

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
The Marriage Prayer: Marriage the way God intended
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January 9, 2009

Good Morning, Men!

Welcome to all our first time visitors.

Open your Bibles to two places: 1 Corinthians 6 and Genesis 2.

Watching these football games and thinking about what is going on, is interesting because you have two teams employing all their skill to deceive the other team so they can get what they want.

In the National Championship game you have three coaches, all in khakis and black shirts, who are all signaling in plays. Only one of them is the real guy, and the purpose is to deceive the other team, because the other team is spying on them.

That sounds a lot like a marriage to me. We are doing the series the Marriage Prayer. Today we are going to talk about this topic: Marriage the way God intended.

Here is the prayer:

Father, I said til death do us part I want to mean it.

Help me love you more than her and her more than anyone or anything else.

Help me bring her into your presence today.

Make us one like you are three in one.

I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her so she would love you more and we can bring you glory.

A beautiful prayer of sixty-eight words that capture the essence of what the Bible has to say about marriage.

We have done the first three fazes; *Father I said til death do us part* – dealt with faithfulness. *I want to mean it* – dealt with priorities. *Help me love you more than her and her more than anyone or anything else* – dealt with conflicts and romance. The last time we talked about this was the phrase: *help me bring her into your presence today* – talked about how to make a greater spiritual impact on your wife.

Today we are going to talk about marriage the way God intends it to be. I thought this picture did a really nice job of capturing all the hopes, dreams, desires, anticipations and idealism we bring with us when we get married.

The obvious question is: why doesn't it stay like that? And, what does she want?

There have been a lot of people that opine on this. My favorite is Sigmund Freud, who once said, 'despite my 30 years of study into the feminine psyche I still have not been able to answer that great question: what is it that a woman wants?'

Well, neither has Todd, Julio or John. What is it that this woman wants?

So, the big idea today is going to be the fourth phrase:

MAKE US ONE LIKE YOU ARE THREE IN ONE.

We are going to look at two examples of how you might go about doing this. Obviously there are many. We are going to look at the concept of oneness, uniting our hearts. We are going to look at sex – this is your reward for coming out early this morning – becoming one flesh. And we will talk about how to respond.

First of all, oneness, this is the idea for oneness: When God sees you and your wife, He sees one flesh. Let's look at the scriptures. We will start at Genesis 2:22

22. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

This is one of my favorite passages. When my son John was 8 years old and still cuddly we were having a spiritual moment and I said: John, John, blood of my blood and bone of my bones. And he said, yeah dad and gut of my guts.

24. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

This is the Biblical concept by which marriage is introduced, this one flesh idea. In Jesus Christ, you have both a physical and spiritual union with Him, when He is in you. Your body is united with Christ and the Spirit lives within you.

Leave Genesis and go to I Corinthians 6:15

15. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? This is the physical union you have with Christ. Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!

16. Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?

There is transference, a one flesh concept that you see in the Bible. God is three in one. God is a relationship; there is a unity in God because He is three persons in one. We are not three in one, but we are two in one if we are in fact married to a woman, not a guy.

Reading on at verse 16b

For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."

17. But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

There you see the spiritual union. We have a physical and spiritual union with the three in one. When we are married we become one flesh, we have this spiritual and physical union with our

wife and we call this oneness or one flesh. It is a miracle. There is nothing on earth quite like marriage, is there? It is a phenomenal kind of relationship.

When my father and mother were still alive, she was fading fast from cancer. As the caretakers son I called a meeting with my parents to discuss where my father would live when my mother would pass.

I said, Dad where do you want to live? He said, I don't care. I said, Dad we should really make an informed decision on this, so you must have some preference. He said, I don't care. Then my mom said, Honey this is an important thing and we need to give it a proper amount of discussion and thought; where do you want to live? I don't care. She pressed a couple more times. Finally, he looked at my mom and said I really don't care; I just want to be with you.

That is what oneness is all about. I just want to be with you. Contrast that with Thomas Carlyle, the great Scottish essayist, who wrote on heroes and hero worship. Carlyle married his secretary, Jane Welsh. She continued to work but became ill. Carlyle, so devoted to his work, didn't seem to notice. It turned out she had cancer, but he was so engrossed in his work that he didn't really have time to spend with her. Then she died; at the funeral there was a throng of people to celebrate her life.

After the funeral he went up to her room and found her diary. He started thumbing through it. On the first page he read the only entry, it said: he came to see me today and we talked for about an hour. It felt like a slice of heaven. I love him so much. Reality began to set in on Carlyle; he had been so preoccupied with his work that he didn't spend enough time with the wife that he loved so much. He was almost unaware of her love and affection for him. He certainly didn't share in her suffering.

He turned the page in the diary and read these words: I waited all day to hear his footsteps in the hall, but now it is late and I don't think he will come today. He threw down the diary and fled from the house. His friends went looking for him and found him at Jane's graveside, where he was sobbing uncontrollably, covered in mud with tears rolling down his face. He was screaming, If only I had known!

If only he had known what? If only he had known that when God sees you and your spouse, He sees one flesh.

I am going to give you what I think is one of the best insights to help understand God's plan for marriage. You are either on the same team or you are on two competing teams.

My father and my mother were on the same team; they had a beautiful 54 year marriage. Carlyle and his wife were not on the same team. That is a decision that each man needs to make for himself: am I going to be on the same team or a different team? The differences are profound, but so are the differences between a quarterback and a tackle but they are still on the same team. Figure it out!

The big idea today: MAKE US ONE LIKE YOU ARE THREE IN ONE.

Sex, the idea for this is that physical intimacy is the byproduct of many small sacrifices that are done with no ulterior motive.

Turn in your Bibles – keeping your finger at I Corinthians 6 – to Ephesians 5. It's hard to talk about marriage and not want to say something about Ephesians 5.

In I Corinthians 7 you will find the rules for a Biblical marriage. You will find what it says about separation, remarriage and divorce, monogamy and duty. In chapter 7 verse 4 it talks about physical intimacy or sex.

4. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. (There is a physical and spiritual union we have together.) In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.

5. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. (In other words if you want to have a prayer fast from sex, that's great; other wise you are not to deprive your mate and she is not to deprive you of this expression of oneness.) This is why I said in a previous session that sex is an act of worship. When you make love to your wife it is an act of worship. It is a taste of the glory of God; it is a great, fun thing. Sex is so wonderful because it is a physical fulfillment of that prayer to make us one.

Let's turn to Ephesians 5:25

25. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her
And so, in all aspects of marriage and in sex there is an element of sacrificing ourselves for the benefit of our wives.

28. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

In other words when you make love to your wife, you are making love to your self. It is an expression of self love to love your wife. There is a sense – Jesus says if any man will come after me let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me – in which sex should not be what I can get out of it, but what I can invest into my wife for her pleasure and her oneness. Her greatest need is for intimacy, to know that I am fully known and accepted for and who I am at the deepest level. Where more is this expressed than in physical intimacy?

Making love should be an act of worship. You should be thinking about God before you make love, not the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders. That is the Biblical way of having physical relations with your spouse.

There is a study that just came out. They looked at 40 romantic comedies that came out between 1995 and 2005; and they determined that romantic comedies are a pox on marriage. They create an unrealistic set of expectations about what will happen in a marriage.

Many people, Christians alike, are unwittingly finding their view of sex, intimacy and relationships are formed or influenced by watching movies that present this very unrealistic expectation.

In movies and romantic comedies everyone knows what the other is thinking. But that is not how life really works. It takes a lot of effort in order to make it work. Many couples allow this to spill over into their sex lives because they believe that sex is always supposed to be perfect and it is not always perfect. You need to be able to have a sober discussion with your wife about her needs, your needs and how you can be a better lover.

I hear enough stories to know that not all men are great lovers. How many of you think you are a great lover? There aren't many, maybe we need to have a tutorial.

I am going to tell you how to be a great lover right now: there are basically three kinds of love in the Bible.

There is agape love, which is moral love. I love you because it is the right thing to do.

There is phileo love, which is like friendship.

And there is eros love, which is – among other things – physical love. The corrupted use of the word would be erotic.

Romantic love always includes an emotional as well as a physical aspect. For men and women, being wired differently, sex is a task/mission for men, it is something that I do, and it's raw and fast. There is a tendency, because maybe you are a quarterback and maybe she is a running back, you both think differently about sex. For you it is an event, for her it is a relationship.

You say, Honey let's make love, and then we'll talk about it and celebrate. She says, no let's drink deeply of each others love, let's talk about all the things going on in our lives and then after we are done we will make love to celebrate.

For you it is something that comes on; for her it is the result of many small kindnesses done throughout the week. It is the result of many small sacrifices done with no ulterior motive. Who makes the first move? You or her; for her, she cannot make love to you physically until you have made love to her emotionally. You are thinking I can't make love to her emotionally until she makes love to me physically. Do you see the conundrum here?

So who is going to make the first move? You are! Why? Because you want sex! No, really, you are going to make the first move because you have been called to be the spiritual leader of your home. On this team there is the concept of headship in a Christian marriage, and you are the quarterback of the team, you make the call. You make love to your wife emotionally and then this releases her to make love to you physically and both of your needs get met.

Awesome!! It is fun, because it is the physical fulfillment of that prayer to make two become one. The idea is to make us one.

How should we respond? The first thing I would encourage you to do is think through this concept: are we on the same team or are we on two competing teams? I was able to think of a number of people on both sides of this deal; if you and she are on competing teams (and you know without doubt if you are on the same team or not) you can make a choice. You can pray, Father, make us one like you are three in one. You can make that choice and I encourage you to make that choice. That is response number one.

Response number two: pursue your wife, go after her and talk to her. A survey I did with the men of this Bible study years ago, the number one thing men wanted was more sex; the number one and two things that women wanted were time and talk. He doesn't talk to me and when he does the conversation is not that meaningful.

You need to make the time to pursue your wife, to date your wife. If you are not dating your wife you are missing the boat. I date my wife twice a week. When we had kids at home it was once a week, now it's twice a week.

Are you on the same team? Are you pursuing your wife?

The third way to respond is with the 2% rule. I have told this story before, early in our marriage at the 13 year mark I made a list of eleven of our friends who were either divorced or separated and a sense of terror swept over me because I realized that although I didn't have a bad marriage, I had a 'good' marriage but I didn't have a great marriage and thought I could be susceptible to what my friends went through.

We were not on the same team. I was running my own offense and to me my wife was more like a business partner, someone to help me get what I wanted out of life. These thoughts led to other thoughts and I realized that I needed to make some changes, so I decided to pray about it. God spoke to my heart and said, make Patsy your best friend. God I will do that, but I don't know how. I wouldn't even know where to begin; I have 13 years of doing it this way. I kept praying about it and a few days later God spoke to my heart and said when the children leave the dinner table why don't you just hang out for 20 minutes to talk with her.

I decided not to tell Patsy, I didn't think she would trust that. I began to hang out and she would stay at the table with me. Twenty minutes a day is about 2% of your time. Would you be willing to invest 2% of your time into the oneness, into the emotional, into the physical and spiritual needs of your wife? Would you be willing to give her 2 % of your time? Would you be willing to pursue her with 2% of your time? Would you be willing to pursue her and get on the same team with her? Give her 20 minutes a day.

The final way to respond is to take the Marriage Prayer Challenge. All of you have done this I believe. If you haven't you should get a Marriage Prayer card from the back. Let's be challenged together and pray the prayer together.

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I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her so she would love you more and we can bring you glory. Amen.