s end with physical death and our heavenly marriage is forever strengthened with physical death.

Now, with this in mind we must see that breaking your marriage covenant is not merely covenant-breaking to the spouse, but it grossly misrepresents Christ and his covenant to his bride.

This is why Christians find it unexpectable to divorce. Because it is not about us, it is about God and the gospel. This is why we forgive, why we sacrifice, why we die to self and grow in Christ.

This is Jesus strong point as he reminds the Pharisee’s in..

**Matthew 19:6** “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

When marriage is about the temporary, When it is about you, when it is about your peace or happiness, when it is about freedom from conflict, we make it about something man-centered and something far less than what **God created it for.**

**What is that?** Him. His Glory. A display of the irrevocable, unbreakable bond Jesus has with his redeemed, with his bride.

This is so important because so many days we make marriage about companionship and romance and love. Not that those things are not a big part of a **“healthy or thriving marriage”** but we must see that there is a work we are doing and a story we are telling that is so much bigger than us by remaining faithful to our covenant promise.

The covenant keeping aspect of Marriage is an essential aspect of what it is intended to do.

**This is why, when the fleshly aspects or luster of a marriage become hard or even nonexistent, there is still a covenant to keep and a story to tell.** A testimony that is way bigger than us.

This is also why working on your marriage to grow in Christ, to communicate, to forgive and serve each other, to stay committed and work through hurts is so important because it too affects the story you tell.
Christian, in the end it is not about you. It is about God and His glory.

But, this makes sense because our life in Christ is not about us, it is about God and His glory!!!

This is why you can’t just resolve to just give up if your marriage is not working.

You cannot stop trying to grow and mature yourself and in your marriage as much as it depends on you.

Far too many married people are content to just settle for what they have become accustomed to with in a marriage. No we must strive for more because our marriages represent so much more then companionship and romance and love.

Church: See with me in all of this, a view of marriage that is bigger than the view we all to commonly hold. See the depths and the purpose of marriage that is so much bigger than the pragmatics of daily life together.

God designed the relationship between a husband and his wife to represent the relationship between Christ and the church. **This is the deepest meaning of marriage. When you wake up each day, this needs to the motivation and the aim in why you will seek to honor God in doing your part to fulfill God’s design for marriage.**

This is why ultimately the roles of headship and submission that we will get to next week are so important. If our marriages are going to tell the truth about Christ and his church, we cannot be indifferent to God’s design for headship and submission. We must understand these roles and faithfully live them out to the best of our God given ability.

Before we wrap up tonight, let me take a few minutes to talk about some needed application for our marriages and or for those how hope to one day be married.

**The Power for a lasting and healthy Marriage**

The power for a lasting and healthy marriage is found in Christ!

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him

But the scripture doesn’t end there…. It says…

—a threefold cord is not quickly broken

What does a marriage need more than anything to stay strong and to last and not be undone.

The selfless love of Jesus! For it is the Glue. the Fuel to making our oneness thrive.

The imagery used in this OT passage has been a long time help to see the principles of what the third cord means to bind two together.

The Love of God is True other-centered love.

It Is the kind of love a marriage MUST have if it is going to thrive.

**WHY?** Because the moment you become selfish in a marriage is the moment you make it about you. This is a fundamental miss in that you are acting as an individual and no longer as two who are one.

The problem is far too many couples live in long seasons outside of real oneness. When you really get down to it this is living in a state of Divorce.

It’s not legal paper work divorce but it is not the union God designed for true marriage in oneness.

Therefore, anytime either of you is selfishly living you are not acting as one and therefore tearing at your oneness. See the Divorce in this… “**Tears at your oneness”**

**This is why we need a spiritual cover!** We need a power bigger then ourselves!

Someone who can bring a ***selfless love*** into play in a way that we do not produce ourselves in our sin**. We Need Jesus!** We need God to change us from the inside out.

We need Jesus to change our hearts to love with other-centered affection and care.

We need the love of God!!!

**1 John 4:7-8** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

John says, “God is love,” not “Love is from God.”

Our world, with its shallow and selfish view of love, has turned these words around and contaminated our understanding of love.

**The world thinks that love is what makes a person feel good and that it is all right to sacrifice moral principles and others’ rights in order to obtain such “love.”**

But that isn’t real love; it is the exact opposite. It is **selfishness.**

And God is not that kind of so-called “love.”

Real love is from God, who is holy, just, and perfect. If we truly know God, we will love as he does.

- **To know God is to know Love!**

**The true definition of Love…..**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** 4Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. 6It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

\* What do all these things have in common in describing Love? Selfless!

**Col. 3:12-13** Since God chose you to be the holy people whom he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. [13] You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.

**- When it comes to a lasting marriage and real oneness ….We depend on God’s sacrificial love.**

The biggest way we have tweaked love is to think that is something we use for gain.

Example: By loving this person …..they will be around me a lot…..

……. they help me when I am down. ….. they will give me things (items)…..

they will give me pleasure (physical & mental)……they will give me status …….

\*This is so far from what love is it is not even funny! And yet we treat it this way.

So this is why divorce happens.. Every divorce begins with selfish love in play.

Some marriages are doomed from day one because selfish love is all they have known.

Here is why that is a problem:

**Selfish** love will fade away when the person does not provide any longer what is most desired

**WHY? Expand….**

But in contrast:

***Selfless or sacrificial***  love will always remain because what is most desired is already had in Christ.

**WHY? Expand….**

**CHURCH: Christ IS the GLUE!**

**Only the God changes you from within to produce the fruit of the Spirit**

**LOVE, JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GENTELNESS, SELF-CONTROL, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS,**

**This is why Jesus is so critical to your marriage as the third strand. To braid you together.**

**The priority of your love is also key if Christ is going to do this in your marriage:**

Meaning, who or what do you love the most in your life?

Jesus answered this question in..

**Matthew 22:37-40** Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

🡪First & foremost we must **love God** more than anything or anyone else!

To not do this is to be an idolater.

I think most Christians believe they love God more than anything else but is that really the case.

Is it the case for you. If you are honest and say no. I really love \_\_\_\_\_ more than God then you must see the love you bring to your marriage is far inferior to what it is when you love God more than anything else.

If you truly Love God more than anyone else… You would forsake everything else for him.

Meaning if left with only one thing… all family, money, health, status, friends, come after Him.

Meaning when you tragically lose one of these.. you aren’t undone because you still have a great and deep love and relationship with God. He must be first. Let’s look at how this plays out.

It says, Love the lord your God with **“all”. What does all mean here?**

<>Does that mean sometimes? <>Does that mean part way?

<>Does that mean when you feel like it? <>Does that mean give him some of your heart?

**“You want to know the number one thing that will challenge this very commandment in your life in your life?” Because for many it’s not God.**

The biggest thing I see take people who are living for Christ away from their commitment to God is a **🡪 Relationship or Love for someone that gets Priority!”**

**This is typically a spouse, Boyfriend/girlfriend, or a child.**

…you need to make sure that you don’t love them more than God!

🡪 They cannot be first. You might be thinking … **did I just hear that correctly?**  YES!

I make sure I love God more than anything else… including my wonder wife, Jennifer.

Because when and if My love for her is greater than my love and hunger for God then I am trying to love her based on my own power.. my own ability….

 **And you know what happens?** **my selfishness will rule that relationship.**

my love for her will be limited! It Will be weaker..

**But, if I love God first and give him my best, my greatest love!**

Then I will be fueled by his abundant SELFLESS love and poor that into my bride.

I will essentially end up loving her **way more** than I would have if they were first, trying to do it on my own without God’s overflow.

When he is at the top.. we will overflow….from Him down. \* I can’t tell you how seriously and game changing this is. In almost 22 years of marriage it all gets better, why? Growth in Jesus!

Because God is sanctifying us and stirring in us a love for each other that is less from my flesh and more from Christ at work in us.

🡪If God is first & you are seeking to obey Him then your love for whoever else will be accurately placed. **--You will never do anything for them that jeopardizes your love for God**

🡪When we commit our greatest love to God,

He then reveals how best to love those around us!

**Is Christ Center of your marriage? Is he your first love?**

**Are you investing real time into your relationship with Christ, in prayer and in his word so that he is fueling you with an overflow of his selfless sacrificial love?** This is the fuel of marriage.

**May it be so in our marriages as we grow in Christ and love God above all else.**

**Q29. What is marriage?**

Marriage is a covenant relationship whereby God joins together one man and one woman into a one-flesh union designed to be faithful and last until the couple is separated by death.

Next week we will look at the roles God has ordained for marriage for the Husband and the Wife and then the following week we will return to this question and really focus in on the part I did not major on tonight and that is the permanence of Marriage being until death do you part!

**Let’s Pray**