

The Man in the Mirror

Solving the 24 Problems Men Face

Wives: How To Be Happily Married

Unedited Transcript

Ephesians 5:25-29, Colossians 3:19, 1 Peter 3:7, 1 Corinthians 7:11

Good morning, men! I agree with what he said about honesty in marriage. I think if you can fake that, everything will be just fine. A few years ago they put an RV store over on Fairbanks Avenue, and at least once a week my wife and I drive by the place twice, going and coming. Apparently, I say something about how great it would be to maybe try out an RV every time we do that. Finally, about four or six months ago she said, "Would you stop already? Every time you say you want to do it, I let you know that I don't want to do it, so why do you keep bringing it up?"

So I stopped. I was thinking about it, though! I said to her one day, "What exactly is it about RV's that you don't like?"

She said, "The beds are uncomfortable, the showers are too small, and they're slow."

This from a woman who has never been in a RV.

I said, "Okay, okay," and then I said, "You know, to get this out of my system, I think what I would like to do is maybe renting an RV for a couple nights myself. I can park it in the driveway for crying out loud, but just to get it out of my system."

She came back to me a couple days later, and said, "You know, I think that really is a good idea. Why don't you rent an RV for a couple nights and tell me if I like it?"

Sigmund Freud, who is not a Christian, said, "Despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, I still have not been able to answer that great question: What is it that a woman wants?"

This morning we're going to talk about marriage, we're going to talk about what women want, what women need. It's too bad that Freud wasn't a Christian, because the answer is very simple, and we're going to look at that this morning. But first, let's do a couple of shout outs.

We have a group called "Builders of Men" of The New Sunset Church in Killeen, TX. They are a men's group who have been meeting for over 2 years at the church weekly using the Video Bible Study. They are led by Richard Johnson, and we are looking for an Area Director for the Killeen (Fort Hood), TX region.

Then a new group that's been formed, Men's Group of St. John Lutheran Church in Wausau, WI. 12 men who meet at the church on the 1st and 3rd Sundays at 6:00pm using the Video Bible Study. They are led

by Darrell Gieschen and we are looking for an Area Director for the Wausau, WI region. So I wonder if you would join me in giving these men a very warm welcome to the Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're really glad to have you with us!

All right, the series is The Man in the Mirror; this morning, Wives" How To Be Happily Married. I have said for years and years that if you take all of the problems with which men struggle and you take the marriage problem and you put it over here in one stack. Then you take all of the other problems with which men struggle and you put them in a second stack, all of a man's other problems combined are less than the marriage problem. Easily, the number one problem that men face is that their marriages don't seem to want to work the way that they want them to, nor the way they were intended to, but I'm going to announce a change this morning. I don't think that we can say that marriage is the number one problem anymore. I think we need to change and say that the male/female relationship is the number one problem. There is such a shift that has taken place in culture over the last generation. 48% of all initial unions are cohabitation, not even marriage! 41% of all children today are born to unmarried women. So I would just like to make a tweak to this idea, but it's still the same! The number one problem that men face is the male/female relationship.

What is it that a wife really needs?

I want to talk first about what is it that a wife or woman really needs? I want to say this before we get going; you may have a great marriage, you may have a good marriage, you may have a not so good marriage, you may be divorced, you may be separated, you may have never married, you may want to marry, you may be a confirmed bachelor; it makes no difference. These are relationship principles, so wherever you are involved in a male/female relationship, then these are the principles that you can apply to be happily married or to have a happy relationship, if for whatever reason you choose to remain single.

Why does this matter? Paul Tournier, a Swiss psychologist and Christian, wrote a book called *To Understand Each Other*. He said, "Most couples enter into conjugal life with a high ideal of marriage."

I know I did. You did, too. Remember all those nights we stayed up and shared all of our hopes and dreams together, and we'd talk all night, and how romantic it was? Yeah, we sure did enter with a high ideal. How many of them can say, a dozen years later, that their home has become what they expect of it? All too few. But it doesn't have to be that way, and we're going to talk about that this morning. I want to tell you also that this is a topic I've written a lot on, so for those of you who are interested, the books are *The Marriage Prayer*, that would be the number one book I would recommend. If you're looking for a devotional that you can do together with your wife, *Devotions For Couples*, great book, it's been my second best-selling book for some reason. Then, if you would like to give a book to your wife, not at her, you can download a free copy of the eBook of *What Husbands Wished Their Wives Knew About Men*. To get that book, you go to The Man in the Mirror website (<http://www.maninthemirror.org>) and under Resources there's a link to free eBooks. There are four free eBooks that we have up there, and that's one of them. Then, *Man Alive*. While it covers a lot of things, there is a section there in the Relationships chapter, Ten Ways To Really Love A Woman. I'll mention those as we get going here.

The problem is that we all want to have a great marriage (those of us who want to have a marriage at all). We want to have a great marriage, but apparently it's a lot more difficult than we thought it would be. What's obvious is that we're not going to be able to love our wives the way that they want to be

loved, the way they need to be loved, the way we want them to love, unless we understand something from the Bible. Ephesians 5. I'm going to read to you from *The Message*, which is the Peterson paraphrase. I'm going to begin at verse 21:

²¹Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to each other.

The Bible, incidentally, teaches mutual submission, you see? Right here. The way that wives submit, verse 22:

²²Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ.

Then, the husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church. That would be you and me. Not by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands.

Now why do wives submit to their husbands? A couple of reasons. Because of the fall, the wife has a desire for her husband that borders on disease (Genesis 3:16). She has a desire for her husband that is subject to corruption. The second reason is that in any organization or institution, you need an authority structure or there is chaos. The idea is that God has made men, put men in this position of spiritual leadership and there are some requirements of the leader to do the right thing, but then this is the response that is required of the wife. Verse 25:

²⁵Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church. A love marked by giving, not getting. Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out for her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And this is how husbands ought to love their own wives. They're really doing themselves a favor since they're already one in marriage. No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, since we are part of his body, and this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become one flesh.

This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church, and this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honor her husband. So what's obvious is that in order to love your wife the way that she really needs to be loved, if the husband is to love his wife the way that Christ loved the church, then what's obvious is that we need to understand exactly how it is that Christ loves the church. If you understand what it means for Jesus Christ to love his church, then you now have in your brain a picture of how you are supposed to love your wife. By the way, when Christ loves the church, and he's loving you and he's loving me, he's loving some pretty irascible, irritating, peevish, petty, angry, easily upset, sheepish kind of people, so it's okay if your wife is all those things, too. You have to have the right information. You have to have the right heart, but you can have the right heart and not be a very good husband, so you have to have the right information. What's obvious to me, and the one thing if fully understood and truly believed I think could change everything for me and for any one of us at any time, would be this: after his love for the Father, Jesus made his church his top priority. The top priority of Jesus was not getting the theology out and distributed to all of the people, although he was trying to do that. It was not getting all kinds of good works done, all though he was interested in getting that done. But Jesus' top priority was making sure that you know how much he loves you. That was his top priority after his love for his own father. So if that is true, then the Big Idea today would make sense: **After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.** Make this whiny,

peevish person your top priority. Or maybe make this unbelievable, radiant flower, this creation of God that he has gifted to you... it was G. K. Chesterton who said, "Sticking to one woman is a small price to pay for even so much as seeing one woman." A woman is an incredible thing! It is the most mysterious and mystical relationship there is in all of creation, this fusion of two separate individuals headed in two separate directions, into what the Bible mysteriously calls one flesh. There's no other thing in all of creation that even resembles in the remotest way this kind of relationship between a husband and wife, this union, which bears fruit, where the progeny comes from and the creation continues. People come and go, the earth remains. But people come and go because of marriage.

How to love your wife like Christ

So how can you love your wife like Christ? Well, this is a weekend seminar, but let me give you the cliff notes. One little idea that again has the potential to change everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church. Husbands, love your wives in the same way that Christ loves the church. Husbands, love your wife equal to the way that Christ loves the church. In other words, you loving your wife and Jesus loving the church ought to look like the same thing. So in order for that to happen, we need to understand how Christ loves the church. When it says the way Christ loves the church, what does that mean? That's the last name of Jesus, right? He's Charley Weathersby, I'm Pat Morley, and Jesus Christ right? No, okay well what is Christ then? Christ is a title of Jesus. So husbands love your wives equal to and the same way as Jesus in his role as the Christ loves his church. That means if we're to love our wives in the same way that Jesus did in the fulfillment of a role that he plays... Now Christ literally means the anointed one. The Old Testament word for it, somebody said it, is the Messiah, and in theology, we have a classic threefold office for Jesus in his role, in his capacity as the Christ of the Messiah. That threefold office is that Jesus is the prophet, priest, and king. There it is! So husbands, love your wives in the same way that Jesus in his role as our prophet, priest and king, loves his church or us. I think it does not do any violence to the text to also say husbands, love your wives, and by extension the fruit of your loins, your children, your family, in the same way, equal to, just as Jesus as our prophet, priest and king, loves his family! All of a sudden we've just cracked the code! You are your family's prophet, you are called to be a spiritual leader. The family prophet, the family priest, and the family king.

So the prophet, in the Old Testament, stood with his back to God and delivered the word of God to the people. You as the family prophet, you're a messenger. You bring the word of God to your family. That means that you have them in church so that they are getting good instruction. That means that you might want to do devotions, you might want to read the word or explain the word of God to your family. Certainly, when you have situational opportunities to resolve conflicts and address problems, you bring the word of God to your family because you're a messenger.

Secondly, you are the family priest. In the Old Testament, the priest stood with his back to the people and faced God and mediated on behalf of the people. He was a mediator, you're a mediator. You pray for your wife. If you want to love your wife the way that Jesus loves the church, then make sure that you are bringing the word of God to her, and by extension your family. If you want to love your wife the way that Jesus loves the church, make sure you are praying with and for this woman that God has put into your life, and by extension your family as well.

Third, in the Old Testament, the king was the one who would leave, provide for, and protect his people. As a spiritual leader, you are the family king, the provider. So you're a messenger, a mediator and a provider. You work hard to make enough money to make ends meet so that you can provide the food,

shelter, clothing, and all the things your family needs, and so many other things as well. Get it? That's it! So if you want to know how to love your wife, and by extension, your children, just think of yourself as the family christ (small c). You are the family prophet, priest and king. You are meant to be a type of Christ in your family. This is a huge responsibility! Does it depend on what your wife does in response? Absolutely not! That's the whole point of being a leader, that you as a man are called to love your wife just as Christ loved the church without regard to how she responds. Now, it works a lot better if she does respond, and by the way, if you do these things, she will respond! Will she respond today? Probably not. If you've spent 7, 8, 10, 15 years not being the spiritual leader, not being a type of Christ to her, then you suddenly hear a message and the lights come on. You begin to do the things that you had not been doing, she's not going to trust that right away. So you are going to need to persevere. It's like having a bad case of the flu and not knowing if it will ever be over or not. You just have to keep enduring it until you don't have to endure it anymore. You have to persevere. Some of these other texts we won't get to, 1 Corinthians 7:11, a man should not divorce his wife. By the way, 1 Corinthians 7 is the relationships chapter, it tells you everything you need to know about marriage, separation, remarriage, divorce, you name it. The Big Idea today is this, and this is how you pull it all together, memorize this Big Idea if you want to, it will help you pull together all these things discussed in this one simple little verse, Ephesians 5:25, after God (just like Jesus) but before all others (before every other person and any other thing in world), make your wife your top priority. Just make her your top priority! And what it means to have something as a top priority is that you organize the rest of your life around that top priority! You don't organize your top priority around the rest of your life!

5 deposits for your wife's emotional bank account

Let's look at 5 deposits you can make into your wife's emotional bank account that'll make this some practical ideas in how to love your wife the way that Christ loves the church. Number one, be more committed to the institution of marriage than you are to her. What did I not say? Did I say that you should not be committed to your wife? No, I did not say that. I said you should be more committed to the institution of marriage than you are to her. Why do we say that? Because if you are not more committed to the institution itself than you are to the person, where is the moral glue to hold you place during those inevitable periods where you just don't like her? What's going to hold you in place unless you have a moral commitment to this Biblical idea that man is not to divorce his wife? But if you have that commitment to the institution, then you can make it through the inevitable ebbs and flows of marriage, and we've all had them! If you've been married more than 28 minutes or something like that!

Number two, pray with your wife. This doesn't have to be a long, drawn out thing. My wife and I spend a minute or two every morning praying about the day. We praise and thank God, I usually pray, she prefers not to. We pray, we thank God, we ask him to bless the day, we pray for the needs we're aware of. Just one or two minutes out loud, but it has the impact of creating a closeness that's very difficult to get any other way.

Number three, spend a few minutes together every day. If you don't have some plan to spend time with your wife, and your kids too, for that matter, you can find that sometimes three weeks will have gone by and you've not had a single conversation that was beyond household management. I learned this a long time ago, picked it up when a number of my friends were getting divorced and I was terrified that it might happen to me, so I decided to follow through on this idea that God gave me. So we set 20 minutes aside a day, after dinner, and we've done this for 30 years. We don't do family business, we just are in to what's going on in our lives. Some of you a few years ago know we graduated to the couch, and now I rub her feet with lotion every night, and I love it. She loves it, too by the way! And it's amazing what we

can talk about. We talk about things that I could never talk about to another person in a million years! Because of the way God has ordered this relationship to work when it's working. By the way, Edwin Friedman, a scholar, if he's correct in his hypothesis, says no marriage ever does better than about 70%. So we're not talking about perfection, there are unhappy times and conflict and so on. There are! Obviously! But if Friedman is correct and you have a 70% marriage, then you have a AAA marriage. And by the way, I would much rather have 70% of a perfect marriage than 100% of nothing. I love being married, I love my wife! I can't imagine not being able to be married to my wife.

Number four, share household chores. When I was in college, a friend of mine, roommate, Steve, one day I couldn't take it anymore. I said, "Steve! I can't stand our relationship! You never change the toilet paper, you never do the dishes, you never take out the trash!"

He said, "Me? You never ever mop the floor, you never vacuum!"

I said, "Oh..." We both sort of looked at each other with a startled look, and what I realized is that my human nature is to remember all of the good things I've done for you and all of the bad things you've done to me. In marriage, think of it this way, 90/10 both ways. If you think you're giving 90% and she's only giving you 10% back, then you're probably about 50/50, just because of the psychology of it. If you think that you are doing 50% of the household chores right now, guess what? She hates your guts!

Finally, date your wife. This doesn't have to be elaborate. You may make it a weekly thing, I would recommend so. Take her out to dinner, take her to a movie, go to the farmer's market on Saturday morning, go to a play, go to a sporting event. Things you both enjoy or mostly enjoy doing together. It's a huge deposit in her emotional bank account. The Big Idea today: after God but before all others, make your wife your top priority. Let us pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest Father, we come to you humbly, all of us wanting to be great husbands with great marriages with great wives. Help us to have a realistic set of expectations, and also help us to have a right mindset about who it is that can make that happen. It is you Jesus and you alone, your Gospel in us, working through us, your love in us helping us to love her the way that you have loved us. You have set the perfect example in love, so Lord, give us your spirit to love our wives the way that you have loved us, the church. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen!