

Pursue Your Relationship With God Above All Else: An Illustration From Marriage

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Introduction

The bible often times uses marriage as an illustration of our relationship with God. We are expected to be loyal to God in the same way a husband should be loyal to a wife. A disloyal husband is said to commit adultery, which is the same concept that is used when we are not loyal or true to the Lord. Our relationship with God is very important and should be pursued. It will not automatically happen. We have to work at it in the same way a wife works to have a good relationship with her husband or so she should.

If we do not actively pursue the Lord then our relationship will suffer. That doesn't mean we will die and go to hell or anything like that. However, it does mean that we will not live as fruitful as we could if we do not nurture a good relationship with the Lord. We are going to discuss the importance of pursuing a relationship with the Lord in this study. We are going to compare it with the marriage relationship to help with "seeing" what that godly relationship should be like.

What is Marriage?

- *Genesis 2:24 (NASB95) {24} For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*
- *Ephesians 5:22-31 (NASB95) {22} Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. {24} But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. {25} Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, {26} so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, {27} that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. {28} So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; {29} for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, {30} because we are members of His body. {31} FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.*

The two scripture passages above highlight a very fundamental point concerning marriage and our relationship with God. Marriage in many ways is an illustration of what our relationship with God should be like. However, we have to understand how marriage is portrayed in the bible to really understand that illustration and especially to understand what type of relationship God wants with us.

First of all I think it is important that we establish the meaning of the word marriage as it is presented in the bible. Genesis 2:24 succinctly states that a marriage is a union. It is not just any union based on agreement of some sort, but rather a union where the two become one. A marriage is therefore an intimate and ideally lifelong union between a man and a woman. The main characters in the marriage and that define the marriage is the husband and the wife. I say this because I have noticed that many marriages are focused on other things besides the relationship of the husband and wife. We shall come to this point in more detail shortly.

A marriage is an intimate lifelong union between a man and a woman

The Husband and Wife Relationship

Consider the passage above from Ephesians. In it the Apostle Paul reveals some very important points regarding our relationship with God and the relationship between a married couple. There are two main points in his discussion that I will list below.

1. Wives are subject to their husbands, **as unto the Lord.**
2. Husbands love their wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her**

Now at first glance there can easily be some misconceptions. First of all it looks like God wants the wife to be like a servant to the husband or the like. Some would even say that the wife is supposed to be inferior to the husband. However, you will find that this verse is not only misunderstood, but is actually interpreted incorrectly. In the original Greek the passage reads like this; *Wives, to husbands, as to the Lord.* You may notice in your bible that the words “be subject to” or “submit” is italicized. That means that the translators added those words to help clarify the passage. Another thing that we have to keep in mind is that the bible was not originally divided into chapters and a verses as ours are.

Therefore, in order to best interpret verse 22 we must look at the verse preceding it. When we do that the actual language will make a lot more sense and we will get the point more accurately.

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, to your husbands as to the Lord.

The passage reads a bit different now doesn't it? The word “subject” in verse 21 is the Greek word *hupotasso* and it means to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject, put in subjection unto or under, to subject one's self, obey, to submit to one's control, to yield to one's admonition or advice, to obey, be subject. Now we have to consider something here that God established with regards to the man and the woman.

Genesis 1:26-28 (NASB95) {26} Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the

cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” {27} 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 God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

What I want you to notice is that the man and the woman had dominion over God’s creation **not over each other**. Nowhere in the creation narrative do we see that the man is the ruler of the wife and that the wife is inferior to the husband and is therefore dominated by him. If anything we see those things after the fall. However, with regards to God’s design, the husband and wife were to be one and have dominion over God’s creation. Therefore, when the bible talks about the woman being subject to the husband it is not talking about him dominating her as if she was his slave. Her submission is like her submission to the Lord. It is according to her will and because of what Jesus has done. We submit to Christ because Christ died for us and provided a way for us to have right relations with the Father. We submit to Christ because Christ is worthy of it and because of the love that he demonstrates to us from the Father.

This also means that the wife’s submission is justified and that the husband is such that the wife would submit to him similar to the way that she would submit to the Lord. If Jesus had never done anything for us then there would be no reason to submit except if God demanded it. That is not the case. We can submit to Christ and the wife can submit to the husband because Christ loves us and gave his life for us and the husband likewise gives himself for the wife.

The submission of the wife to the husband is both voluntary and justified because the husband gives himself for his wife as Christ gave himself for the church

This is a good segue into the husbands part. He is to love his wife as the Lord loves the church and gave himself for it. This is of course not referring to romantic love, but rather a committed affection for. For example.

John 3:16 (NASB95) {16} “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

God demonstrated his love for the world by giving his one and only son so that we would be able to have right relationship with him, i.e., be justified. The husband is to likewise love his wife. He is not the master of his wife, but the head. Headship should be defined with regards to what Christ did for the church and not as a mere identification of position in the marriage. Christ gave himself for the church and is therefore the head of the church. The husband gives himself for the wife and is head of the wife. Headship in this regard can be best understood as the one who puts his head out first for the benefit of those behind him, in this case the wife.

So you see effectively that both the husband and the wife submit to each other as they submit to Christ. They do not dominate each other nor are they inferior to each other. They are together as one in a committed love for one another. That brings us to our relationship with God.

Hindrances to a Good Relationship

There are several things that hinder a good relationship between husband and wife. Some of these things are even from within the marriage itself. This shouldn't be surprising since we are dealing with two human beings that grew up in different environments with different personalities and experiences. I am quite amazed how many marriages are not based on the relationship between husband and wife, but rather functional things. For example, the husband's main focus is many times earning money for the family and therefore doing his duty in addition to doing his duties as a father. The wife may focus on her career in addition to the children. The intimate marriage is replaced with Marriage, Inc.

The husband and wife no longer pursue each other in the union, but rather pursues their individual objectives for Family, Inc. I am amused when people talk about the dysfunctional family. We all strive for functionality while intimacy suffers. The union does not truly develop or mature because so many other things are pursued. I read an article a few weeks ago on the MSN.com website. It was dealing with the myths of marriage. One of the myths was that children should come first. Personally I never believed in that because of my affinity to pursuing the union, i.e., togetherness. However, it is amazing to me how many parents lives rotate around the kids. They are so busy caring for the kids that they don't build a lasting marriage relationship. The husband and wife may indeed grow old together, but it will be all function and dedication and no intimacy or togetherness.

My point is that a marriage is supposed to be a union of the husband and wife. A marriage should be an intimate relationship between the husband and wife that lasts for as long as they live. However, the husband does not submit to the wife and the wife does not submit to the husband. Instead they dedicate themselves to the job, business, children, church, and a plethora of other things that serve as a hindrance to a good marriage relationship.

Our Relationship with God

Our relationship with God is an intimate one like marriage—or it should be. We become committed to God similar to how a husband is committed to his wife and vice versa. However, like a marriage there are many things that can hinder the relationship. There are many things that are counterproductive to an intimate and personal relationship with God. Jesus said to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33). The greatest commandment is to love God with all of your being (Matthew 22:37-38).

Many people dedicate themselves to church attendance and other religious activities. Still others dedicate themselves to abiding by their particular religious dogma. Some common religious dogmas are as follows.

1. All Christians must attend church every Sunday

2. All Christians must tithe
3. You must speak in tongues if you are truly saved
4. You must not listen to secular music or watch secular movies
5. You must do whatever your pastor asks you—you are to honor the man of God

There are so many people who think that they must be in church at every service the pastor decides to have else they have sinned against God. People forsake their family, friends, and even their own lives to serve whenever called upon by their church. Some even worship their pastor or religious leader as a god.

Just like so many distractions hinder a good marriage relationship there are many distractions that hinder our relationship with God. I have found that pursuing God may mean defying church. I have told those who attended Pursuing the Truth Ministries Sunday services that it is ok to stay home on a Sunday to spend time with the family or just to relax or pray. God wants you not your church attendance. God desires to fellowship with you not your money. I have come across people who believed that they will go to hell because they didn't tithe.

I am going to make a very strong statement and I hope you understand. I will of course explain. Many of the dogmas that we are taught from the pulpits and the like are lies from Satan with the sole purpose of severing your relationship with the Father. He hides it in religion knowing that most people do not read and study their bibles. Most people blindly follow men or women who call themselves Bishops, Pastors, Priests, evangelists, or whatever.

I find it extremely critical to nurture a good relationship with Christ. It is very important to pursue God, i.e., seek him as a priority of your life. I have met people who have dedicated themselves to their church only to find themselves abandoned when they needed help from that church. God will never abandon you. He will never leave you. My life's testimony is that God has never let me down.

Pursue a good relationship with God. After all that's what he wants. God wants you. Your church attendance, money, following the rules, etc. do not matter when compared to the fact that God wants you. Jesus died on the cross for you not your money or church attendance. He died so that you would be joined with God for all eternity. Be mindful of the distractions in your life that keep you from pursuing an intimate relationship with the Father.

Matthew 13:20-22 (NASB95) {20} "The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; {21} yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. {22} "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.

What is hindering you from an intimate relationship with God? When is the last time you had good quality time with the Lord alone? When was the last time you studied the scriptures and received revelation from the Holy Spirit of what you were studying? Many people will have to admit that its been a while since they did any of those things. Many will have to admit that they have spent their time doing other things such as their careers, the children, hobbies, or even church. However, it is most important that you pursue the Lord above all else. What can compare with your relationship with God?