

MARRIAGE

PART 2

Don Krow

Today we're going to look again at the subject of marriage, and the question is, "What is marriage?" Have you ever thought about that? According to the Bible it was God's idea to design marriage. Marriage is a joining together, a oneness, a uniting. Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife [they will be joined, and he will cleave to his wife] and they shall become one flesh" (NIV). Did you know that marriage is more than a joining, more than oneness. For example, 1 Corinthians 6:15-6 says if I go out, being a Christian, and join myself to a prostitute, I become one flesh with her. Then consider the quotation from Genesis 2:24 about marriage. Joining myself to a prostitute would not automatically make me divorced from my wife or make me married to the prostitute because I had intercourse with her. So what is marriage? If marriage is a oneness, if it's a joining together, if it's becoming one flesh, what is the difference in that and going to a prostitute, because if you went to a prostitute you obviously would become one flesh with her.

The Bible does say that marriage is a oneness, a joining together, a uniting together, but it's more than that. It is uniting together by a covenant. The word "covenant" in Hebrew is "berith," and it has the idea of binding together. It's a final commitment of an individual, even a commitment till death do you part. Now, if I went into a prostitute, if I did such an evil sin as that, there would be commitment on my part to her. The essence of marriage is first of all forsaking all others. The Bible says you shall leave your father and mother, and you shall cleave to your wife. Ezekiel says "you became mine." It's forsaking all others for this one—to commit yourself to this one. Obviously if you, in an immoral way, go to another person when you are married, that would violate the principle of marriage, the oneness, and unity that comes through a covenant or commitment. Ezekiel 16:8 calls it a covenant of marriage. In Ephesians 5 we learn that in marriage the husband is to love his wife, even as Christ loved the church, so it's a covenant of love. The reason it's a covenant of love is because love is the ruling principle in marriage. Above all things, love must be the ruling principle of marriage.

Marriage is a covenant of oneness. It says in 1 Peter 3:7 that if I don't honor and appreciate my wife as being the weaker vessel and realize that we are heirs together of the grace of life, our prayers will be hindered. Think about that—our spiritual lives could be hindered if we do not walk in the unity and harmony that God has designed for the marriage relationship. Proverbs 2:16-17 talks about a wayward woman who forsakes her marriage covenant, the guide of her youth, and that marriage relationship is called a covenant of her God. This is a very serious thing—it's a covenant we make to an individual, but it's also a covenant that we make before God. As much as I love to minister to people, God has a priority, and that is to focus on our marriage. Marriage really is a focusing of your life onto another individual, and as I said, the ruling principle is love.

Matthew 7:12 says whatever you would want someone to do to you, do to them, for this is the law of the prophets. This is exactly the principle that should rule in marriage. It's not a selfish thing, not for self, not about what can this person give you. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13:4 that love is kind, it's seeking the welfare of another—to be generous and kind, and always seek the best for that other individual. The reason marriage is designed that way is because it is an example, a model of what a real relationship with

God should be. He has given us illustrations in the natural. He has shown us how to have a good marriage, a great marriage, because he wants us to have a model of what a real eternal relationship is to be with Him. Marriage is only until death do us part, a temporary thing. The Bible says in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage. God wants us to understand having a good marriage—the principles of love—the principles of giving unselfishly to another. He is saying, “What I want you to really understand is that I’ve called you into a marriage relationship with me—not a temporary relationship, not one that will just last a few years and then be gone, but an eternal relationship where all of My love will be manifested to you forever and ever.”

Let me give you a few principles of marriage. Marriage is a merger, not just a partnership. The Bible talks about it in Genesis 4 as a knowing, and in 1 Peter 3:7 as being heirs together of the grace of life. Marriage is a covenant, which means it is binding; there’s a commitment involved. Sin did not enter the first church, it entered the first marriage, so we need to get the manual, get the instructions about marriage, and implement the principles of love in our lives. We also ask, “What is love?” The definition of love is really in a sense, unselfishness. Isaiah 53:6 says we are like sheep; that we went astray and turned every one to his own way, but in marriage we focus on the other individual and seek their welfare and benefit.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians that loving your wife is like loving your own body. We husbands are to cherish and honor the wife God has given to us, which means to appreciate her. To love your own body doesn’t mean you sit around and hold hands with yourself, pat yourself, and say, “Oh, I love you.” It’s not that at all. To love yourself is to protect yourself; feed yourself, and look out for yourself. We should never take our wives for granted, never take one of her weaknesses and expose it publicly, never make fun of her, or do things that hurt her. We’re to love her as we love our ourselves.

I would like you to lift yourself up to God in prayer, and first of all, thank Him for loving you. The second thing I want you to do is thank Him for your partner, the mate He gave you. That’s part of the problem. You haven’t appreciated your mate; you put her down, and the Bible says that basically is selfish and is sin. It says in Ephesians 5 that Jesus cleansed the church by the washing of water by the Word, by his Words He spoke over the church. When you speak words over your mate, they will rise to the level of the words you speak. If you say, “You’re no good, you’re ugly, you’re overweight” you will suppress your marriage and cause not oneness but separation and alienation. But if you speak words of kindness like, “Honey I appreciate the things you do, I appreciate you, I love you,” and back them up with your actions, your mate will rise up to the level of those words.

Can’t you see today that a lot of the problems in your marriage relationship are the words you’ve spoken? You have brought your mate down rather than up. I encourage you to speak good words over your mate today. Love is not a feeling; love is speaking the welfare and benefit of another person regardless of how you feel. Begin today with acts of kindness, just like painting several layers of a lacquer on a piece of wood. That’s how love is built, by little acts of kindness. Start to esteem, honor, value, and speak words of love over your mate, and you’ll see a difference. God bless you as you implement these principles.

MARRIAGE

PART 2

(Outline)

Genesis 2:24, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

1 Corinthians 6:15-16 says, “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. ¹⁶What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.” Marriage is more than a joining, it is a uniting together by covenant. Covenant is a binding, a final commitment, forsaking all others for one. United as One.

Ezekiel 16:8 says, “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” We see the covenant of marriage.

Ephesians 5:21-31 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. ²²Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” Marriage is a covenant of love. Love is the ruling principle of marriage.

1 Peter 3:7 says, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” Marriage is a covenant of oneness.

Proverbs 2:16-17 says, “To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; ¹⁷Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.” Beware of the wayward woman. Your covenant with God is broken if you lie with another woman. A covenant is between a man, woman, and their God.

Matthew 7:12 says, “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” The priority of marriage is focusing on one another to the exclusion of others.

1 Corinthians 13:4 says, “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” Loving is the ruling force in marriage by seeking the welfare of the other person.

Marriage is a small scale model of our eternal relationship with God.

1 Peter 3:7 says, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” Marriage is a merger. Sin entered the first marriage, not the first church.

Isaiah 53:6 says, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Marital love seeks to benefit the other.

Ephesians 5:21-31 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. ²²Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” Cherish, love, appreciate, protect, feed, look out for, and never take advantage of your spouse.

Summary

- Thank God for loving you.
- Thank God for your mate.
- Your mate will rise to the level of the words you use; speak good words over your mate.
- Love is seeking the welfare of the other.
- By little acts of kindness you layer love on your spouse, like layers of lacquer on wood.

MARRIAGE
PART 2
(Teacher's Guide)

1. In Genesis 2:24, what does the word “cleave” mean?

To glue to, stick to, to adhere to.

2. In your relationship with your mate, ask these questions:
“Are the things I am doing drawing us closer or driving us apart?”
“By what I do and say, does it build up our relationship or tear it down?”
“Do I express love and loyalty to my partner?”

3. According to 1 John 4:19, why do we love God?

Because He first loved us.

4. When God calls us to Himself, how is this picture expressed in Ezekiel 16:8?

We become God's own possession, “thou becamest mine.”

5. What is the Hebrew meaning of a covenant?

The Hebrew word for covenant is “BERIYTH” (ber-eeth) and is the most binding contract possible. It involves two becoming one. The closest concept is blood brothers, becoming one under a covenant or vow.

6. In the New Covenant, what happens between us and God? (Hebrews 8:10)

He becomes our God and we become His people.

MARRIAGE

PART 2

(Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being discipled. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ Marriage in scripture means a joining, a oneness, a uniting, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). “The two shall become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). “The man shall cleave to his wife and they twain shall become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). What does the word “cleave” mean? In Hebrew it means “to stick to; to adhere to.” It also means “to pursue.”

² The command was given to man to pursue, cleave and stick to the woman like glue. Why? Because man is the lover in this relationship and woman is the responder. The woman will respond to the way the man loves her. Submission is not blind obedience. Submission is won through the love of the man, just as Jesus became the head of the church and gave Himself for the church, and won the right to have our submission.

If I love my wife, I'll give her tokens of my affection and love. They may be gifts or flowers, or ways of meeting her needs by giving her spending money, providing for her, giving her the security of a home, or expressions of affection that are not necessarily of a sexual nature. Women just need affection. When I do that for my wife, she doesn't get upset with me and say, “I want a divorce.” You know why? My wife doesn't want a divorce when I provide for her, give her security and affection, verbally express my love for her and do other things. She wants to respond in kind to those acts of love. God made her as a woman to be a responder. God says that this kind of relationship, where one responds to acts of love is just a model of His real, eternal relationship with us as responders!

¹ In Genesis 2:24, what does the word “cleave” mean?

² In your relationship with your mate, ask these questions: Are the things I am doing drawing us closer or driving us apart? By what I do and say, does it build our relationship or tear it down? Do I express love and loyalty to my partner?

³ Do you know what I think eternity will be? Eternity will be an endless unfolding of divine love. I believe that the relationship I have right now with the Lord is truly an engagement relationship. In the New Testament, when Mary and Joseph were espoused, it meant that in the eyes of the law they were married, even though it was not consummated. The engagement period was called marriage, and it took a divorce even to break an engagement. Paul said to the church, “I want to present you as a pure virgin unto Christ, wholly and exclusively unto Him” (2 Corinthians 11:2). This marriage relationship is going to be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I believe that all throughout eternity there’s going to be an unfolding of love. God designed a small, physical model on earth, with the man as the lover and the woman as the responder. And just as she’ll respond back with love if she’s given love, God has said, “I want you to know that you loved Me because I first loved you” (1 John 4:19). The Bible doesn’t say that we just started loving God on our own. The Bible says that we love Him because He first loved us. In Ezekiel 16:8 God says, “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” He gave us a picture of marriage in this verse, but He likened it to bringing us into a relationship with Himself.

So this is the first principle in marriage: anywhere in scripture that it talks about marriage, it’s talking about joining together as one.

⁴ Marriage is more than just a joining together, because this joining together involves a covenant. Sexual intercourse is not marriage. Sexual intercourse is a consummation of marriage, and marriage is a joining together and becoming one in the fullest possible way—it’s only done in covenant. The Hebrew word for this covenant is “BERIYTH” (ber-eeth) and it’s the most binding contract that is possible. It’s even used with the shedding of blood or cutting an animal into pieces. It involves blood. It involves the two becoming one. The closest concept we have is two becoming blood brothers, and marriage is it. It’s becoming one under a covenant and a vow. It’s the vow and the covenant that keep me moving in the area of love toward my wife.

³ (a) According to 1 John 4:19, why do we love God?

(b) When God calls us to Himself, how is this picture expressed in Ezekiel 16:8? We become God’s own possession, “thou becamest mine.”

⁴ (a) What is the Hebrew meaning of a covenant?

(b) In the New Covenant what happens between us and God? (Hebrews 8:10) He becomes our God and we become His people.

MARRIAGE
PARTS 1 AND 2
(Discipleship Questions)

Read Genesis 2:18

1. Did the Lord God think that it was good for man to be alone?
2. What did He decide to do for Adam?

Read Genesis 2:21-24

3. How did the Lord create Woman?
4. Why is she called Woman?
5. Whom shall a man leave when he marries his wife?
6. What happens to the two of them once they are joined?
7. Are they joined and made one by a marriage certificate or by God? (Circle one)

Read Psalm 128:1-4

8. What are you if you fear the Lord?
9. If you fear the Lord, what will you do according to verse 1?
10. What two things “shall” you be when you eat the labor of your hands?
A. _____ B. _____
11. Describe what your wife will be like.
12. What will your children be like?

Read Proverbs 12:4

13. What is an excellent wife like to her husband?
14. What is a wife who causes shame?

Read Proverbs 18:22

15. What do you have if you find a wife?
16. What do you obtain from the Lord?

Read Proverbs 19:14

17. What two things are an inheritance from your father?
A. _____ B. _____
18. What do you receive from your Heavenly Father?

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

19. How is the wife to be toward her own husband?
20. What is the husband to the wife?
21. What is Christ to the church?
22. If the church is subject to Christ, how is the wife to be toward her husband?
23. How is the husband to love his wife?
24. How much do you think Christ loves the church?
25. By what are we sanctified, cleansed, and washed?
26. What was the purpose of cleansing us?
27. In verse 28, how are husbands to love their own wives?
28. Is this a selfless act or a selfish act? (Circle one) refer to verse 29
29. Verse 33 recaps the marriage passage. How is the husband to love his wife?
30. How is a wife to treat her husband?

Read Colossians 3:18-19

31. How are wives to be toward their husbands?
32. How are husbands to be toward their wives?

Read 1 Peter 3:1-9

33. How are wives to win their husbands to the Lord?
34. What is the wife's instruction regarding outward adornments?
35. What things are considered "very precious in the sight of the Lord" in regards to a woman's beauty?

- 36. How did the holy women who trusted in God adorn themselves?
- 37. How are husbands to dwell with their wives?
- 38. If we are dwelling in unity with one another, what will the result of our prayers be?

Read Proverbs 31:10-31

- 39. Whether you are a wife, or you are looking for one, this Proverb gives sound advice and wise instruction to both man and woman. As you read this passage, mark in our Bible those virtues that a wife is to have.
- 40. If you are a wife, ask the Lord to lead you and guide you in conforming the patterns of your life around this passage.

Read Psalm 112

- 41. Whether you are a husband, or looking for one, this passage gives a road map of how a man should conduct himself within his family and the world.
- 42. If you are a husband, ask the Lord to lead you and guide you in conforming your life around His Word, and to show you how to walk in the fear of the Lord.

MARRIAGE
PARTS 1 AND 2
DISCIPLESHIP ANSWER KEY

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. No | 21. The head |
| 2. Make him a helper | 22. Subject to him |
| 3. From the rib of Adam | 23. Just as Christ loved the church |
| 4. Because she was taken from man | 24. Beyond measure |
| 5. His father and mother | 25. By the Word |
| 6. They become one flesh | 26. To present us to Himself a glorious church
without spot or wrinkle, holy without blemish |
| 7. God | 27. As their own bodies |
| 8. Blessed | 28. Selfless |
| 9. Walk in His ways | 29. As himself |
| 10. A. Happy
B. Well | 30. With respect |
| 11. Fruitful vine | 31. Submissive as is fitting in the Lord |
| 12. Olive plants | 32. Love them and not be bitter towards them |
| 13. A crown | 33. With their conduct |
| 14. Rottenness in his bones | 34. Let your life be more than just outward
adornments, let your heart shine forth |
| 15. A good thing | 35. A gentle quiet spirit |
| 16. Favor | 36. By being submissive to their husbands |
| 17. A. Houses
B. Riches | 37. With understanding, giving them honor |
| 18. A prudent wife | 38. They won't be hindered |
| 19. Submissive | |
| 20. The head | |

MARRIAGE PART 2 CHANGED NAMES (Additional Information)

Did you know that in a true marriage relationship the names are changed? My wife, Wendy, used to be Wendy Sellon and now she is Wendy Krow. She used to have her own bank account and now she has mine. I go to work and when I get my paycheck, I don't know where it goes because it goes into her hands. God has said that the women are to guide the house. Wendy's ability to function in guiding the house, buying the groceries, driving the car and putting gas in it, really comes through my ability. She's doing what God has called her to do through my resources and strength when she signs my name on those checks because we're no longer two, we're one.

We're no longer separate entities going separate ways but we are one, and the expression of our oneness is found in our children. Our son has some of me in him, but he also has some of her. He looks like me, and he looks like her. He has my qualities in him, but he also has her qualities. We've born fruit from our union of oneness.

What does the Bible say in Romans 7:4? It says that we're dead to the law. We're married to a new husband, Jesus Christ Himself, and that we should bear fruit unto God. There's going to be an expression of bearing fruit unto God. There's going to be an expression of Christ on this earth. But it's not me alone, and it's not Jesus Christ by Himself in spirit form walking upon the earth. He uses me as a vessel and we're in union together. The Bible says we are co-laborers together with Him (1 Corinthians 3:9). We're bearing fruit unto God and it's an expression of something that's sweet and something that's pleasing in the Father's eyes. I'm married to another so I should bring forth fruit unto God. Under the law I had no ability to bring forth fruit. I was impotent, so to speak, under the law because my strength was limited by my own ability to do things.

Do you know what the real root of sin is? It's independence. It's being self-sufficient; it's self. The original temptation in Genesis was not to be like the devil, it was to be like God. The temptation was to eat of the tree and be like God. Didn't God tell us to be like Him? The trouble is, God doesn't want us to be like Him independently of Him. I'm in a marriage relationship, and the only way that I can be like Him is by being joined in this union of divine oneness. Now I've taken on His name, "Christian." I've become one in spirit, according to 1 Corinthians 6:17. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is [not become one in flesh, but] one spirit" My spirit and God's spirit have been united into one through Jesus Christ. The fruit I bear has to be produced through His strength and ability.

First Ruling Principle in Marriage: Joining

There are two ruling principles in this marriage relationship between Christ and me. These same principles exist in my physical marriage on this earth as well. The first principle is that marriage in scripture means a joining, a oneness, a uniting: “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matthew 19:6). “The two shall become one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). “The two shall cleave and become one flesh” (Matthew 19:5). What does the word “cleave” mean? In Hebrew it means “to stick to; to adhere to.” It also means “to pursue.”

The command was given to the man to pursue, cleave and stick to the woman like glue. Why? Because the man is the lover in this relationship and the woman is the responder. The woman will respond to the way the man loves. Submission is not blind obedience. Submission is won through the love of the man, just as Jesus became the head of the church and gave Himself for the church, and won the right to have our submission.

If I love my wife, I'll give her tokens of my affection and love. They may be gifts or flowers, or ways of meeting her needs by giving her spending money, providing for her, giving her the security of a home, or expressions of affection that are not necessarily of a sexual nature. Women just need affection. When I do that for my wife, she doesn't get upset with me and say, “I want a divorce.” You know why? My wife doesn't want a divorce when I provide for her, give her security and affection, verbally express my love for her and do these other things. She wants to respond in kind to those acts of love. God made her as a woman to be a responder. God says that this kind of relationship where one responds to acts of love is just a model of His real, eternal relationship with us as responders!

Do you know what I think eternity will be? Eternity will be an endless unfolding of divine love. I believe that the relationship I have right now with the Lord is truly an engagement relationship. In the New Testament, when Mary and Joseph were espoused, it meant that in the eyes of the law they were married, even though it was not consummated. The engagement period was called marriage, and it took a divorce even to break an engagement. Paul said to the church “I want to present you as a pure virgin unto Christ, wholly and exclusively unto Him.” (2 Corinthians 11:2). This marriage relationship is going to be consummated at the marriage supper of the Lamb. I believe that all throughout eternity there's going to be an unfolding of love. God designed a little, physical scale model on earth with the man as the lover and the woman as the responder. And just as she'll respond back with love if she's given love, God has said, “I want you to know that you loved Me because I first loved you” (1 John 4:19). The Bible doesn't say that we just started loving God on our own. The Bible says that we love Him because He first loved us. In Ezekiel 16:8 God says, “Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.” He gave us a picture of marriage in this verse, but He likened it to bringing us into a relationship with Him.

This is the first principle in marriage: anywhere in scripture that it talks about marriage, it's talking about joining together as one, but marriage is more than that. If a man went into a prostitute, the Bible says he'd become one body with her, but that doesn't mean he's married to her. He would be sinning against this principle of marriage. He'd be sinning against his mate or future mate, and also

against the design and definition of marriage. Marriage is a joining together in the fullest sense—in a sense of spirit to spirit, soul to soul, and body to body—especially for a believer. That’s why God says, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). In a Christian marriage, you have the potential of bringing Christ not only into the marriage but into the union of spirit to spirit, soul to soul, and body to body. That’s what is so powerful for Christian couples in this relationship. The Bible says that if I go out and join myself to a harlot, I actually join Christ to the harlot because I am a member of Christ’s body (2 Corinthians 6:15). However, if I consider this same dynamic in a positive light—I’m bringing Christ into my marriage relationship, inviting Christ into, and joining Christ to every aspect of my marriage union. That potential is the strongest potential in the world!

Joining Involves a Covenant

Marriage is more than just a joining together, because this joining together involves a covenant. Sexual intercourse is not marriage. Sexual intercourse is a consummation of marriage, and marriage is a joining together and becoming one in the fullest possible way, but it’s only done in covenant. The Hebrew word for this covenant is “BERIYTH” (ber-eeth) and it’s the most binding contract that is possible. It’s even used with the shedding of blood or cutting an animal into pieces. It involves blood. It involves the two becoming one. The closest concept we have is two becoming blood brothers and marriage is it. It’s becoming one under a covenant and a vow. It’s the vow and the covenant that keep me moving in the area of love toward my wife.

Love is Not a Feeling

The Bible never teaches you to love only when you feel like loving. The problem is that we don’t feel like it often enough. The world isn’t full of love, is it? The Bible doesn’t say to feel like loving and then love. The Bible commands me to love and my feelings will follow. Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church—that’s the commandment (Ephesians 5:25).

If I thought that love was just a feeling or an emotion I might say, “I want to be with you because I feel good when I’m with you.” What if that was my only concept of love? It is a form of love, but it’s not the kind of love that God commands us to have. God says, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

If I thought love was just a warm feeling I’d be saying, “God, do you mean I have to have a warm feeling of love and affection for somebody who slaps me in the face, persecutes me, hates me, and slanders me? That’s impossible.” The Bible didn’t say to love when you feel love.

For example, two singles want to be united in matrimony. We ask the man, “Do you solemnly promise and vow that you will love this woman, you’ll take her as your wife, cherish her and honor her?” And the man vows, “Yes, I do.” Then she says her vows. So we pronounce them man and wife and they go on their way. Suppose a few years later, or maybe after only one year, they come back and they’re having problems in their marriage. She says, “He doesn’t love me. He doesn’t show me any affection or kindness. He just doesn’t love me.” We ask him, “Is this true?” And he replies, “Yes, that’s right.” Why does this happen?

I used to think that if I taught my children enough Bible verses, when they got older they would “not depart from the Lord” and everything would be fine. Then one day I discovered that it wasn’t going to be some Bible verse that I made my son memorize that would carry him through life. It’s what he experiences in my home that he’s going to take out into his life. I know because what I experienced in my home is what I took out into my life.

If you came from a dysfunctional home and you’ve never seen love expressed in acts of kindness and affection, if you’ve never heard your father or mother ever say “I love you” to each other, then it won’t matter if you come into marriage and vow to love your spouse for the rest of your life. If you’ve never seen your parents hug or kiss, or you never saw your father give a gift to your mother just because he wanted to, then you will have no concept of what I’m talking about. You will have no concept at all about what I mean by love or how to be loving to someone. Even if you vow to do it, in just a matter of months your marriage will break down and start falling to pieces. You see, my son is going to take out of my home what he’s seen in my home, what he’s felt in my home and what he’s experienced in my home. If he never experienced it, then he can’t take it with him.

Second Ruling Principle in Marriage: Love

We’ve seen the principle of marriage that is a uniting together which first involves a covenant. This small-scale model of the relationship here on earth between a husband and wife is the same kind of relationship that is to be found eternally in the heavens. It’s a joining, an unfolding of a love for all eternity. And it’s a joining process of God’s covenant to be one with me forever. He says, “This is the covenant that I will make with you—your sin and iniquity I’ll remember no more. I’ll put myself on the inside of you, I’ll be merciful to you in your unrighteousness, and your sin and iniquity I’ll remember no more. I’ll be your God and you will be My people. I swear to you, this is what I will do” (Hebrews 8:10, 12).

A covenant is a binding and solemn promise, agreement or vow. It’s binding because God is not a man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19). I can violate all of these principles of oneness that God is trying to show me about Himself. I can violate them on earth but I’m talking about something that He is trying to get across to me in an eternal way. Marriage is a joining and a oneness that involves a covenant. It’s a covenant of love, because love is the ruling principle of this covenant. What’s the ruling principle of my covenant with this woman in marriage? It’s love. What is the ruling principle of her submission to me? It’s love. What’s the ruling principle of me providing for her, nourishing her, and cherishing her as my own body? It’s the principle of love.

The Bible says, “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church . . . This is a great mystery (the relationship of marriage): but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:29,32). Have you ever thought about that? No man ever hated his own flesh. I used to think people who had poor self images and committed suicide hated their flesh, but the Bible says that no man ever hated his own flesh. He nourishes and cherishes it even as Christ cherished the church. Husbands are to love their wives in the same way. Do you know what that phrase, “nourished and cherished” means? Let’s say it’s getting chilly in the room you’re sitting in now. You’ll probably put a jacket on, and when you do you’ll nourish your body. You don’t just say, “I love being cold. I’m going to go outside and stand in the snow because it feels so good.” In a few

hours you are most likely going to nourish and cherish your body with a meal because it's the natural thing to do. You're not going to starve yourself. Do you know that's the kind of love God called me to in my marriage relationship? I'll be saying, "Are you cold, Honey? Here's your coat. Do you need food? Here it is."

While it's natural for me to nourish and cherish my body, it's not natural for me to nourish and cherish my wife. Why? Because the principle of sin came into the first marriage. It didn't come into the first church, it came into the first marriage. In Genesis 3, when sin entered into creation and into the marriage, all of a sudden what was natural was no longer natural. Why? Because the root of sin in my life caused me to go astray and turn to my own way. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). So now I'm independent. Now I want to do things my way.

You see, it's not natural to love. Someone might disagree, "I beg your pardon," they'll say, "I want to be with her. I just want to be around her." Well, wait until they've been married for a little while, because there's this principle of sin that causes independence in people; they want to go their own way and do their own thing. They don't care if they hurt someone else. There's some type of dysfunction in every family like this. Perhaps you never saw affection, or expressions of kindness and love in your home. There's only one way to love with the kind of love God's Word talks about, because it's not natural; it has to be learned. It's going to have to come from believing and acting on God's Word.

What is Love?

First John 5:3 says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. . . ." 2 John 6 says, "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments." If I were to ask someone to describe love he might say, "Love is a warm feeling, it's tender affection, it gives me goose bumps." But God says, "Brothers and Sisters, this is love. You live and you walk in My principles and My commandments." Then you have to learn the principles. Romans 13 says those principles of love will never harm anyone: "Love does no wrong to anyone. Therefore love is a fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). When you walk in God's principles, you'll be walking in love. Love is kind, that means generous, that means giving, that means being unselfish, and that means seeking the best for someone else. God says, "This is love. Walk after these principles."

Someone might say, "I've never seen it in my home. I don't know what God's talking about." Well, I'll show it to you right here. Matthew 7:12 says, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Here it is in written form. When Jesus said, "It is written," in the Greek it meant, "Say it again." God is telling us, "I'm saying it to you again. And this is what I'm saying, "Whatever you want someone to do for you, that's what you do for them."

Why can't we love? Because we're caught in this principle of sin, and this principle of sin is selfish. If someone sitting home alone and says, "They don't love me. If they loved me why don't they come over here and visit me? Don't they know I'm hurting? Why don't they come over here and pray for me? They're a bunch of hypocrites down at that church. Why don't they do something? Don't they know I'm hurting? I'm hurting so bad, why doesn't anybody care?"

What has God said? God said, That is the way it works. He says get up out of your pity party and think about what you would want done to you, and then put it into action. Would you want someone to be kind to you? Would you want someone to give a gift to you? Would you want someone to be loving and say kind words to you—not jokes that put you down, but words like, “This is what I like about you”?

Put those principles into action, and do you know what will happen? The love you’ve been desiring will be generated in those people you’ve been ministering to, and it will come back to you in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Luke 6:38). To have friends, you have to be friendly (Proverbs 18:24). To have love, you have to give love. God so loved He gave (John 3:16). Love is a verb. Love is an action word. Love can be seen by what it does, not only by the words that are said. 1 John 3:18 says, “let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” It’s good to say that I love you. But if I say, “I love you” yet do things contrary to and opposite of what loving you would be, then I’m lying. Love is an action, it has to be seen. There never comes a time in my marriage when I say to my son, “Stephen, you’re 16 years old now, and I want you to know that I love your mother, Wendy.” He already knows I love his mother because love is an action. It’s the example he sees in our home.

Love Can be Taught

Titus 2:4-5 (NIV) says, “Then they can train (or teach) the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind.” This says that love is not a feeling, but it’s a principle to be taught by the older women to the younger women in the church. Love is something that’s taught.

Even though you’ve been given these principles, do you know what it’s going to take to be able to walk in them? It’s going to take getting down on your knees and saying, “God, I can’t do it in my own strength or ability.” It goes against the grain of my flesh to honor someone else above myself. It goes against the grain of my flesh to give to another person rather than meeting my own selfish needs. It takes God, who is the source of love, the author of love, and the One who’s saying, “Brothers, I wrote it down because I wanted to show you that if you’re walking in these principles you’re on the right path. Keep looking to Me; I’ll give you divine ideas. I’ll give you creative ideas on how to love others, how to be in love, and how to stay in love, even when you don’t feel like it.”

Jesus didn’t feel like it when He went to the cross. He said, “God, I don’t want to do this. Nevertheless not my will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42). Romans 5:8 (NIV) says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” He demonstrated love. The love that He demonstrated in going to the cross even went against His feelings. He didn’t feel like it, but He chose to operate in the principles of divine love that God gave in the Scriptures. He gave Himself without feeling like it, and as He gave, many of us have given back to Him the feeling of love and appreciation. We generated that love back to Christ when He took a step to love us without feelings.

It can happen in your marriage, too. You can rekindle the flame of love. It can happen in your friendships. It can happen in your job situation. It can happen if you make it your goal. You should make operating in the principles of divine love the most important thing in your life. The next time you come to a decision, just stop and think, “Am I making this decision based on selfishness and what I want, or am I considering others in this decision?” As you continue loving this way, you’ll find that the love you’ve been desiring will be multiplied back to you. Your life will become a demonstration of God’s love to the world, and your marriage relationship a fulfillment of God’s mystery revealed, an expression of His love for us, and ours for Him.

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