

Practically Spiritual Marriage Part One

The next couple weeks we are going to be looking at the marriage relationship. Now some of you may be thinking that this subject doesn't pertain to me because I'm not married...I'm too young to be thinking about marriage. But down the road you may find yourself in a relationship with marriage as the end result. Hopefully as we discuss what God's word says about marriage over the next two weeks it will help prepare you and help you to know what to look for in a future spouse to help you have a Christ focused marriage. And whatever stage of marriage you're in, whether you've been married for 1 yr. or 25 years we always need to be focused on our marriage relationship. Other than our decision to accept Jesus as our Lord and savior, our decision about who we marry and how we pour into marriage are the most important decisions you can make. And if your marriage is in a season of a mountain top or in a valley either way we need to focus on our relationship daily. The enemy loves to put strife in marriages because of the splintering affect it has spreading out into families, affecting kids, siblings and friendships. So let's go to our Lord in prayer together before we look at this important topic in our practically spiritual journey:

Pray

Let's go back to the beginning when the relationship between man & woman...husband and wife was first ordained---this is pre-fall. Before sin had entered the world and altered the marriage relationship....

Turn with me to Gen 2:15 -25 (read).

¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother

and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ *And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*

This scripture tells us that Adam joyfully proclaims the sense of oneness that exists between him & eve...between a husband and a wife when he proclaims *“this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh”*

Then the scripture tells us that the man and his wife were naked and not ashamed---this offers a picture of innocent delight between the husband and wife.

---then the “fall” happened...sin entered the world...the serpent tempted eve...she ate...then gave to her husband and he ate.

Now jump over to Gen 3:16 when God is explaining the ramifications of what they have done...the consequences of sin.

READ Gen 3:16 ¹⁶ *to the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”*

Before we go any further let’s define marriage.

Ok so what is Marriage?

Mariam Webster defines marriage as: *the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law*

Psychology Today: *Marriage is the process by which two people make their relationship public, official, and permanent. It is the joining of two people in a bond that putatively lasts until death, but in practice is increasingly cut short by divorce.*

Bakers Evangelical Dictionary: *An intimate and complementing union between a man and a woman in which the two become one physically, in the whole of life. The purpose of marriage is to reflect the relationship of the Godhead and to serve him.*

Quite a difference between the three: the scholarly dictionary says it's a contractual relationship, Psychology says it's the joining of two people in a bond that lasts till death...well it is supposed to but in practice it is increasingly cut short by divorce...and then the Evangelical dictionary: the purpose of marriage (a complementing union between a man and a woman, who become one) is to reflect the relationship of the Godhead and to serve him.

So according to the scholarly dictionary marriage is a contract or a binding agreement. But in the business world or society who

does a contract benefit? You don't sign a contract unless it benefits you...you're not worried about the other party...we only sign or enter into a contract if we think we are getting the benefit of the contract...we are self-focused...how does this contract affect me, help me, protect me? It's about ME! The dictionary tells us that marriage is a contract-but the biblical view of marriage it is to be a reflection of the Godhead...a covenantal relationship. Marriage is to be covenantal not contractual.

In business, we enter into contracts. If you sign up for a credit card, that's a contract. You buy a home or a car, that's a contract. The worst ones of all are Cell Phone plans...there contracts...they will let you out, but it will cost you. What works for business does not work for marriage. Marriage is not to be contractual.

Perhaps the most appalling example of contractual marriage is the prenuptial agreement, which is, "Let us make sure that we have organized our divorce before our wedding. Let's make sure that the terms of dissolution are absolutely agreed upon before we even have a union." Isn't that what a contract is? If this happens...then this is the result...if you don't hold up to your end of the contract...then this is what will happen.

The Bible, when it comes to marriage, does not present it in a way that is contractual, but covenantal. Hundreds of times, the Bible speaks of covenant. I have heard it said many times that it's not a stretch to say that the Bible is, in large part, all about covenants.

The simplest understanding of a covenant, it's an agreement between two people. Sometimes that can be between two human beings, or between a person (or a group of people) and God. Salvation is called the new covenant. God enters into a covenant with us, and God's covenant with us is that, "*I will be your God, and you will be my people, and I'll never leave you nor forsake you.*" That's covenantal language. Similarly, a husband is to look at his wife and say, "I will be your husband, and you will be my wife, and I will never leave you or forsake you."

Two examples of where the Bible explicitly speaks of marriage as a covenant are in Proverbs 2 and Malachi 2. Proverbs 2:17 "*who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God*" and in Malachi 2:14 "*Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant*". Scripture says marriage is a covenant

explicitly, and then infers it repeatedly throughout the course of the Bible.

The first thing we as husbands/men need to understand is that we are the head of the covenant. And before we get into headship, I want to look at covenant a bit more. To break it down in its simplest form, I would put it this way. Contract is about me negotiating terms that benefit me. It's selfish. Covenant is about me giving myself to you for your well-being. It's servanthood. Covenant is about your benefit, your spouse's benefit; contract is about my benefit.

When you hear people say things like, "Well, I think we should get a divorce, I want to start over, you know, God wants me to be happy," they're thinking contractually, not covenantally, because what they're saying is "me." "God wants me to be happy. God wants me to get what I want. God wants me to get what I need." Covenantal thinking says, "God wants me to become what you need, what my spouse needs. God wants me to love my spouse, to serve my spouse, to invest in my spouse as she needs." Covenant is about what is best for your spouse; contract is about what is best for me. It's the difference between selfishness and servanthood. We will talk more about how God wants husbands

& wives to love each other, serve each other and cherish each other next week.

But, in a covenantal marriage, a husband and a wife are in covenant with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, and they are to be in covenant with one another. And the Bible says that as Jesus loves and serves the church, so the man, the husband, as the covenant head, is to similarly, lovingly lead his wife, so that she flourishes and grows in the grace of God. So, number one, it's about covenant; and, number two, every covenant has a head, and the head is the one who is ultimately the leader, the one who is responsible for the oversight, the management, and the well-being of the covenant. So, in our new covenant relationship with God, through Christ, Jesus is our covenant head. He is the Head.

Let's look at Ephesians 5:22-33.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he

might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.[a] 28 In the same way husbands should love their 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 Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Guys/husbands we need to know that we will stand before God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the one who knows and sees all, and we’re going to give an account for ourselves, as men. And if we’re privileged to be husbands, we will also give an account for our wife. And if we’re given the blessing of children, we will also give an account for our children. They will give an account, as well, but we will give an account for everyone that is under our authority.

We are responsible, the head is responsible in the sight of God, it is our responsibility; in addition to their own responsibility, but it is our responsibility, as well, and that's what the Bible means when it uses the word "head," and it does so in many places.

Let's look back at Genesis 2&3

Did Eve receive the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good & evil directly from God or through Adam?

In Genesis 2 it would seem that Adam was alone" when he was given the command because in the next verses after the command God expresses the loneliness of the man, but in Genesis 3 when Eve was having a discourse with the serpent she uses the word We which is inclusive of her & Adam as having received the command,

Let's read Genesis 2:15-18

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat[a] of it you shall surely die 18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for[b] him."."

Skipping ahead to Genesis 3:1-3

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You[a] shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Here Eve replies to the Serpent by saying that God had commanded both Adam and her when she said "WE".

While we may not be able to say for certain that Eve was or was not directly commanded by God along with Adam, at the very least it certainly appears that her understanding is that the commandment applies to her. Based on the verses it looks to me that Eve was not present when God commanded Adam, so I believe that Adam informed Eve of the commandment. So he fulfilled the first part of his headship role by informing Eve but did not continue to fulfill his role first by allowing Eve to be deceived and then by partaking and finally by passing the Buck when he said *"the woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."* He blames both the woman and God. See guys this is what I was talking about when I said our wives

are responsible for their actions but we are also because as it says in Eph 5-23 *For the husband is the head of the wife.*

Guys this Headship is a big one. We have to get this right... whether it is Ephesians 5 or Colossians 3 or 1 Corinthians 11... we are commanded to lead.

This is something that we have to continuously be working on. Now no condemnation here, if you are not doing a good job of this or even trying, start now. Sometime today, pull your wife aside and repent to her and assure her that you are going to try harder. *With God's help; ask her to pray for you in this area.*

Remember the words from Gen 3:16 the consequences of the fall. there would be an ongoing struggle between husbands and wives for leadership in marriage. It says "*your desire shall be for your Husband and he shall rule over you*" this desire that is being talked about here is not physical. This desire is to lead... to be the head. This is a consequence of the fall it is a tendency of a wife to want to lead or be the head. Maybe not outwardly or even a conscious desire but it is a reality because God has said it is.

Look with me at Col 3:18-19...these two verses go hand in hand together...you need both to fully understand and apply correctly the other.

But before we do I want to point out that in Colossians 3 Paul emphasizes 7 times that his instructions to Christian Families are rooted “*in the Lord*” or in similar terms...stressing the importance of evaluating everything in the Light of Christ. So Col 3:18-19

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Paul instructs wives to submit to their husbands...he doesn't say obey-which was counter cultural in that day as well as today. See in a typical Roman household the wife would obey-not out of respect or love or honor but out of fear.

The hierarchy of the Grecian social system was divided into categories:

Athens – The Upper Class

Metics – The Middle Class:

Freedmen – The Lower Class

The Slaves

Women

...in Grecian civilization women were considered to be less than slaves.

In his book “The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians” William Barclay wrote about how

Under Jewish law a woman was a thing; she was the possession of her husband, just as much as his house, his flocks or his material goods. She had no legal rights. For instance, under Jewish law, a husband could divorce his wife for any reason, while a wife had no rights to initiate divorce. He goes on to talk about that in Greek society a respectable woman lived a life of entire seclusion. She never appeared on the streets alone, not even to go to market. ...Both under Jewish and under Greek laws and custom, all privileges belonged to the husband, and all the duties to the wife.

But this is not how it was to be. Men and women are joint heirs in Christ- In Galatians 3:28 we are told “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” We are all coheirs in Christ...one is not more important than the other and in Ephesians 5:21 “*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*”

Now these verses are where some get confused and think they contradict what Paul is saying in Col 3:18-19

I want to talk a little about a couple examples of this confusion that are very popular in today's culture.

1. ...the stretching of the Egalitarian philosophies...which is the doctrine that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities

1. The egalitarians are correct in the fact that all people are equal in value but they take this to mean "mutual submission" as no one is the head. But Paul tells us that "*submitting to one another*" means submitting to others in accordance to the authority and order established by God. We are to submit to our leaders, our bosses, our government. And in Eph 5:22

"Wives submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord".....
this doesn't mean out of fear like with the Greeks or Romans but out of Reverence for God's ordained order of the marriage.

2. We must not think of submission as "subjugation" which means bringing someone under domination or control

This is the other way that Paul's words have been misconstrued. The women's liberation *or feminist* movement use this to help in their case...they are correct that women should be treated as equals to men in value, but they use this to show Christian men are told to oppress or dominate/control their wives...because in Genesis 3:16 it says "*he shall rule over you*" but this was not

God's design-*he shall rule over you* here is not a good thing. This is the effect/ramification of the fall. God is saying man will have a sinful desire to rule over his spouse. Paul is very clear that husbands are to be the leader not the ruler...rulers- hard-handed, harsh rulers don't love. We are told to love our wives and they are commanded to submit.

Submission according to many scholars was a military term which simply means "to arrange under rank" The fact that they are different ranks doesn't mean one is better than the other. It only means they have different ranks.

John Phillips says in *Exploring Colossians & Philemon* "*That Paul wrote by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, not of himself. We must have order in the home as well as anywhere else in a stable society. We cannot have two heads of state in a nation or we invite civil war...we cannot have two commanders in chief running the country's armed forces. And we cannot have two heads of a family. God has ordained the man to be the head of his home. He is not the Boss, but he is the head. If he abdicates that headship he does so to the detriment of himself his wife, and his children. The bible does not open this up for discussion or debate. It is part of God's plan in creation. One made all the more necessary by the fall. The sensible man will*

listen to his wife, respect her views and consider her best interests when making decisions regarding the home. God holds him responsible, however, to exercise his headship and the woman is responsible to submit to it"

See wives are to submit to their husband's leadership as is fitting in the Lord...meaning...wives are not less important and are not to be ruled over.

A woman needs to be careful about whom she marries for she will need to willingly submit to her husband's leadership while demonstrating respectful behavior to him even when he does not lead as he should (1 Peter 3:1-2). *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct.* We will talk more about these verses next week.

Submission is an act of her will and not something coerced or forced. A wife's submission demonstrates her love and trust of God through her service to her husband. Her submission is first to God and then because of that she secondarily submits to her husband.

Submission, headship, leadership all fit together...as we would expect when it is a plan drawn up by the Lord...and we follow the plan.

1 Cor. 11:3 But *I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife[a] is her husband, [b] and the head of Christ is God.*

To understand this hierarchy all we have to do is look at the Trinity: the Son is equal to the Father and at the same time submissive to Him. Equality and submissiveness can coexist. Just like a wife is equal to her husband but at the same time is to be submissive to him. But wives being submissive is only half of the equation...Colossians 3:19 tells "*husbands to love your wives and do not be harsh with them*". Remember in the day when this was written a husband had all power and control over his wife. She had no rights whatsoever. So again...what Paul is saying was very counter cultural...

Just like today...society portrays men as either being harsh, dictator style rulers in marriage or the lazy, slow witted husband you see on all the sitcoms. Basically incompetent baboons... thinking back through all the sitcoms that portray men as poor leaders in the home the one that most comes to mind is "Tim the Toolman Taylor from Home Improvement" he was always

getting himself into mischief by trying to “add more power” to everything and trying to quote his philosophical neighbor Wilson. Tim’s wife would always set him straight. In one episode she even tells him “the problem is your brain doesn’t serve any function other than keeping your head from caving in”. then finally one episode...and I remember having a conversation with Annessa about how he is always wrong/causing the issues and finally he wasn’t the one, his wife was, but somehow they again made him out to be the buffoon...now I’m not saying that us guys don’t do our share of trying to add “more power” to stuff and totally make a mess of things but we need to be trying our best to lead our wife...

And this is where our **wife can help us lead by** using the skills that God has entrusted to and given her. There are many areas where a wife excels over her husband. Guys think about it... there are many areas where your wife is better at something than you are. For example...in my case...remembering things or scheduling things, Annessa’s ability far exceeds mine. I mean if my ability in this area was a container my memory would be compared to a wet paper sack and Annessa’s would in comparison be a bank vault. See I can hear a person’s name 10 times in a 2 minute conversation and forget it before the conversation is over. (Reminder’s, forget after phone calls). So

when it comes to remembering things, I depend on my wife...this is a simple example...there are many others...when it comes to a large purchase...maybe your wife is more calculated and does the research and is more prepared and guys maybe you would just go with the first option out there. You should listen to her... seek her counsel in areas where she is more equipped...but this is not an excuse to be passive or let her take the lead or carry the burden...that is our job...we are to carry the burden...we should take her wisdom and experience but guys we are to carry the burden not her...and if the wrong choice/decision is made... guys we are to take ownership of that...let's talk football for a minute...you know I have to mention football someplace...let's say it's fourth and goal from the one yard line and your down by 4 with 2 seconds left...a field goal is no good, you need a touchdown. You have the best running game in the league, you're playing your third string quarterback, everyone expects you to run the ball and the assistant coach says lets trick them and throw a pass...you fake the hand off roll out the quarterback and he throws a perfect pass to a wide open receiver and he drops it. You lose, everyone questions the decision...who takes the blame...THE HEAD COACH. Just like in marriage there is a head and an assistant, the head shoulders the responsibility. But if the play would have been a success who gets the credit-

the head coach should give credit to the assistant coach-just like the husband should give the credit to his wife.

My point is guys you are the head but don't discredit your wife's knowledge and abilities, remember you are a team-"a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh".

Remember 1 Cor 11:3 *"but I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband and the head of Christ is God"*.

And so even in the covenant of marriage, Jesus Christ is the capital-H Head. The Head of your marriage is Jesus, and the lowercase-h head is the husband, and the husband is to be part of the church, and learning about Jesus, and seeing how Jesus loves and serves and sanctifies the church, because guys if we are not studying and pursuing the Lord, how can we lead in a manner worthy of Him? See we are supposed to take Jesus' example, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, be something like Jesus to our wife, so that she's cherished, and she's nurtured, and she's loved, and she's pursued, and she's forgiven, so that she grows in godliness and grace and gloriousness, (again we will talk more about this next week).

The essence of masculinity is the taking of responsibility. It doesn't matter how much you can lift, or how much meat you can eat, or how loud you can belch. That does not make you a man. A monkey can do that. A gorilla can do it even better. We live in a day where masculinity is defined by some sort of ridiculous machismo. Ultimately, masculinity is about taking responsibility. You may not be big. You may not be tough. You may not be able to win a thumb-wrestling match, let alone a cage fight. But if you take responsibility, and are trying to follow Jesus' example, you are being a good head.

A husband who is being a good head loves his wife, and they love their children, they take responsibility, and as a result, people under their leadership are blessed, flourish, and see Jesus Christ in them. Those are men. Those husbands are being leaders, heads of their marriage.

And this is what Jesus did for us. This is the good news. This is amazing! God comes to earth and becomes a man, and he lives a life without any sin! And he goes to the cross, and he dies! Why? Why did he die? The Bible says it over, and over: "for our sins." See, the wage for sin is death. We all should die. Instead, it's Jesus who suffers death.

What does this mean? Jesus took that which was not his fault, and he made it his responsibility. That's why Jesus—, he's the perfect man. Is it my fault that I sin, or is it Jesus' fault that I sin? It's my fault. I can't look at Jesus and say, "Well, look what you made me do." Jesus goes to the cross, and he substitutes himself in my place for my sins. And what he's doing, he's taking responsibility for me. It's my fault, but his responsibility. That's what Jesus does for the church, and that's what husbands are supposed to do for their wives. Not in a saving way, only Jesus can do that, but in a serving way. We are to serve our wives as Jesus served us, the church.

Let's go back to Genesis again. After Eve eats and Adam eats and God questions Adam, what should his response have been? "Lord it is my fault, I allowed my wife to be deceived and I ate also" This would have been being the head. This would have been Adam "loving" his wife.

God designed marriage between one man and one woman to become one flesh, to be in a covenant relationship with each other and the two of them with Him. We need to embrace our God-given roles as husbands and wives. We need to do life in covenant with each other. Asking, “How can I benefit my spouse in this relationship?” And more importantly, “How can we both—as one, serve our Lord together”? Guys/Husbands God wants us to seize our role as the head of our wife and ladies/wives God wants you to willingly submit to your husbands. Spouses are to cleave to or cling to one another to remain physically and emotionally close, to hold tight, serving one another selflessly. Joyfully proclaiming the sense of oneness that exists between us and our spouse in our intimate and complementing union growing in our ability to reflect the essence of God.

