

Husbands And Wives

One Flesh

Ephesians 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

(Ephesians 5:25-33 (NKJV)

In John chapter 17, Jesus spoke about His deep and intimate love for those whom God had given to Him, those who would be His “bride”, the “church”, first the twelve, and then all the many others who would come afterwards, you and me. And He expressed His love in a manner that few truly understand. He used the word “one” to describe the intimate love relationship, first with God, His Father, then with His bride, you and me, “One!”

I hear people use that expression often these days, “one”, especially couples, and I believe that many, perhaps most of them are sincere in their intentions, but often I question if they truly understand its meaning, especially as the Lord Jesus intends it to be here in these words, “one”!

May I say simply that God counts this word, “one” and “oneness” as being one of the most important concepts that He will ever impart to us. And He desires for you and me to grasp its full meaning and to embrace its solemn and serious purpose, especially as it concerns the relationship that we have with Christ and then on further, as it concerns the relationship between a husband and his wife.

The scriptures tell us that God knows our “frame”, our inability to grasp certain “concepts”, and especially the difficulty that we encounter when we are asked to “dig” very deeply beneath the surface of the meaning of a matter. And that is so with this

concept of “oneness”. And that is why we find Him giving us the meaning and the concept over and over again. Listen to these words as Jesus prayed for “oneness” among His disciples, “oneness” with Him and “oneness” with each other. This from John 17, first in verse 11 and then following on from verse 20 . . .

11 . . . Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

20 “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:11, 20-23 (ESV)

While the church, the Body of Christ is a great body of believers, and here in John 17 and in Ephesians 5 God is addressing His Church as the whole body of believers, His love and His concern for His “body” is intimate and personal to each member within His body, individually. And that personal intimacy can be seen ever so clearly as He expresses His loving “oneness” with two very special individuals within His body, “a husband and his wife”.

And that is the intent expressed here in Ephesians 5 as God likens the intimacy that Christ has with His “bride”, the Church, to that of the intimacy that is to be experienced between a husband and his “bride”.

And may I take a moment and say that most English teachers, if grading an essay in which these words in John 17 and these words in Ephesians 5 were expressed in this manner, would probably give the writer a poor grade, simply because of the “overly repetitive” way the words are given, saying the same words over and over again in similar ways. But again, God knows our frame and He know that we need these words to be repeated over and over again so that we will more fully grasp the concept of what He is saying to us.

As a “body of believers” God wants us to be “one” with each other in all that we are, all that we think and all that we do. And likewise, He wants that same “oneness” to be the foundation of each marriage relationship.

From the first moments of human life, God spoke this truth into the souls of men and women, that a deep, undivided intimacy was to fill every portal and avenue and fiber of the relationship of marriage, that nothing less than “oneness” would satisfy the

demands of love. Listen to these precious loving words in Genesis 2, first from God and then from Adam,

18 And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; 22 And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. 24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (Genesis 2:18, 21-25 (KJV)

Are these words not some of the most precious words you could ever hear, loving and gentle and kind! And God spoke these words right at the very beginning of the very first husband and wife relationship so that they then, and all husbands and wives who would come afterwards, would know the depths of intimacy and oneness that would be needed in the marriage relationship.

My wife is to be “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” and we are to be “one” with each other, “one flesh”. And we should never have anything within us or about us that we would desire to hide from one another, and therefore can walk naked before each other and not be ashamed. Folks, that is intimacy!

And to emphasize the importance of this special “oneness”, several thousand years after Adam and Eve, Jesus found it necessary to repeat the same words. On the occasion of some Pharisees asking Him about divorce, the separating out of two people who had become “one flesh”, Jesus said to them,

4 . . . "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:3-6 (NKJV)

I have often said to you that I am a very visual thinker. And words like these come into my mind in a very visual way. And my mind pictures my wife and I, from the first moment we said our vows, becoming “one flesh”, one heart that beats, one set of lungs that breathe, one mind to think with. If she is separated from me, how will I breathe, my heart will no longer beat, my mind will no longer think. I will surely die!

And so Jesus said,

6 . . . Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."
(Matthew 19:6 (NKJV))

Folks, all these words are so very, very real. With divorce being so common these days, a kind of "death" has come to so many within the "body of Christ". No, in divorce the bodies of believers do not die, and no, they don't lose their eternal salvation. But oh, a death has surely taken place.

You cannot "rip away" one-half of a whole person and expect either half to live. And I know that just as Christ wept over His people while He walked this earth, so also must He weep for us now, His dearly beloved bride separating and divorcing one another, breaking the heart of God. How tragic!

What are we to do to stop this overwhelming "tidal wave" of sin and sorrow that is taking place with the precious "Body of Christ"? The answer to that question is really a very simple one. It is "humility", "surrender" and "repentance", a three part formula that will solve all the problems within every marriage. But such things as "humility", "surrender" and "repentance" are completely contrary to the hearts of men. And for that reason, though I do hold onto hope, sadly, I'm not optimistic that such things will ever take place. Our world and the "Body of Christ" that lives within it are too consumed with self and the needs of self for anyone to listen to such solutions.

But may I say . . . I am a preacher, called of God to cry out these answers to anyone who will listen. And so therefore, I do that now and I will continue to do it while I still have breath.

This relationship of marriage is far too precious a gift from God to simply cast it aside as if it were worthless and meaningless. From the first moment that marriage is entered into, it must be guarded with great reverence and care.

As we said in an earlier message, before we ever make the decision to enter into marriage, we must first be very sure of some very basic truths. First, are they a believer? We must never "yoke" ourselves together with an unbeliever. Next, is this person the one that God intends for me to marry? Some might disagree and say that God does not have just one specific person that He intends us to marry. But may I remind us that it was with God's own hands that Eve was carefully created and fashioned to be the exact "suitable helpmeet" to Adam. That sounds rather specific, does it not? And also, when Abraham sent his servant to search for a wife for Isaac, every detail of that search was specific, Abraham saying to his servant, "The LORD

God of heaven . . . will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son".

So then, may I say, as for me, I do believe that God had a very specific wife for me and I am blessed to be married to her now for almost 44 years.

And also from an earlier message, may I repeat a warning that was given first in Genesis 2, then by Jesus in Matthew 19, and then again here in these words of Ephesians 5 verse 31. . .

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (Ephesians 5:31)

Why do you suppose that God took the opportunity to state these words so prominently and to repeat them so often within these instructions about marriage? Folks, it is clear! God is saying that the man and his wife will become "one flesh" with each other. And to do that, they must separate themselves out from their parents.

Yes, as children are born and grow into adulthood, they are first under the direction and authority of their parents. But once they enter into the relationship of marriage, all of that changes. The husband and wife must leave the direction and authority of their father and mother immediately and become "one" with each other, under their own authority, under the direction and guidance of the husband.

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and (shall cleave) to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (Ephesians 5:31)

These are the words of God and He is emphatic about this. There is absolutely no room in the family of a man and his wife for the authority and guidance and parental influence of the parents, advice sometimes yes, but only as a matter of loving counsel and never as a matter of authority. And may I again put it as kindly as I know how, "Parents you must get out of the marriage relationships of your children! You do not belong there!" They are "one" with each other!

But also, you husbands and wives be warned, do not invite the authority, influence and guidance of your parents back into your lives. Their presence will surely be destructive.

And while this passage does not specifically address the influence of friends within a marriage, may I also offer a caution regarding "influential friends"! Note here that God's command is for us to be "one" with our wife or husband". And take note that the

command does not include influential friends. Do not become “one” in thought or conversation or deed with anyone except your wife or your husband.

The essential command that is being given here is a command to “love”, and not to just love as we so often do, but to love with the powerfully deep and faithful love of Christ Himself. And that is not an easy concept of love for us to grasp. And so here beginning in verse 28, God condescends to our often childlike ignorance and explains it for us in the most basic of human terms. Here He tells us,

28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. (Ephesians 5:28-30 (NKJV)

Yes, we do too often hear people saying disparaging remarks about their own body, perhaps being overweight or some other disappointment with their physical condition. We especially hear people who are depressed, saying awful things about themselves. But with that being as it is, these words are actually far more true and accurate. Verse 29

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. (Ephesians 5:29)

This is a simple fact for most all the people of the earth. If our body hurts or is hungry or is thirsty, we rush to meet its needs. For some, even a slight chill or a rush of heat sends us scrambling for a remedy. And if we are in danger, great fear consumes us until we are relieved from the danger. But especially, we do not “yell at” and “argue with” or “slap” or “beat” or “hurt” our own self, we instead “protect” ourselves. So then, yes, these words are ever so meaningful and true.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. (Ephesians 5:29)

And God has given us these words to say in very basic terms how we husbands are to love our wives. We are to look for and quickly meet all the many little needs that will come to our wives. Husband, do you do that for your wife? If you are hungry or thirsty, you get up immediately to find food and drink for yourself. But do you also consider if your wife is hungry or thirsty? When your heart is broken because of the behavior of one of your dear children, do you not realize that your wife’s heart is also broken?

Husbands, there are a thousand things that happen daily that you are concerned about. May I say that your wife is also just as concerned as you are about those very same things? These words command you and me to quickly put aside our own

concerns and grief and fears and rush to the aid and comfort of our wives. It is simply the loving thing that we are supposed to do. Jesus did that for us and we must do that for our wives! So then . . .

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

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