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Sermon Notes

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Marriage in the Lord

Colossians 3:18-19

Only Satan can turn God's richest blessings into our bitterest battlefield

God's richest earthly blessing is marriage... yet Satan's constant attacks on marriage have made it the bitterest battlefield... not only because of divorce, but spouse abuse, constant conflicts, and deep seated bitterness

Sadly, this even happens in Christian homes

I. Haven't You Read That At the Beginning...?

A. Foundational Principles Still Apply: Matthew 19:4

Jesus' enemies, trying to get him in the same trouble with Herod that had taken John the Baptist's life asked him about divorce:

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

Jesus showed us a timeless principle in His answer:

Matthew 19:4-6 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

1. What captures my mind here is the way Jesus approaches this issue as He does every one: **"What does the scripture say?"**
2. If I were to go to Jesus and say, "Lord, I'm so confused about what it means to be a husband. Would you please teach me how I am to be, what I am to do...?", He would answer the same way:

"Haven't you read that at the beginning...?"???

So, what does Genesis teach us about marriage?

B. God's Original Purpose for Marriage: His Glory, Genesis 1:27-28

Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

1. God's intention: to fill the universe with a radiant display of His glory

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

2. Central to that plan: the human race, created in His image, able to see and recognize the glory of God and worship Him for it
3. Central to THAT plan, marriage, from which would come children who would grow up to fill the earth with God's image

C. Adam Alone: The Headship of Adam, Genesis 2:7, 18

1. God set up an order from the beginning by creating Adam alone, having him be alone for a period of time
2. This is the foundation of Adam's headship in his marriage and his leadership of the human race
3. Yet, Adam could not stay alone and accomplish God's plan for the human race; Without a suitable mate, there would be no children, no way to fill the earth with the knowledge of God's glory

D. "To Serve and Protect": The Responsibility of Adam, Genesis 2:15

1. One of the most important verses in the Bible for me in understand my role as a man, and especially as a husband and father

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

2. Simple understanding of the verse: the Garden of Eden needed Adam's ministry

Two verbs fascinating:

3. The first: "to work", or "cultivate", "tend", "till"... literally "to serve"
 - a. Usually used of slaves or servants, who put their labor at the disposal of another
 - b. Here, Adam is called on to serve the Garden of Eden... but HOW?

- c. Certain plants could only grow under direct human care

Genesis 2:4 no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground

- d. The genetic code for these plants was established on the third day of creation

Genesis 1:11 Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so.

- e. The Garden of Eden had IMMENSE POTENTIAL, but only if Adam served it would it reach that full potential
- f. In like manner, a woman has even greater potential... and under the loving care of a godly husband, she is enabled to grow to her full potential in Christ
- g. A husband is called on to SERVE his wife as Christ served the church

Ephesians 5:25-27 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

A Christian wife really belongs to Christ... the husband's job is to serve her, to get her ready for her true wedding day, her perfection as part of Christ's bride, the church... he does this through loving service in the word, in prayer, in nurture. Etc.

4. The second word: "to take care of" = "to protect", "to guard," to "keep from harm"

Psalm 121:4, 7-8 The LORD will neither slumber nor sleep... The LORD will keep you from all harm-- he will watch over your life; ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

- a. Adam was called on to protect the Garden of Eden from the threat of harm, the danger of evil... he was to stand as a guardian angel and watch over this precious place...
- b. From what danger? SATAN and his demons!!
- c. And if God wanted the Garden of Eden protected, how much more Eve, the man's precious wife

- d. Amazingly: Genesis 3, Adam just stood there the whole time his wife was talking to the serpent and never said anything!!! He FAILED to protect her or the Garden from immeasurable harm
- e. The first sin, the original sin, was Adam's, not Eve's... it was a sin of OMISSION... he FAILED to protect his wife and the Garden of Eden by his silence
- f. So today, husbands fall into one of two opposite errors as husbands and fathers
 - i) Tyranny... domination... including wife abuse and child abuse
 - ii) Passive Male syndrome... failing to serve or protect... coasting in life and doing very little to shepherd his wife and children
 - iii) OF THE TWO, the second is far more prevalent in the Christian church

Summary: a husband is called upon to Serve and Protect his wife and children... just as Adam was called on to serve and protect the pristine Garden of Eden

E. "A Helper Suitable for Him": The Good Gift of a Wife, Genesis 2:18

Genesis 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

1. Adam could not fill the earth, subdue it, and rule over it alone
2. No animal could be his mate, no animal could be his partner in this glorious work
3. God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and made from his rib a woman... his wife... his partner... his helper suitable for him
4. Thus a wife finds her role in helping her husband fulfill God's call on his life

1 Corinthians 11:8-9 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

In other words, the woman was brought to man to help him; it was not the man brought to the woman to help her

The headship of the husband and the submission of the wife finds its roots here

F. "The Two Will Become One Flesh": The Summary Statement, Genesis 2:24

Genesis 2:24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

1. Given once in the Old Testament, repeated three times in the New Testament
2. Given once before the fall into sin, repeated three times after the fall
3. Thus it is a statement for God's purposes in marriage both for perfect man and sinful man

II. Marriage "In the Lord"

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

A. "In the Lord": A New Realm for Order and Blessing

1. "In the Lord" = in a new relationship with God through Christ
2. Our new life in Christ makes a new kind of marriage possible

B. A "New Command"... love one another

John 13:34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

1. Why did Jesus call it "new"

"AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, SO... you must love one another."

It is new because His life and death give a whole new pattern for love

Jesus put his love on full display... not just in the foot washing, but especially in His going to the cross for us

2. New pattern, new power, new purpose
 - a. Jesus' life and death give the **new pattern**
 - b. The indwelling Holy Spirit gives us the **new power**
 - c. Eternal glory in heaven gives us the **new purpose**

C. Universal Submission... of Christians to the Lord

1. In a moment: the particular submission of wives to their own husbands
2. Foundational first: submission of ALL Christians to the Lord and to the Bible

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God.

- a. Biggest problem: Christians not submitting to Christ and to the Bible

- b. We run our lives as if we had no master, no king... as if obedience were a demeaning and shameful thing

Bottom Line: Because Christ is our King and our Savior, we are able to live a whole new kind of life... a husband is able to love his wife properly and a wife is able to submit to her husband properly

III. To the Wife: Submit to Your Husband (vs. 18)

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

A. The Basic Command: Submit

1. Greek word: hupotasso...

- a. Basic definition: “hupotasso” submission to God-ordained authority; one being willingly under the authority of another
- b. Inspired commentary: Ephesians 5 gives a fuller picture

Ephesians 5:22-24 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

B. The Reason Given: “Fitting in the Lord”

“as is FITTING in the Lord”

- 1. “fitting” = appropriate for a women who professes to be a follower of Christ
- 2. Titus: submission is in accordance with SOUND DOCTRINE

Titus 2:1 You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine.

Part of that is that OLDER WOMEN should teach younger women

Titus 2:5 to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

- a. The submission of the wife is orderly, fitting, appropriate
- b. We learn MANNERS, what is appropriate and fitting for each setting, and what is out of place

America is a very INFORMAL culture with fewer and fewer cultural rules governing good behavior

Some remaining bastions of orderliness and beauty remain... like a wedding

As the groomsmen and bridesmaids proceed down the aisle, it not FITTING or PROPER for them to race each other or go out of the order specified during the rehearsal... or to wrestle each other for the best places to stand

During the wedding ceremony, it is not FITTING or PROPER for a guest to interrupt the ceremony to speak words of encouragement and blessing to the couple or to pray for them... this would be embarrassing, out of place

At a the wedding banquet, it is not FITTING or PROPER to stir your coffee with your finger or suddenly to reach across the table and take someone else's dessert

There is a sense of ORDER, a sense of PROPRIETY, of what is PROPER and WELL-PLEASING... The ordering of a wife in submission to her husband's authority is from GOD; He established it at the beginning, by creating Adam first and making the woman to be a HELPER SUITABLE for him

3. Refuting "mutual submission"

- a. Some Christians focus on Ephesians 5:21 and teach a doctrine of mutual submission

Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

- b. Egalitarians (who teach that there are NO gender based roles in the church) say this means sometimes wives submit to husbands, but sometimes husbands submit to their wives
- c. They redefine the word "submit" to mean "act in love toward someone"
- d. BUT that's NOT how the word is used in the New Testament:

- Jesus is subject to the authority of his parents
- demons are subject to the disciples
- citizens are to be subject to government authorities
- the universe is subject to Christ
- unseen spiritual powers are subject to Christ
- Christ is subject to God the Father
- church members are to be subject to church leaders
- wives are to be subject to their husbands
- the church is subject to Christ
- servants are to be subject to their masters
- Christians are subject to God

None of these relationships are ever reversed. Husbands are never told to be subject to wives, nor the government to citizens, nor masters to servants, nor the disciples to demons. Clearly parents are never told to be subject to their children! In fact, the term hypotasso is used outside the NT to describe the submission and obedience of soldiers in an army to those of superior rank

Mutual submission is NOT taught in Ephesians 5:21... rather Paul means one category of Christians should submit to another category: wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters

C. What Submission is Not and What It Is

1. What it does NOT mean:

a. NOT: That women are inferior to men

Jesus submitted to His parents:

^{ESV} Luke 2:51 And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.

It does not mean that husbands are naturally wiser, better leaders, clearer thinkers, better in crises, or any such thing

b. NOT: That God loves men more than women

c. NOT: that a husband's authority is greater than the Lord's

- i) Certainly a wife does not need to obey any commands from her husband that are contrary to scripture:

Colossians 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

There are some things that are NOT fitting in the Lord... the wife must not obey those; especially if the commands come from a non-Christian husband

d. NOT: That men can dominate their wives in tyrannical ways

e. NOT: that a wife does not have a significant role to play in her husband's decisions and in the running of the home

- i) A godly husband will seek advice from his godly wife above all other sources of human wisdom

^{ESV} Proverbs 31:11 The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.

2. What is IS: [Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*:]

- a. Scripture indicates that it is the wife's responsibility to make herself submissive
 - i) Nowhere does Scripture give the husband commands to FORCE submission out of his wife
- b. Scripture indicates that the wife's submission is to be continuous... a pattern of lifestyle, not a sporadic thing

Ephesians 5:24 As the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

- c. Wifely submission is mandatory, not optional... this is a part of her obedience to Christ, since it is Christ commanding this ultimately—not Paul!!
 - i) her submission is not based on the way her husband treats her
 - ii) nor is it conditioned by her husband's abilities, talents, wisdom, education or spiritual state
- d. wifely submission is a spiritual state, to be done “in the Lord”, performed only by the power of the Holy Spirit
- e. submission is a positive, not a negative concept
 - i) Bill Gothard's definition: **“Submission is the freedom to be creative underdivinely appointed authority”**
 - ii) Wife puts all her considerable talents, wisdom, abilities, gifts, resources and energy at the husband's disposal
 - iii) She and her husband are team members, with him being the God-ordained leader... they are not working at cross-purposes, they are not opponents, but on the same team... she is not trying to undermine or outdo him
 - iv) NOR is she an individual going her own way, pursuing her own agenda
 - v) She has ideas, opinions, requests, desires, and insights, and she lovingly makes them known
 - vi) BUT she knows on any good team there must be a leader who makes the final decisions and plans, and that good team members must support those plans or no progress can be made
- f. Submission involves the wife's attitudes as well as her actions

- i) She should be cheerful in this role, not grudging
 - ii) Like the Lord Jesus who said “My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work”
 - iii) Proverbs 31:13 says she works with delight
 - iv) Ephesians 5:33 says she must see to it that she respects her husband: she must honor him in her heart
- g. Not in fear: thinking the family will fall apart if he leads it
 - h. Not in manipulation:

My Big Fat Greek Wedding: the daughter was afraid to ask her father for something; the mother reassured her and said, “Yes, the Papa is the head, but the Mama is the neck... she can turn the head whichever way she chooses.”

A wife ought not learn the techniques of manipulating her husband: buttering him up, or withholding marital affections, or flipping the levers of his pride... she studies him constantly and knows how to move him... but such movement can be manipulative

D. Practical Advice for Wives... Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*

1. Making the home a safe place... a refuge of refreshment and encouragement
 - a. Do not allow the home to be either in shambles, full of disorder and confusion NOR so pristine that he feels like he can't walk in the place without defiling it
2. Being trustworthy and dependable: be the kind of woman worthy of your husband's full trust and confidence
3. Offering suggestions, advice, and corrections when needed in a loving fashion
4. Maintaining a healthy spiritual life
5. Cooperating with him in raising children... Building loyalty in the children

“The wife's attitudes toward the husband are quickly picked up by the children. Lack of respect or confidence in his leadership, complaints about what he has done or not done will have a debilitating influence on the children. She must avoid taking sides with the children or anyone against her husband. Differences must be settled away from the children.”

6. SHOWING CONFIDENCE IN HIS DECISIONS

“Disdain, lack of confidence, anxiety, or strong opposition over his decisions may cause him to become indecisive, defensive, or reactionary.”

WIVES: Examine yourself in this command to see if God has anything to say to you

IV. To the Husband: Love Your Wife (vs. 19)

A. The Basic Command: Love

1. Understanding the command

- a. Ephesians 5 likens a husband's love for his wife to Christ's love for the church
- b. He says Christ "gave Himself up for" the church... laying down His life so that the church might live
- c. Paul commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies
- d. Thus a husband's love for his wife must be self-sacrificial for the benefit of his wife
- e. Love is therefore a commitment to sacrifice yourself for the good of another

2. BUT love goes beyond merely sacrifice

- a. Love means cherishing... delighting in the wife as a precious gift from the Lord
- b. Love means joy in the relationship
- c. Love means words expressed, affection given

Song of Solomon 4:1 How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead.

The word "beautiful" appears 14 times in the Song of Solomon... more than any other book in the Bible... and every time it is applied to the beauty of the wife... the husband is consistently expressing his appreciation for her beauty

- d. There is a unique love a husband has for his wife... so clear that an outside observer can tell right away

In Genesis, Isaac took his family to the land of the Philistines, in Gerar; AND (like his father before him) lied about his wife Rebekah to the king of the place (Abimelech) and said "She is my sister"...

Genesis 26:8-9 When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. ⁹ So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

The way Isaac was touching Rebekah could only have been done by a husband to his wife

The love of a husband to his wife is not merely self-sacrifice, or discipleship, or gifts bought, or words spoken... it is all of that... but it is also a sacred union, sexual in nature, but encompassing the whole of the relationship

The wife needs to know that her husband still CHERISHES HER in that way years later

B. A Delight in Sacrifice

1. A husband is to delight in laying himself down for his wife
2. He is to delight in her happiness, her well-being, her satisfaction
3. And in whatever it takes to bring it about... even if it means great self-denial

C. The Negative Command: Do Not Be Harsh

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

1. The word means “bitter”...
 - a. It’s used in Revelation 8 of the “Wormwood” that turned on third of the fresh water on earth bitter... and many people died because of the bitter water

Illus: On the Westward Trail to California or Oregon, sometimes settlers desperate for water would come upon a spring, only to find out the it was poisonous alkali water

- b. So also people in marriage can become very disappointed with their spouses...
2. Two interpretations given
 - a. Bitter= holding a grudge against his wife... internal heart attitude
 - b. Caustic = treating her harshly, roughing her up with words, brusque encounters, etc.
3. I think BOTH are in view... the harsh treatment frequently flows from bitterness of heart attitude
 - a. It is possible for a husband to hurt his wife by clumsy hardness... he forgets she is a woman and speaks too loudly or using too forceful an approach
 - b. Then he is surprised later to find her crying
 - c. He had no idea why she is so hurt

- d. Reason: he wasn't careful in how he treated her
- e. A husband needs to understand the fragility of his wife
 - i) Words spoken in anger last a lot longer in her mind than in his
 - ii) She still remembers a long time later... he has since moved on

BUT... more likely Paul is addressing a deeper issue: harsh treatment that flows from deep-rooted bitterness

- f. Bitterness in a marriage is caused by one thing: UNFORGIVENESS
 - i) Perhaps the wife was disrespectful... or undermined his authority... or withheld marital relations... or mocked him... or hurt him in some other way
 - ii) The husband is then tempted to be harsh with his wife

D. Practical Advice for Husbands

Love languages: Dr. Gary Chapman

Words of Affirmation

Mark Twain once said "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Verbal appreciation speaks powerfully to persons whose primary Love Language is "Words of Affirmation." Simple statements, such as, "I love your new haircut," or "You are the best cook I know—I would rather eat your meals than anyone else's," or "You made an excellent decision when you did _____"

Quality Time

Quality time is more than mere proximity. It's about focusing all your energy on your mate. A husband watching sports while talking to his wife is NOT quality time. Unless all of your attention is focused on your mate, even an intimate dinner for two can come and go without a minute of quality time being shared.

Receiving Gifts

Some mates respond well to visual symbols of love. If you speak this love language, you are more likely to treasure any gift as an expression of love and devotion. People who speak this love language often feel that a lack of gifts represents a lack of love from their mate

Acts of Service

Sometimes simple chores around the house can be an undeniable expression of love. Even simple things like laundry and taking out the trash require some form of planning, time, effort, and energy.

Physical Touch

A hug, a pat on the back, a tender kiss, or even marital relations... all of these things are part of cherishing...

BUT... all of this must be done with DELIGHT... giving the message “Doing this makes me truly happy” or the wife will not want any part of it