

God-Honoring Marriage (Ephesians 5:18-6:4)
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There are many marriages. There are fewer marriages in which at least one spouse is saved. Fewer still exist in which both spouses are saved. But unfortunately, the fewest of marriages are those marriages in which saved spouses practice a *God-honoring* union. Three indispensable components characterize such a marriage:

1. The Atmosphere of a God-Honoring Marriage (5:18-21)

Perhaps the greatest mistake we make in trying to create a good marriage is to focus on having a good marriage!

The Bible principle is this: My horizontal relationships cannot be right unless my vertical relationship is right.

I often make this statement to our people: "The best thing you can do for any relationship in your life is for you to be right with God yourself."

To be filled by the Spirit of God means that I am yielded to His control and attentive to His Word (v. 18 with Col. 3:16-19).

As a drunken man has imbibed alcohol and thereby behaves in ways he would not otherwise behave, so the Spirit of God will enable me to do the things that I would not and could not otherwise do!

Note the three atmospheric conditions of the Spirit-filled spouse:

(1) Melodious Song (v.19)

Does your life have a song? What about your marriage?
People often forget what we say or do, but rarely forget how we make them feel.

The atmosphere of your life will determine the climate of the home.

When the song arises from within, little matters about the circumstances that are without.

(2) Mature Spirit (v.20)

Thanksgiving is a faith that's all grown up. It trusts God, and because it does, thanks Him in advance for His sovereign control.

How many potential conflicts simmer in our marriages because we do not have a mature spirit?

Have financial circumstances or other adverse situations revealed in you a lack of faith and caused a chafing in your marriage?

(3) Mutual Submission (v.21)

To submit is to put the other first.

The Spirit-filled spouse will look for ways to please his mate without compromising his relationship with the Lord.

The essence of submission is voluntary self-denial.

Submission is not a matter of weakness, but rather of great spiritual strength.

Remember: Storms brew when fronts collide!

2. The Attitudes of a God-Honoring Marriage (5:22-31)

a. The Attitudes of a God-Honoring Wife

(1) Positional Submission (v.22-23)

The Bible teaches that the husband is the governmental leader of the marriage and of the home (1 Cor. 11:2-3).

The Bible does not teach that men are better than women; nor does it teach that men and women are not equal.

Just as one would submit to the authority of a church leader or of a civil leader, so the wife should submit to the authority of her husband.

Remember that the one in authority is the one with the accountability (James 3:1; Heb. 13:17).

(2) Particular Submission (v.22-23)

Wives are to submit to their *own* husbands.

How often is submission extended to the pastor or the boss and not to one's own husband?

What is particular to one's own husband?

His authority over you: don't undermine it through rebellion or manipulation. (See Gen. 27:5-10.)

His abilities and gifts: don't compare him negatively with other men. (See 2 Cor. 10:12.)

His prerogative to your love: don't reject his advances and defraud him physically. (See 1 Cor. 7:2-5.)

His spiritual leadership: don't demean *any effort* he makes in a positive spiritual direction. (See Job 2:9.)

His calling: don't disassociate yourself from his work. (See Gen. 2:18.)

(3) Parameters of Submission (v.24)

Wives are to submit to husbands "in every thing."

Defined contextually, *every thing* would not include that which violates one's obedience to Christ (note *as unto the Lord* in v. 22 and *as the church is subject to Christ* in v. 24). See also Romans 13:1-7.

A husband's leadership is not limited to spiritual decisions alone. He is accountable for the way by which money is spent, children are reared, ministry is conducted, etc.

The wise husband will include his wife in decision-making and will often defer to her expertise in areas; however a wife's responsibility to submit remains regardless of his choice to include her in the decision.

Although he has delegated some areas of authority to his wife, the husband must remember that he remains ultimately accountable to God for those decisions. (See Gen. 3:12 and 16:2.)

b. The Attitudes of a God-Honoring Husband

Husbands must love as Christ loved—a tall order indeed! How then did Christ love? He possessed an,

(1) Initiating Love (v. 25)

We love Him, because He first loved us! (1 John 4:19)

Perhaps the only area in which men score highly in this regard is in initiating lovemaking.

Love is an act of selfless sacrifice. It is acting in regard to the welfare of another without possessing any ulterior motives.

Remember that the essence of love is giving.

- “For God so loved the world that He gave...” (John 3:16)
- “Hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us...” (1 John 3:16)
- “Who gave himself a ransom for all...” (1 Tim. 2:6)
- “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us...” (Eph. 5:2)
- “Who gave Himself for us...” (Titus 2:14)
- “Who loved me, and gave Himself for me...” (Gal. 2:20)
- “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)
- “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood...” (Rev. 1:5)

Christ loved us by providing for us what we needed before we ever knew we needed it! His decision to love us was right even when it was misunderstood.

Husbands must love their wives by providing for their needs and by initiating right decisions for the marriage.

During times of strife, husbands should initiate reconciliation.

During times of betrayal and rebellion, husbands should initiate forgiveness.

During times of apathy and mediocrity, husbands should initiate repentance.

During times of trials and frustration, husbands should initiate faith.

(2) Identifying Love (v. 26-27)

Jesus saved us that we might be His peculiar people, set apart and cleansed by His Word.

Ultimately, He saved us for Himself. He bought us, set us apart, and cleansed us for the purpose of eternal fellowship with Himself.

He identified with our sin at Calvary that He might identify with us for all of eternity.

Similarly, husbands must identify with their wives.

Ponder the great lengths to which you went to win her to yourself. Rekindle that identifying love.

Remember the longing that you had for her to be identified by your name. Guard that identity.

Christ did not save the church for occasional moments of passion intermixed with longer periods of coexistence. He saved us for the purpose of an abiding fellowship.

A wife feels cheapened and exploited when her husband treats her with sporadic episodes of passion and ignores her otherwise.

(3) Imitating Love (vv. 28-30)

Illustratively the church is depicted as both the *bride* of Christ and as the *body* of Christ.

While it might be understandable for a man not to understand how to love a bride, he certainly understands how to love his own body!

Consider these principles regarding caring for one's body:

Bodies are imperfect. Don't expect your wife to embody some unrealistic (and unhealthy) Hollywood ideal.

Bodies need daily nourishment. Daily attend to your wife's needs for security, affirmation, and attention. My awareness to her needs should be as apparent to me as a hunger pang.

Bodies need to be protected. My wife should know that she is physically and spiritually protected.

Bodies tend to need increasingly more, not less, care. The passing of years should reveal an ever-deepening love and attention on the part of the husband.

(4) Including Love (v.31)

Husband and wife are viewed as a unit. (1 + 1 = 1)

True unity in marriage involves leaving and cleaving.

Among the greatest reasons for marital difficulty is that of trouble with in-laws. At the heart of this trouble is the neglecting of the principle to “leave and cleave.”

Regarding human relationships, a husband’s loyalty belongs to his wife first.

Foolish are the couples that speak negatively of each other to their respective parents.

3. The Applications of a God-Honoring Marriage (5:32-6:4)

A God-Honoring marriage will find context in the way it is applied. Its Christ-centered purpose will testify to onlookers of the love of Christ for His church. Moreover, the product of such a marriage will testify from generation to generation the benefits of a Spirit-filled union. Therefore, a God Honoring marriage will demonstrate these two essentials:

(1) Picture of Christ

Your house is on fire! You must choose one thing to carry out with you. Insurance will cover your belongings, but it will not replace the memories. Quickly you grab the family picture album and hasten for the door.

God has chosen to depict the relationship of Christ and His bride by the marriage of a man and wife.

We must seek to honor God in our marriage in order that we not depict Christ in caricature or distort His image to onlookers.

(2) Priority of Child-rearing

Within the context of this passage, marriage is not an end in itself. The “one flesh” of marriage is perfectly illustrated in the product of marriage: a child. After all, is not the child the combining of two into one?

Children are commanded to obey parents. But which parents should they have the opportunity to obey? The Spirit-filled parents described above!

When parents seek the Lord and honor their respective roles, they can then faithfully impart to children the principles and examples by which Christianity can flourish from generation to generation.