

Some years ago a woman named Clare Tommie told a Wayne County circuit court jury she doesn't feel a thing when she kisses her husband, and the jury decided that the “lack of sensation” was worthy of \$275,000.

Mrs. Tommie, who received the award, said a dental operation left her lower lip and lower jaw permanently numb and had caused a strain in her relationship with her husband.

Today and next week we are going to look into Scripture and find that while the pleasures of the marital union are important, the success of marriage has more to do with *commitment* than feeling. It's a commitment by both the husband and wife to fulfill the role and assignment given to them by God.

I want to say before we go any further that in teaching this material, I am not claiming to “have arrived” when it comes to marriage. I am still learning and still needing the Lord's wisdom and strength to stay married. I am still a student of my wife and learning new things about her all the time!

Last time we left off in our series learning about what it means to be “*filled with the Spirit.*” In Ephesians 5:18 Paul writes, “*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation (or excess); but be filled with the Spirit...*”

Following this exhortation and beginning at verse 19, Paul gives certain evidences of being filled with the Spirit.

If you are a follower of Jesus Christ and filled with the Spirit...

- (1) You regularly fellowship with other Christians (5:19a; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:23)); - “*Speaking to one another...*”
- (2) You have a private, inward worship (5:19b); - “*singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord*”
- (3) You have an attitude of thanksgiving (5:20); - “*giving thanks always for all things to God*”
- (4) You have willingness to be accountable to other Christians, “*submitting to one another in the fear of God*”
- (5) You willingly subject to authority -- If you are a wife, you reverence your husband (5:22-25)
- (6) If you are an unmarried child, you submit to your parents (6:1-4), If you are employed, you subject yourself to your employer (6:5-9). If you are a citizen, you subject yourselves to governing authorities (Romans 13; 1 Peter 2), If you are a member of a local church, you submit yourself to your elders (Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- (7) If you are a husband, you lovingly exercise your spiritual leadership (5:25-32).

When a life is yielded to Christ, the filling of the Spirit results in an absolute control of the believer's life. When it comes to marriage, it is only through a life yielded to Christ can one accomplish and live out God's will for marriage.

Many marriages fall by the wayside because one or both persons in the marriage union is not yielded to Jesus Christ. They are not yielding their expectations, hopes, aspirations, desires and longings to Him.

When the rubber meets the road, marriages fail because one or both parties in the marriage are pursuing their own desires rather than seeking the other's good.

Seeking the other's good is just plain old fashion Christianity. Paul writes in Philippians 2:3-5, "*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...*"

Today we are going to begin our look at *God-Honoring Relationships*. We are going to look at what makes for a God-honoring marriage. Remember, God is the architect of marriage. He designed marriage; His Word, the Bible, is the blueprint.

In the Bible we find the Genesis account of the beginnings of creation. We find that God creates the heaven and the earth and on the sixth day He creates man. After naming all the animals Adam found there was no creature like himself. Man soon found that (in spite of living in the midst of all the animals) he was alone in the Garden of Eden.

Adam was "set up" by God. God purposely put him in the position to discover upon naming the animals that each animal had a female counterpart but for Adam, there was not found one that was suitable for him. (Gen 2:20)

You may have heard the story of the Sunday school teacher who asked her class: "*Can anyone tell me the story of Adam and Eve?*" A little girl put up her hand. "*First God created Adam,*" she said. "*Then God looked at him and said, 'I think I could do better if I tried again.' So he created Eve!*"

But Eve isn't a better version of man, she is a *different* version--one that God provided to Adam to be a "helper comparable to him," i.e., one corresponding to him in kind.

As we turn to Genesis chapter two, we find that woman was created, not as Adam was, directly from the dust of the earth; she was created from Adam's body.

(Gen 2:21 NKJV) And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

*(Gen 2:22 NKJV) Then the **rib** which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

The word for "rib" (*sela`* - tsay-law, Heb.) is translated elsewhere in Scripture as "side" (Ex. 25:12; 1 Kin. 6:5). The principle taught here is that the woman is formed from the man himself, making her of like nature, the same flesh and blood, a being with equal faculties and likewise "in the image of God" (1:27).

Now Adam recognizes that God has provided him with a uniquely perfect counterpart, designed especially for him and from his own body.

(Gen 2:23 NKJV) 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."

Adam calls her "Woman" because she was taken out of man. Adam saw that there was a marked difference between this creation and the other creatures that God had brought to him. He felt as one with this creation because she was part of himself.

After the introduction, God establishes marriage and gives His intent for marriage:

(Gen 2:24 NKJV) Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

(1) "*Therefore a man shall **leave** his father and mother*" - the "leaving," i.e., the legal act in which husband and wife make a public commitment of ultimate loyalty and lifelong devotion one to the other, above all others, even parents.

(2) "*and be **joined** to his wife*" -

- This verse hints of the oneness that ought to be lived out in marriage; the oneness that eliminates solitude and loneliness.
- It speaks to the romance of marriage--the tender love that is experienced in marriage.
- It speaks of the physical relationship that is ordained for both enjoyment and the propagation of the human race.
- Lastly, it is an indication of the permanency of marriage ("*and be **joined** to his wife*").

(3) "*and they shall become one flesh*" - the becoming "one flesh."

Here God is focusing on the spiritual, psychological and physical intertwining of persons.

God ends His narration in this passage with, "*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*" (vs. 25)

Adam was the leader and Eve was to follow his lead, but in such perfect balance that their oneness overshadowed their respective roles.

In the beginning, the woman's submissiveness and the man's provision were both willing and beautiful. There was no animosity, no struggle, and no conflict--only a glorious union. The woman as the helper was to joyfully support the man, and he as the head was to joyfully love the woman.

But something happened. Something tragic occurred. Genesis chapter 3 tells us the serpent sidestepped the authority and headship of the man, going around Adam's back to the one who by assignment was supposed to be the follower.

The serpent, who was actually the devil, enticed the woman to do the one thing God had told them not to do--eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2:17) The woman took the fruit, ate it, and gave it to her husband, and he took it and ate.

Now we see that the roles which God ordained when the woman was created were reversed. The woman was now in charge and the man had become the follower. God's design and order for marriage was twisted at that moment of temptation and this defilement of marriage relations has been passed down to each successive generation of Adam and Eve's offspring.

Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God's clear command against eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God punished them. The curse of Genesis 3:16-19 impacted the most basic elements of the human existence:

- *Life (2:17)* - God told Adam that if he ate the fruit of the forbidden tree he would die. Adam had died *spiritually* on that day and would as a result die *physically*. Not only that, he would pass this “death virus” to all his descendants. (Romans 5:12).
- *Child-bearing (v. 16a)* - There would be physical pain and anguish that would accompany the joy and the anticipation of child birth.
- *Provision (vv. 17-19)* - Man would have to labor and sweat to earn a living and provide for his family.
- *Marriage (v. 16b)* - There would be the strivings and problems that result as the sinful nature of man moves him to rule over his wife in an oppressive way, and the sinful nature of woman motivates her to be the one in charge.

Because of Adam’s sin, we all have been infected with the disease of sin. King David in Psalm 51:5 describes himself as “*brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin.*” Job 5:7 says, “*Yet man is born to trouble, As the sparks fly upward.*”

Romans 5: 12 says, “*... just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...*”

Because of Adam's came sin and death.

But in Christ came life..

Romans 5:17 tells us that “*by the one man's offense death reigned through the one...*” *but life will reign through One, Jesus Christ.*

Romans 5:18 tells us that “*through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation...*” *but through one man Jesus Christ, there is justification.*

Romans 5:19 lets us know that “*by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.*”

Because of the death of Christ, God has given us grace that reigns through righteousness and this grace can break the stranglehold of Adam’s curse.

- *Adam's sin brought death.* Jesus broke the curse of Adam’s sin and though we may die physically, God has promised to give us new bodies where we can live eternally with Him.
- *Adam's sin brought pain and suffering in child-bearing.* However, the woman who lives godly in Christ can be rewarded by joining with the Creator God in the process of producing the next generation of children who follow Christ (1 Timothy 2:13-15)
- *The curse of Adam's meant that man has to work by the sweat of his brow.* However, if he’s in Christ, he need not worry about his most basic needs because God has promised to supply all of them. Jesus said, “*...do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on... for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*”

- *Adam's sin brought strivings and problems in marriage.* However, for the Christian couple, the marriage union would be a picture of Christ and His bride, the church and God would give His Holy Spirit to empower husbands and wives to accomplish what they couldn't do through the flesh.

Here is the good news: Jesus broke the curse on the marriage relationship and has given His Holy Spirit to help us do marriage right!

I cannot love, nurture and cherish my wife like Christ does for the church without the Holy Spirit's power. My wife cannot reverence and respect me unless she willing to allow the Holy Spirit to rule and reign in her life.

This is why the commandments to the wife and husband for marriage are found nested in a passage that is teaching how Christians how to be filled with the Spirit.

- Without the Spirit of God in a marriage you will have the regulations for marriage but no love.
- Without the Spirit of God controlling the husband, you will have a domineering, overbearing, dictatorial tyrant who oppressively rules his wife.
- Without the Spirit of God controlling the wife, you will have wives contending with their husbands for the leadership role or at the least, reluctantly submitting to their husband's authority out of fear of physical harm or pressures from society.

This is exactly what we see in Islamic countries¹. We see the law in action with no Holy Spirit and no grace and no righteousness leading to eternal life.

God is the Designer of marriage and as the Architect of marriage He has made the blueprints available for us to build great marriages. His blueprint for marriage is found in the Bible.

With this in mind, let's continue our study in Ephesians, looking at what God says to wives.

(Eph 5:22 NKJV) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

(Eph 5:23 NKJV) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

(Eph 5:24 NKJV) Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

It doesn't take a Greek scholar to see that Paul gives a command, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands...*" and then a comparison... "*as unto the Lord.*" For wives, the basic role is one of submission, and the analogy is "*as to the Lord.*" As the Christian wife would respond to her Lord, so she is to do to her husband.

(Eph 5:25 NKJV) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Again, it isn't complicated. The husband's basic role is adoration...and the analogy is "...*as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*"

¹ <http://www.answering-islam.org/Silas/wife-beating.htm>

Both roles have unique patterns and both are analogous to Jesus Christ.

The godly wife asks, "*Lord, how can I show my love to You in the role you have called me to fill as a wife?*" God answers, "*My dear child, show it in your submissive heart toward your husband.*"

The godly husband asks, "*Lord, how can I be the kind of man You want me to be as a husband?*" God answers, "*My son, your limitless love for your wife shows the world and shows Me the kind of love you have for Me.*"²

In Ephesians 5:22 God says, "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*"? Let's look at some of the words in this text.

Wives - If you are married, if you are a *wife*, God is speaking to you.

Submit - *hupotasso*, hoop-ot-as'-so; to subordinate; to obey, to be under obedience, to be (put) in subjection (to, under), to submit self unto.

This word is not found in verse 22 but is supplied from the proceeding verse, "*and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.*" Verse 22 is rendered in the Greek, "*The wives to their own husbands as to the Lord.*"

Verses 21 and 22 together would be "*...submitting to one another in the fear of God. The wives to their own husbands as to the Lord.*"

I always feel the need (when I teach through this passage) to remind everyone that this is not my book. This is *God's Word*.

The Bible says of itself in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is given by **inspiration** of God...*" The word, inspiration literally means, *God-breathed*. It is the Word of God. If you have a complaint related to this teaching, I'm not the person to voice your complaints with; you need to have a sit-down session with God.

According to *God*, the wife must submit herself, that is, be subordinate to the leadership of her husband.

Someone may be thinking, "*Maybe that was for the culture of that time.*" Or, "*Paul just said that to deal with a unique problem in the Ephesian church*" or, "*Maybe that was added to the Bible by some who were interested in domineering their wives.*"

Some may ask the question, "*Are there other places in the Bible where this is taught?*"

Yes: *1 Corinthians 11:1-3; 8-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34; Colossians 3:18-20; Titus 2:1-5; 1 Peter 3:1-6*

It's kind of funny that I've talked to many women who seem to have a problem with the biblical command for a woman to submit to her husband but have no problem whatsoever with the biblical command for a husband "*to love his wife as Christ so loved the church.*"

How did Christ demonstrate His love for the church? He DIED for her! Scripture teaches that Christian husbands must die to themselves, their own wants, desires and agendas, and if called upon, must be willing to die for their wives.

² Chuck Swindoll, *Strike The Original Match*, Multnomah Press, 1980, pg. 41

It's like the barnyard animals that were planning to make breakfast for the farmer. The chicken said, "I'll give few eggs" and the cow said, "I'll give some milk and cheese."

The cow and chicken looked at the pig with disappointment because it did not participate and so the pig responded, "You all gave a contribution; I have to make a total commitment." So husbands ought to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Let's go back to Ephesians 5:22: "*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*"

"Own" – *idios*, id'-ee-os; pertaining to self, that is, one's own. Here the concept of *privacy* or *separateness* is implied. It means "one's own private, peculiar, unique possession." This means "your own husband" not your girlfriend's husband. This means not another man who is not your own husband.

"As to the Lord" - Just as you are submissive to Christ so you should be to your husband; the wife is to regard the reverence she must render to her husband as reverence and respect rendered to Christ.

In Ephesians 5:24 Paul writes, "*Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*"

In verse 33 he says, "...*let the wife see that she respects her husband.*" The KJV uses the word "*reverence.*" It is the same Greek word used for the reverence we have for God.

How does one reverence the Lord? Many of our worship songs speak of our reverence for the Lord with words like,

*"I love you Lord."
"I desire to commune with you Lord."
"I depend on you Lord."
"I belong to you Lord."
"I need you Lord."
"I honor you Lord"
"I give myself to you Lord"
"I adore you Lord."*

God is teaching us in His Word that this is the heart attitude a submissive wife should have. This is the heart attitude only a Spirit-filled and controlled wife can have for her husband.

To help you put this command in perspective, you wives may want to ask yourself the following question:

"Do I love my husband enough to live for him?"

- When was the last time you told your husband that you loved him and needed and depended on him?
- When was the last time you gave yourself to your husband; without him having to beg you for it?
- Do you respect your husband or do you diss him or correct him in front of the kids?
- Do you spend time with your husband and do with him the things that are fun or important to him?

Wives be subject to your own husbands---reverence your husband as you reverence Christ. Yes, this is a difficult assignment, but this is why God has given us His Holy Spirit—to empower us to do marriage!

As God teaches us the heart-attitude a respectful, Spirit-filled wife should have toward her husband, He also teaches us the heart-attitude a loving, Spirit-filled husband should have for his wife.

Most Christians have no problem acknowledging what the Bible teaches concerning the ministry of Jesus Christ. We say things like:

- *"Jesus gave His life for me."*
- *"While we were yet sinners, Christ die for me."*
- *"Oh how He loved you and me; He gave His life what more could He give, Oh how He loved you and me."*
- *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom 8:38)*

Because the husband is commanded to love His wife *"just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"* he may want to ask himself the question:

"Do I love my wife enough to die for her."

The Christian wife asks herself the question, *"Do I love my husband enough to live for him?"* But the Christian husband asks himself the question, *"Do I love my wife enough to die for her."*

The wife is to submit herself to her own husband. This describes the attitude of her heart where she has a Holy-Spirit induced desire to honor her husband, respect her husband, obey her husband; praise her husband and open herself up to her husband, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

"But my husband is not a Christian." (Oftentimes a wife would get saved before her husband)

You will find nowhere in the Scriptures where a wife's submission to her husband is contingent on whether or not he is a believer. In fact, you will find submission to her husband stressed even more because she has an opportunity by her submission to win her lost husband to Christ.

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife..." (1 Corinthians 7:14)

"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear..." (1 Peter 3:1-2)

Again the clear command from Scripture is - *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

"But my husband doesn't love me like Christ loves the church....He doesn't talk to me; he watches TV all evening—We never go out; there is no romance..."

You will find nowhere in the Scriptures where a wife's submission to her husband is contingent on the performance of her husband in the discharge of his marital duties. In fact, the Scriptures teach just the opposite:

"And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him". (1 Corinthians 7:13)

Why do some women have such a hard time with the concept of submission? Let me share with you five reasons:

1. *Christians in general do not understand the biblical teaching on submission.* When the average person thinks of submission, they think of slavery, dominance, supremacy and subservience. Those who think this way, imagine the wife being squashed under the heels of a man...shoved in a corner with her activities reduced to changing diapers, doing dishes, checking off a grocery list and mopping floors.³

Biblical submission is willingly serving others and humbling ourselves rather than dominating and exalting ourselves. Christians willingly submit to one another out of a reverence for Christ. Again Ephesians 5:21 says, "*submitting to one another in the fear of God.*" The same word is used for other relationships Christians have in society and the church (government, employer, pastors)

2. *Because of the sinful flesh* (i.e. Adam and Eve's legacy) - The sinful flesh moves a wife to want to rule over her husband creating conflict in the home (Genesis 3:16).

(Prov 21:9 NKJV) Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, Than in a house shared with a contentious woman.

(Prov 21:19 NKJV) Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.

(Prov 27:15 NKJV) A continual dripping on a very rainy day And a contentious woman are alike;

The proverbs are telling us that God's gift to the man may cease to be a submissive helper and become a piercing, shrieking adversary. In such cases a man would rather live on the roof exposed to weather and elements than in a luxurious home with a quarrelsome woman (cf. v. 19; 19:13; 25:24).

When an ill-tempered woman seeks to rule and insists upon her own way, it is degrading and unpleasant for her husband, disastrous for her children, distasteful to community and friends, and an abomination to God (2 Sam. 6:16-23; 1 Chr. 15:29; Job 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:4).

Another reason why some women have such a hard time with the concept of submission...

3. *Pressure from the world* (TV, movies, soaps, magazines) - Female warriors, cartoon characters, movies and sitcoms that depict wives disrespecting their husbands and husbands who have no spine and turn over the responsibility of leading their family to their wife and/or children.
4. *Having to raise children out of wedlock* (Women who've had to be both mom and dad)

In words attributed to Scottish historian Alexander Tytler: "*A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until a majority of voters discover that they can vote themselves largess out of the public treasury.*"

Many now know that providing cash subsidies to never-married women who have children out of wedlock destroys marriage and promotes illegitimacy.

³ *ibid.*, pg. 42

When men are released from this primary economic role that they have filled throughout the ages, and when it is made possible for women to financially support out-of-wedlock children, the family becomes obsolete.

A man who hasn't been held accountable to provide for his out-of-wedlock children will find it hard to be a loving leader if he decides to get married.

When a woman who has had children out of wedlock gets married, it is difficult for her to surrender the role she has had to fulfill for so many years to her husband. Biblical submission means having to relinquish this role to the husband--which for some women is very hard to do.

5. *Emotional insecurity in marriage* (mostly) as a result of premarital sex.

Two new surveys, one of Swedish couples and one of Canadian women, suggest that cohabitating may actually hurt a couple's prospects for marital success.

The Canadian study predicted marital failure for 35 percent of women who had lived with a man before marriage. This compares to 19 percent for women who had not cohabited.

A website warning of the dangers of premarital sex had this to say:

If you date and you don't have sex, you can forget about that relationship when you stop dating. But if you have sex with those you date and then break up, the nature of sexual involvement creates strong, often unpleasant memories for your whole life.

Every relationship you break up where you had intimate relations is like a mini-divorce. The psychological difficulties of these mini-divorces does damage to your character. Later, when you are married and go to bed with your beloved spouse, these unpleasant memories will accompany you.

Why do some women have a hard time with submission?

- 1.) A lack of an understanding of the biblical teaching on submission.
- 2.) Because of the sinful flesh
- 3.) Because of pressure from the world
- 4.) Having to raise children out of wedlock
- 5.) Emotional insecurity resulting from premarital sex

In Ephesians 5 the Apostle Paul gave us the pattern for the overall structure for marriage. This would be the framework or the superstructure. In 1 Peter chapter 3, the Apostle Peter specifies the bricks along with the mortar to bond them together.

Paul gave us the "what" for the role of the wife. "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*"

Peter gives us help with the "how." Paul explains the structure, the underlying frame. Peter shows us the actual bricks that gives the role of the wife beauty and color. This is what we will be looking at next time.

In preparation for next week's message, please read through 1 Peter 2:18-3:6.

We stated near the beginning of this message that it is difficult for you to “do marriage” without the power and the control of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Perhaps you are here today as a Christian who is married—you’ve been striving and arguing; there is loneliness and mistrust. You may need to confess to God that you have attempted to “do marriage” without following His blueprints.

Perhaps you are here today as a Christian who is single. The pressures from the world to hook up—to have the “one night stand” to answer a BC. You’ve been trying to live your life whether without the controlling influence of His Holy Spirit.

If you are here today as one who needs Christ in your life; perhaps you’ve been attending church but you’ve never had a personal relationship with God through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. You can learn all the principals of having a Christian marriage and go to hell as a good husband or wife. You need Jesus Christ. You need to have your sins forgiven.

If you sense the need to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior, pray in this way: *"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life, turn away from sin and trust You as my Savior. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.."*

If you trusted Christ please indicate your commitment by checking the “I’m committing my life to Christ” box on your Communicator Card. Someone will be contacting you about your new life in Christ.

Whatever commitment you have made today, please let me know by making use of our Communicator Card by filling it out and dropping it in the offering plate as it comes around. .