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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today, some people are asking the question “What is marriage?” For thousands of years marriage has been defined as the union of one man to one woman. But we are living in a time when many people are trying to redefine marriage as the union between two people: female to female or male to male. God’s original plan for marriage is found in the words of Jesus when He said, Mark 10, “From the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife. What God has joined together, let no person tear apart.” (Mark 10:6-9)

The same-sex-marriage proponents think we are intellectual morons for believing an old book like the Bible should be our basis for defining marriage. They are radically committed to changing God’s definition of marriage. Frankly, they are more organized, committed and vocal than most of us who claim to believe the Bible. We need to be the army of light and the army of love and let our voices be heard.

But defining marriage is not the point of this message. It’s a lot easier to define marriage than it is to be married! Recently, some children were asked to share their thoughts about marriage. Here are some of their answers:

How do you decide who to marry?

“You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming.” Alan, age 10

“No person really decides before they grow up who they’re going to marry. God decides it all the way, and you get to find out later who you’re stuck with.” Kirsten, age 10

What is the right age to marry?

“Twenty three is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then.”
Camille, age 10

How can a stranger tell if two people are married?

“You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids.”
Derrick, age 8

How would you make a marriage work?

“Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a truck.” Ricky, age 10

Have you ever heard the expression, “a marriage made in heaven?” Every marriage that follows God plan for marriage is a marriage made in heaven. When Jesus spoke about a husband and wife He said, “What GOD has joined together...” In the past 34 years of ministry, I have performed hundreds of marriage ceremonies, but I’ve always been aware it was God who really joined the man and woman together, not me.

If some of you were really honest, you’d have to say, “Pastor, my marriage doesn’t seem very heavenly right now—in fact, it’s more like that other place. It’s hell.” Just because your marriage

was made in heaven, it doesn't mean that it will always BE heavenly! Marriage is made in heaven but maintained on earth. Here's what God's Word says about maintaining a healthy marriage in I Peter 3:1-7:

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hopes in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Some people say you have to be crazy to be married. A sign in a courthouse in Kansas says, “Marriage License Bureau.” Underneath it are the words, “Mental Health Department.” You are crazy if you think you can get married and automatically you'll have a wonderful marriage. The key to having a healthy marriage is to continue to learn how to be a better wife or husband. There ought to be a statement on every marriage license that says: A marriage license is just a learner's permit.

In some ways, marriage is like a car. It'll get you where you want to go, but you've got to put something into it. If you got a new car and never changed the oil, or got a tune up, that new car is going to malfunction. I've never understood why a couple will spend so much energy, time and money on a wedding, but then they think the marriage will automatically be great. Marriage is a high maintenance relationship. Marriage is made in heaven, but it must be *maintained* on earth. Here's how. Ladies, first, please.

I. GOD'S DIRECTIONS FOR WONDERFUL WIVES

You may wonder why Peter gives six verses to the wives and one verse for the husbands. Simple: He WAS a husband! We know for sure there was a Mrs. Simon Peter because he had a mother-in-law. In Mark 1:30 Peter's mother-in-law was sick with a fever and Jesus healed her. Someone said, “That's why Peter later denied the Lord three times!” Seriously, this isn't Simon Peter giving directions; this is the Holy Spirit communicating through him.

1. Support him with your submission

Verse 1 says, “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands.” The words “in the same way” are there because he had already written about submission. Back in 2:13 we're directed to submit to those in our government. Then in 2:18, he wrote that servants are to submit to their bosses.

Most of you who are Christians wives *know* the Bible directs you to submit to your husbands. But unless you understand what the concept of submission really is, you’ll be frustrated, angry, or fearful.

There are two negative extremes wives often take. First, some are so repulsed by the idea of submitting they rebel and become the opposite—a loud, boisterous, criticizing woman. They refuse to recognize the headship of their husbands and they are constantly complaining and nagging. Solomon was an expert on wives; he had 1,000 of them. In Proverbs 21:9 he wrote: “Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a contentious wife.”

The other extreme mistake is to think submission means you are a slave, a doormat, and that you must always do exactly what your husband says without question. As a result some women become a mousy, timid wife who bows and walks 15 steps behind their husbands.

The word “submit” is one of the most misunderstood words in the Bible. It sounds like such a scary word. Some words sound nice like “freedom” or “liberated.” You can say them with a rising tone. But “submit?” It sounds like something that strangles and smothers you! It’s no wonder the word “submit” makes some wives angry and others afraid. That’s why verse 6 says, “don’t give in to fear.”

Our English word “submit” does sound negative. But in the original language in which these words were written, it’s the word *hupotasso*—that even sounds better! “Submit”- grumble, grumble. “*Hupotasso!*” You can say it with a positive tone.

Hupotasso is a combination of two words. “*hupo*” means “under” or “beside.” But it carries more meaning than just location; it also involves the purpose of improving something. It means to be under or beside to strengthen or support. We get our English word “hyper” from it.

“*Tasso*” is a word meaning “to arrange in a proper manner.” So the word “submit” really means: “to come under/beside someone to lift them up.” Wives, when you submit to your husband it means you are coming under or beside him to give him support and strength. It doesn’t mean you sublimate yourself as if you’re inferior. It doesn’t mean you’re the doormat and he’s the dirty boot.

That’s what submission means, now let me show you how it works out practically in a marriage. When Cindy and I are facing an important decision, we always pray about it and discuss it together. If we don’t agree on the decision, we’ll pray about it and discuss it some more. 95 percent of the time, we both agree on the choice to make. In our discussion, I may have convinced her my direction is better, or she may have shown me her idea is better and many times it is. But on those rare occasions where we just can’t agree, and a decision has to be made, she *huppotassos*. She comes underneath me and my idea and she lifts me up. There have been times when she *huppotassoed* me and I was wrong. She still supported me, and then she resisted the temptation to say, “I told you so.”

Ladies, that's what it means to submit. It's not a position you take, it's a disposition. Whenever you encourage your husband, you're lifting him up—*hupotasso*! Whenever you pray for him, you're lifting him up to God—*hupotasso*. Don't be afraid of submission.

2. Dazzle him with your inner beauty

In verse 3 we read, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment...it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." Peter wrote those words because some wives in Rome had become Christians and their husbands weren't saved. The Bible teaches that if we are a Christian before we marry, we should marry a Christian. We are not to be "unequally yoked together." But if you are a believer and your husband isn't, you shouldn't leave him. Instead, it becomes your responsibility to introduce him to Jesus. But the best way to do that is not with words, but with your behavior.

The reason you must show your faith to your husband isn't because you can't express it verbally. It's probably because husbands don't listen very well—but they do watch. Women are verbal creatures. They love to talk! Guys tend to be less verbal. A husband was sitting at the breakfast table reading the paper and he said to his wife. "This article states that women use twice as many words as men every day." Her wife said, "That's because we have to repeat everything twice to men." Her husband said, "I'm sorry, what was that?"

The best way to show your husband Jesus is by being beautiful. The Bible teaches there are two different kinds of beauty. There is outward, physical beauty, and our culture is obsessed with that kind of beauty. The world is filled with women who are gorgeous on the outside, but once you look below the surface, there is nothing pretty there. Beauty really IS only skin deep. The thing that makes a woman truly beautiful is the purity and kindness that comes from within. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:22, "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion." Discretion is the opposite of being what our culture calls a wild woman.

There is another kind of beauty the Bible calls inner beauty, and it is the kind of beauty God values. There is a powerful beauty secret found in the Old Testament. "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7)

Verse 3 says inner beauty doesn't come from make-up, hairstyle, jewelry or clothes. Notice the Bible doesn't forbid those outer enhancements; it just says true inner beauty isn't dependent on them. Just as there are things you can do to improve your outer beauty, there are some things you can do to enhance your inner beauty. Peter writes that inner beauty is a matter of your spirit. In verse four he uses three words to describe this kind of beauty: "the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit."

Inner beauty is gentle. The word means "meek." Meekness is not weakness; it's strength under control. Jesus used this word to describe himself in Matthew 11:29 when he said "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me because I am gentle and lowly in heart." Ladies, you can only learn meekness from Jesus. The second word Peter uses is quiet. That word has nothing to do with how many words you say, or even how loudly you speak them. It's a word meaning "tranquility

that arises from within.” It’s a word used to describe calm water. It means the ability to be calm under fire.

The third word about inner beauty is unfading—it doesn’t go away with age. Someone once said, “Time is a great healer, but a lousy beautician.” Women who only focus on outer beauty despair as the years roll on. But women who possess inner beauty only become more beautiful with the years.

II. GOD’S DIRECTIONS FOR HEAVENLY HUSBANDS

In this one verse the Bible gives us three ways we can be better husbands.

1. Never demand submission

Notice verse 7 begins with the words, “in the same way.” Those are the first four words directed to wives in verse 1. What way? Remember, the context is speaking about submission. Before you start demanding your wife “submit or else,” perhaps you should understand that submission is not just for wives. The Bible teaches a principle called mutual submission. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)

Cindy and I love to visit the Gulf Coast. At Sandestin there is a walking path that shares part of a golf cart trail. Part of it runs underneath Highway 98, so there is a tunnel golf carts, bikers, and walkers share. On one end of the tunnel there is a sign that says, “Yield to Oncoming Traffic.” At the other end is another sign that says: “Yield to Oncoming Traffic.” What that means is neither direction has the right of way, so if someone is already traveling through the tunnel, you yield to them. To me, that’s a great example for us—if we would practice mutual submission there wouldn’t be as many head-on collisions!

As I said earlier, Cindy and I are in agreement 95 percent of the time. And there were times in our marriage when Cindy agreed to go along with my decision even though her decision turned out to be the right one. So, I’ve learned I should listen to her and there are times when I yield to her side of an issue. And there are times when she will yield to my side of an issue, but I never point my finger and say to her, “You’d better submit to me on this.”

A few weeks ago I received an email from a woman in our congregation. I’m not going to reveal her name, and she gave me permission to use a portion of her note. She believes, and I agree, that her feelings may be shared by other wives. As I read her words, some of you husbands may be wondering, “Is that my wife?” If you even suspect your wife could write these words, it reveals you need to apply God’s Word to your role as a husband. She wrote:

Dear Pastor David,

You may be surprised to read that I am full of anxiety regarding your upcoming message on I Peter 3 regarding a wife’s submission to her husband. My reason is that my husband uses that verse like a sledgehammer to break my spirit.”... “As far as I can tell, his version

of submission is merely him ordering how I should live my life, not the loving submitting to one another spoken of in Ephesians 5.

To me, submission in marriage is not cracking the whip or forcing someone. In a marriage, submission cannot be demanded—it should be freely offered. I’ve always believed that if a husband truly loves his wife as Christ loves the Church, then kindness, compassion and respect will prevail on both sides. Submission would then be a beautiful thing—easily and willingly offered.

To me, that’s a woman who understands submission who is married to a man who doesn’t.

2. Consider her needs before yours

Husbands, focus on those words in verse 7: “Be considerate as you live with your wives and treat them with respect as the weaker partner.” The word considerate means to think about her before you think about yourself. The essence of love is unselfishness. You are to love your wife the way Christ loves the church and He said, “Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) Husbands, do you love your wife? Are you laying down your life for her and for your children?

Guys, your wife has some special needs only you can meet as her husband. You need to know what these needs are and you need to work on meeting them. Let me give you four:

(1) Every wife needs to be CHERISHED

You must let her know how valuable she is to you. You can do that in many ways. One of the best ways is to send her flowers or a card. Guys, you don’t get any points for cards or flowers for anniversaries, birthdays, and Valentine’s Day, but you do *lose* points if you don’t give them. But wives really expect them on those occasions. But you can really score points by sending her a note or flowers when there’s no special occasion. There are other ways to cherish her. Tell her, or say, “Honey I wrote a poem for you: Cherish is the word I use to describe / All the feelings that I have hiding here for you inside...” You get the point.

(2) Every wife needs to be UNDERSTOOD

You may be wondering why I didn’t tell the wives what your needs are—they know. You need sex, food, and to hold the remote control. But woman are a lot more complicated than men. I saw a picture the other day that had one switch for a man, and dozens of dials and switches for a woman. Guys, you’ll never totally understand your wife, but she needs to know you are trying to understand her. The best way to do that is to listen to her when she has a problem. She doesn’t want a solution; she wants you to try to understand how she feels. Guys, here are three words that will improve your marriage. When your wife is talking to you about a problem, look her in the eyes and say, “Tell me more.”

(3) Every wife needs to be RESPECTED

Aretha Franklin was right, "R-E-S-P-E-C-T Find out what it means to me." That's true. We don't fully understand how much it means to our wives. So, treat her like a lady. Open the door for her. You can show her you respect her by asking her opinion about decisions you are facing.

(4) Every wife needs to be EMBRACED

Husbands, don't every lay a hand on your wife except to show her affection. A wife and husband who had been married for 40 years were talking to marriage counselor because they always fought and fussed. For 20 minutes, the counselor didn't say a word as the two of them argued back and forth. Finally the counselor stood up and walked around his desk. He pulled the wife up off the couch and took her in his arms. He planted a real Hollywood kiss on her lips. When he finished he said to the husband, "Pops, that's what she needs three times a week." The old man said, "Fine, I'll bring her in on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays!" You wife does need affection—from you. Every wife needs at least *five* hugs a day, and you need to ask yourself, "is my wife suffering from hug deficit?"

Guys, look at those four needs: Cherished, Understood, Respect and Embraced. Together, they spell CURE. If your marriage is sick, that's how you can work on a cure!

3. BE HER SPIRITUAL HERO

Look at verse 7. Your wife is an heir with you, "of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing may hinder your prayers." I used to think that was speaking about *my* prayers only. In other words, if I wasn't the kind of husband I ought to be that *my* personal prayers would be hindered. But the word is plural. It's not just talking about the prayers of a husband; it's talking about a husband and wife praying together.

Husbands, you are the head of your wife, but that means God has ordained you to be the spiritual leader of your family. Here's why you are the head: "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...Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy..." (Ephesians 5:24-25)

Here's the question for you to answer to see if you are the being the spiritual leader of your family: Am I making my wife more holy? One of the best ways to do that is to pray with her. Husbands, your job is to make sure your family is in Bible Study and worship every Sunday, but it's not what you do on Sunday that really shows what kind of spiritual leader you are. It's what you do the six other days of the week.

Men, one reason you may not be the spiritual leader of your family is because you don't have a personal relationship with God. You may be religious, but you've never totally surrendered your life to Jesus. Real men love Jesus. And the first thing you may need to do to be a better husband is to admit you are a sinner and ask Jesus to forgive your sins and to make you His child.

CONCLUSION

Wives will you do your part to improve your marriage? Husbands, will you do your part to improve your marriage? Marriage is *not* a 50/50 proposition—it requires 100 percent from BOTH partners.

In her book *Love is So Much More, Lord*, Ruth Harms Calkin wrote a poem entitled “Marriage.” It says: “Marriage! It’s rough! It’s tough! It’s work. Anybody who says it isn’t Has never been married. Marriage has far bigger problems Than toothpaste squeezed From the middle of the tube. Marriage means...Putting up with personality weaknesses; And giving each other the freedom to fail. It means turning self-pity into laughter; and taking a walk to gain control. Marriage means...Learning when to say nothing; when to keep talking; when to push a little When to back off. It means acknowledging, “I can’t be God to you—I need Him, too.” Marriage means...You are the other part of me; I am the other part of you. We’ll work through With never a thought of walking out. Marriage means...two imperfect mates Building permanently Giving totally In partnership with a perfect God. Marriage, my love, means us!”

OUTLINE

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1. Support him with your submission

Submit: “To come under someone to lift them up”

2. Dazzle him with your inner beauty

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