

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY  
FAMILY AND THE MAN IN THE MIRROR  
THE CRUCIFIED HUSBAND  
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Welcome to Man in the Mirror Men's Bible Study. If you are visiting with us this morning, we would like to welcome you. If you are here for the first time, why don't you raise your hand and let us greet you. For the anonymous first-time visitors, we welcome you. As we break after the message, I am going to invite you to join me at the Visitor's Table at the front, right-hand corner. We will just spend a few minutes to get to know each other a little bit

We have one announcement. Everybody grab one of these red pieces of paper, if you would. I don't know if your children were like my children, but when they were supposed to bring notes home from the teacher at school, it rarely happened. You know, those children grow up to be what? Guys. If you take that sheet of paper, it's red. Red is the symbol of love, and blood, but this is your invitation to take home to your wife or your girlfriend for next Friday morning when we will have a special Valentine's thing. I am going to try to keep it light and fun and laugh and meaningful at the same time. How do you do all that anyway? So take one of those home to her, and you all come back next week. We'll have a good time.

We're going to continue with our series this morning. I am going to invite you to turn to Genesis: Chapter 2, Verse 18, and if you have one of those mathematical minds and can hold multiple figures in your mind, you can also put your thumb at Ephesians: Chapter 5 where we will go after Genesis: Chapter 2. Let me invite you to turn your chairs and get comfortable.

I had a weird experience this week; in fact, every week I have several weird experiences, and from time to time I share one of them with you. This particular weird experience was that I was having lunch with a friend and a woman came in, who is old enough to be my mother since she has children my age, and I had not seen her in a long time. Now, this is a very sophisticated woman who always dresses to the nine. I was excited to see her, and she was excited to see me, then she looked at my hair. We haven't seen each other for at least five years and she said, "Oh my goodness, Pat Morley with all that great hair. Why don't you die that or something?" I said, "It really is nice to see you, too." Women, you gotta' them. They will do anything. They will say anything.

I am the most fortunate man I know because every week I get to soak in these subjects all week long and then I get to share with you the things that I've been learning about them. Just to show you where we are, we are doing a series on Family. Last week we talked about being an honorable son, then we looked at two ways you can be honorable - two ways that you can honor your parents. You can forgive them, and you can what? Repay them. This week we're going to look at the word "husband," and we're going to talk this morning about what it means to be a "crucified husband." That sounds interesting, huh? Three guys just got up and walked out. We're going to look at two things, the joy of marriage and then we're going to look at the cost of this joy. That's where we're headed; that's where we've been.

We're going to start this morning at Genesis: Chapter 2, Verse 18. For those of you men who are not married or who are divorced, these are relationship principles that apply in all kinds of relationships. These are things that, hopefully, you can use the next time around or the first time around if you have not been married before as well. The creation story has just taken place. God has put Adam into the Garden to do work. Everything that God has created has been very good, and now we get to Verse 18. "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" So we have good, good, good and now we have not good. Interesting question. Somebody else actually thought of this point. Is God, alone, enough for men? Is God enough for man to be happy - to be satisfied? You can make up your own mind about this, but this passage does hint, at least, that it is not good for you to be alone that God alone may not be enough for a man. I'm not drawing any conclusions myself on that. I've just only

been thinking about that for three weeks, but it is something you might want to use as something to stimulate your own thinking.

So, what is God saying in this passage? “It is not good for man to be alone, and I will make a helper suitable for him.” I have said here before, and I’m probably going to say this a lot in the days to come. It’s an idea that has really captured and summarized the things that I think I have been learning about men in the 28 years I have been working with all of you guys. Some of you, unfortunately, I have been working with for the whole 28 years which doesn’t say much for the effectiveness of my ministry now, does it? Anyway, after 28 years of working with men, I really think you can boil what men want down to about three things. I’ve said this one other time here. The first is something you can give your life to – a mission or a cause – something to live for. The second thing is someone to share it with; and the third thing is a system that gives a reasonable explanation for why one and two are so difficult. That’s basically it – something, someone and a system.

Jesus is the cause, Jesus is the someone, and Jesus is the system. That really does give meaning and purpose to life, but you can also flush that out in your human relationships as well. So, this idea of finding someone to share it with is really kind of a master rubric under which we are operating this morning. It’s interesting, too, how you change over the years. Men are often said to be very task oriented, and we are, but we start out very relational looking for someone we can share our lives with. When you think about it, we actually look for someone to share life with before we actually fully identify that is something we want to give our lives to. Then, after you secure this relationship, it’s pretty natural that you want to give your life to something. You want to find something to live for, a mission or a cause; in fact, she was the mission, but once you’ve conquered that one, then you’re moving on to the next one. As men get older, this turns around again.

I have two very infirmed parents whom I have mentioned. My mom was telling me last week when we were trying to figure out if my mom predeceases my father what do we do and vice versa, but it looks like my mother will probably predecease my father in the next few weeks. We were trying to pin down what Dad would like to do. They have always talked about trying to figure out how to keep Dad in their home. They have a lovely home, but he is not capable of managing the household. We said, “Dad, where do you want to live?” The answer was, “I don’t really care.” That’s my father. He’s very stoic and wouldn’t want to state a preference and so we kept pressing. “Dad, where do you want to live?” He looked at Mom and said, “I don’t care. I just want to be with you.” At this point in his life, he doesn’t care where he lives he just wants to be with this woman that he’s been married to for 54 years.

The Bible tells us that a wife is a gift. A woman is a glorious creature. Listen to what it says in Proverbs. “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favors from the Lord.” A wife solves a number of problems that a man has. A man wants to give his life to something, he’s looking for someone to share it with, a system. A wife helps solve a number of very important problems. What are some of the problems that are solved by having a wife? A wife does solve the problem that you don’t burn with lust, the sharing of responsibilities, and she’s given as a helper. So, you have these two people going through life helping each other, sharing responsibilities. Sounding board. That would be companionship. It’s not good for the man to be alone because he needs someone to talk to. There is a difference between being alone and being lonely, but there is some correlation between the two. Man who is alone often will wind up being lonely, so it’s good to have someone to share things with. What else? A woman is a glorious creature. She can make children with your help, of course. Then she has this amazing capacity to nurture them. You go out to hunt your bear. She stays home and spreads her wing over her chicks and protects her brood. It’s a beautiful, lovely thing to watch. What else? What other problems does having a wife solve? Men often tend to be linear and rational, but a woman will often be able to think in very creative ways and in a 30-minute rational conversation pull up one little thing that unwraps the mystery. Women are fascinating and a gift from God - perfect companion, friend, confidant. She brings also sensitivity into a relationship. All you have to do is watch the beer commercials for the Super Bowl and you know that men don’t have much sensitivity, right?

There is great joy in marriage. Now let's talk a little bit about the cost of this joy. If you would, turn now to Ephesians: Chapter 5, Verse 21. G. K. Chasterson??? Wrote one of the important books of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century called *Orthodoxy*. The copyright on that was 1908. This has deeply marked a number of leading Christian thinkers over the last century. He has this to say. He is talking about how many young men revolt against the idea of monogamy. Many young men don't understand why you should only have to have one woman. He said this, "Keeping to one woman is a small price for so much as seeking one woman." When you think about how glorious a woman is, his point is that it is a small price to keep the one, just to be able to see one ever. A woman is a glorious thing. Then he says this. "To complain that I could only be married once is like complaining that I'd only been born once." Interesting thought.

Ephesians: Chapter 5, Verse 21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." This is the master verse for the series. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The first relationship and the first two categories are wives and husbands. Verse 22, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body which he is the Savior." So the relationship of the husband is one of headship over the wife. Verse 24, "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." That's where the wife comes in. Now the husband. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." So husbands, and this is probably the big idea for the day, out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will give myself up for \_\_\_\_\_. This word here, love is the word agape. There is a type of love called agape love. It's the kind of love that God has for us. The text says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as..." in the same way or equal to the way that, "...Christ loves the church." The church is Christ's family, the family of Jesus Christ, and we are that church. So husbands, agape love your wives just as Christ agape loved his family.

How does a man do this agape love? We find a very important clue right here in the text. Verse 25 says, "Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." There is a sense of sacrifice. The cost of joy is sacrifice. I'll be honest with you. I am going to tell you the most difficult year of my marriage. What was the most difficult year in your marriage? The most difficult year in my marriage was the 26<sup>th</sup> year. Can you believe that? Let me tell you why it was difficult. She was getting older, and I didn't recognize that I was too. I did not properly adjust my expectations, and I was hard on her. I don't like to think of it this way, but, basically, I was downright selfish and mean spirited about the whole thing. Like she should slow down in time or something like that. One day, by God's grace, I just sort of thought, "What are you doing you stupid idiot?" The way I was able to work through that was first of all changing the way that I was thinking; right thinking leads to right believing leads to right behaving. So I just worked on my thinking and got my believing conformed to the word of God. Then, in due course, the behaving worked it out. This is the text. This is the text we all need, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us. So we should also love our wives and give ourselves up, and sacrifice ourselves. That's the cost of true joy. Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will give myself up for Patsy.

C. F. Lewis has written what some people consider to be a classic text on love. It is called *The Four Loves*. I recommend it. He has this to say on the text Ephesians: 5, 25. He talks about kind of a secular way of approaching love, then he moves to Christian love. He says, "The Christian law has crowned him in the permanent relationship of marriage bestowing, or should I say inflicting, a certain headship on him. This is a very different coronation than the one that goes to the secular. Christian writers, notably Milton, have sometimes spoken of the husband's headship with a complacency to make the blood run cold. We must go back to our Bibles. The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the church." That's saying the equal sign between them. "He is to love her as Christ loves the church and gives his life for her." Now watch this, "This headship then is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be, but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion." The man who gives himself up for his wife in the same way that Jesus Christ has given himself up for you. The Crucified Husband. Then he amplifies just a little bit and says, "Whose wife receives most and gives least. Whose wife is most unworthy of him is in her own nature least lovable, for the church has no beauty but what the bridegroom gives her. He does not find but makes her lovely. This terrible coronation is to be seen not in the joys of any man's marriage, but in its sorrow, in its sickness and sufferings of a good wife or the pulse of a bad one or in his unwarying care or his inexhaustible forgiveness," and so on and so forth.

This headship is most fully embodied in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion. Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will give myself up for Patsy. I do not need to have my own way anymore; my life for her life. I want to be like my Dad. "I don't care where I live, I just want to be with you." All of a sudden, many things that seem very important all of a sudden seem very small. How do we do this? How do we pay this price? How do you bare the cost of marriage? Change your thinking, like believing leads to right thinking, right thinking leads to right believing, right believing leads to right behaving so lead right, think right, believe right and behave right. Don't try to modify your behavior. Come to the foot of Jesus Christ and there negotiate the terms of a full surrender to the Lordship, and then out of reverence for Jesus Christ, give yourself up for her. That's the Gospel of Jesus Christ practically speaking.

I was with a fellow, a few years ago now, who proposed to a woman on a beach one day and she had said yes. Then over the next few weeks, he realized he had made a terrible mistake or so he had thought. But because of his integrity and because he was a man of honor, he decided to go through with the marriage, and he married a woman he didn't love. Now it's 15 years later, and he was miserable. After pouring his heart out to me for about an hour, we were in a car together from an airport to a long distance away, he said, "What can you do for me? What can you say?" I'm sitting there thinking, "Lord, what can I do and what can I say?" There's nothing I can do and there's nothing I can say. Then suddenly I found these words coming out of my mouth, and I said, "Well, friend I really don't have anything profound to say to you, but why don't you try to serve her?" It's interesting because that's the thought that came back to me in my own marriage. "Why don't you just serve her? Why don't you just prefer her - prefer her well being, prefer her comfort, prefer her satisfaction, prefer making her life more comfortable, not mine? Why don't I just prefer her and serve her?" Did I do this perfectly? Well, my wife will be here next week so we won't go there. If you want to pay the cost of joy and have joy in your marriage, then serve her, prefer her, give her first place. You take second place, give yourself up for her out of reverence for Jesus Christ.

One more idea – we did this a long time ago. I'm going to suggest that if you sense that you need to make a big investment into your mate, when you get to your place of work this morning or wherever you find yourself at a phone, that you call her and ask her out on a date. Then when you put down that telephone, I want you to pick it back up again, and I want you to call a florist, and I want you to send your wife some flowers. In fact, by 9:30 I want to hear reports from AT&T that the phone systems are overloaded and shutting down in Orlando because men all over Orlando are flooding the phone lines getting to their florists. Then, sometime before that date whether it's tonight, tomorrow night, or a week from now, whenever you can work it in, I want you to take 15 minutes and sit down and write on a piece a paper a list of all the things I appreciate about my wife. Write across the top "The Things I Appreciate About You." Just write down the things that you appreciate. Men, now you're on your date and you're having coffee, the meal is over, I want you to pull out the list, and I want you to speak the list to her. You've got the list, so you won't forget. Your palms are sweaty, your knees are shaking, and you feel like it's your first date. So you have this little list, and I want you to just tell her the things on the list and tell her how much you love her. Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will give myself up for Patsy. What's her name? Say it with me. Out of reverence for Jesus Christ, I will give myself up for Patsy. (Who's the idiot who said Patsy?) Do I need to give an IQ test to get in here? I try to make this profoundly important point and .....

Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these glorious creatures that you have given us, these women. And, Lord, it is a small price to stick to one for the joy of having seen one. Lord, I do want to pray for these men as all of us, Lord, want joy in our relationships with our mates whether we are currently married or hoping to be remarried some day or to be married for the first time. Everybody wants to have joy, Lord. Help us understand that the price of this joy is sacrifice and out of reverence for you, Jesus, that we would give ourselves up to be able to achieve this joy. We make this prayer in Christ's name.

Take a moment and if you need to tell the Lord something about your relationship with your mate, take a moment and do that. Lord, keep hearing these prayers. Amen

/cjb

