

# The Christian Man

## Session 4: Marriage

### Finding a New Best Friend In Your Wife

Edited Transcript

Patrick Morley

Good morning men. If you would, please open in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter five. Let's go ahead and begin the morning with a shout out. We have a group we want to welcome called M.A.K.E. Men Advancing the Kingdom Everywhere. They're led by Pastor Rasheed in Rochester, New York. Five men, they've been meeting for about a year now, monthly on either, they pick a Saturday or a Sunday and they say "We are men wanting to engage, equip and elevate men and advance the kingdom of Yahweh everywhere." And so what a great mission, vision that they have. Thank you Pastor Rasheed for submitting your group. So guys would you join me in giving a very warm rousing welcome to MAKE? One, two, three! Hoorah. Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us.

So, we are in this series, The Christian Man. And I told my wife one day that I was going to teach our son what makes a wife tick. She said, "Good luck." We have done, this is the fourth message in the series. We have done the issue of identity. Who we are, where only God can see, is who we really are, and then we looked at the issue of life balance. And for life balance we talked about how we each have, all the time we need to do everything God wants us to do and the idea of how we live by Biblical priorities. And then last time, we did growth, spiritual growth and the Big Idea was that a Bible, a small group and serving someone else resolved 90% of your problems. There's more of course, but it's this idea of getting the few big chunky things that can really help us grow.

Now we come today to the topic of marriage, a profound mystery, a beautiful mystery, but a profound mystery. The title today is going to be Marriage: Finding a New Best Friend in Your Wife. So last week, when we did spiritual growth, I told you that that was the number one issue that the men who helped storyboard this series and book, was the number one issue for them was spiritual growth. However, from my perspective, looking out on men, this is the number one issue. Marriage is the number one issue. In other words, in the work that we do with men, perhaps you've heard me say this before, if we took the marriage problem and put it over here in one stack and we take all of the other problems with which men struggle and put them over here in another stack, the marriage problem alone is bigger than all of the other problems men are struggling with combined. Easily.

#### **WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW THAT THE HONEYMOON IS OVER?**

Easily the number one issue that men struggle with is how to do marriage God's way. And so, the first thing I want us to talk about is this circle, what needs to happen now that the honeymoon is over? So how many of you are married, could I see your hands? Most of you. How many of you are not married? So we do have some men who are single. And then, how many of you have no intention of ever getting married again? Raise your hands. Those of you who are not married, how many of you? Ha ha ha ha ha.

So whether you're married, single, divorced, plan to get married, don't plan to get married again, these are principles that I believe that you're going to find very valuable. So now, unfortunately most everything I've talked about, I'll talk about it here. I'm trying to summarize all these years, the premier ideas about marriage, in like a short four or five thousand word talk, so we won't get everything. But I'm gonna be having to obviously say some things I've said before. I've told this story before, but I want to tell it again.

When I was dating my wife Patsy, I was racing motorcycles and my dream was to own a motorcycle dealership. Specifically, at that time, I wanted to have a Suzuki dealership and I wanted to travel around the country winning motocross races and then have this dealership. And so when we fell in love, that was the dream and so Patsy called home and she said, "Mom and Dad, I think I've met the young man I'm going to marry." And the father said, "Well that's great, honey. What does he want to do?" And she said, "Dad, it's so exciting. We're going to travel around the country and you know, he's going to be racing motorcycles and we're going to have a motorcycle dealership." I can't imagine what he must have thought.

So, since I was in love with motorcycles, I decided when we were dating, to buy Patsy a little dirt bike so we could go out and do some dirt biking together. So I bought her a little 100 cc Hodaka and so we would go out and we would ride. And watching her, she's not the most athletic person I've ever met. Watching her ride this was honestly, in my heart, I knew that she was doing it for me, that she wasn't doing it for herself. So we were married, we came back from the honeymoon. The honeymoon was over. One weekend I said, "Honey, let's go riding. Let's go dirt biking this weekend." And she said, "I tell you what, I've got some things I need to do around the house. Why don't you go by yourself this weekend?" And so I did. Do you know that once we were married, she never ever once has been on a motorcycle since that time?

When the honeymoon is over, things start happening. Adjustments have to be made. I made a partial list, and this is the problem with making a marriage work the way it's supposed to. The honeymoon's over, you're trying to figure out how to understand each other, to synchronize your lives, to set up a house, to find a rhythm of how you're going to live together. Setting up some ground rules, figuring out each other's hot buttons and how not to push them. What is going to be the division of labor in the home? How you're going to support each other. What the other person's love language is. How to encourage, comfort and console each other and taking the time to do that. Remembering that she has a dream too, just like you do. Working out a sex life, having children, going to work, figuring out how we're going to deal with money. Resolving conflicts. Not trying to control the other person. Forgiveness, asking and receiving and giving forgiveness. Having some fun together. It's a great time of adjustment when we get married.

Florence Littauer once wrote, "We are attracted to marry each other's strengths, and then go home to live with each other's weaknesses." And as problematic as that is, here's the real problem, the real problem is whatever you are struggling with in your marriage, in your first year, those things are by degrees, the same things you're going to be struggling with at the 10 year mark, the 25 year mark, the 50 year mark. And so the idea of figuring out how to address these challenges, the sooner you can get on top of them, the more effective your marriage is going to be. You should be in Ephesians chapter five, verse 25.

So, how do we solve, how do we solve this problem? In Ephesians five, verse 25 and following, we find the principle and virtually the only instruction that the Bible gives us about a husband's role with his

wife. So let's take a look at this. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy." To make her holy. "Cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." I have no idea what that means. "And to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." That's what Jesus is trying to do with us. "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives, just as they love their own bodies. He who loves his wife, love himself. After all no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church. For we are members of his body. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery. A profound and beautiful mystery.

And so, when we think about the reasons that we got married in the first place, our hopes, our dreams, the things that we share together, the things that kept us talking late into the night. My first date with my wife Patsy, we started talking and the next thing, we looked out the window and the sun had come up. Literally, we literally talked all night long and about all of these important things. And so, the way that we have the marriage that we always wanted is summed up in this text to love our wives, just basically with everything that we've learned about how Jesus loves us. And so, many years ago I came to the conclusion that I am the top priority of Jesus. He loves me, I mean he likes you, but he really likes me.

That, it just, I became clear in scriptures that, "Hey, I am his top priority. I'm the most important thing, I'm the most important thing in the world to Jesus." And so here's the Big Idea for today. **After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.** How many of you heard me say this before? A few of you. After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.

## WHAT IS A MARRIAGE?

Now let's just take a minute to take a look at, you know, what is God's plan for marriage and you know, what is our part in that? So what is a marriage? What is a marriage? Well, if you would, turn to Genesis chapter two, verse 28. Genesis chapter two, verse 18. And just a few verses give us God's master plan for marriage. Verse 18, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" Everything had been good up until that point, but, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Verse 22, "Then the Lord God made a woman from a rib that he'd taken out of the man and he brought her to the man and 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. For this reason," Repeating what was said in Ephesians five, "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. And they will become one flesh." So marriage is this mysterious, profound, beautiful, mystical fusion of two distinct human beings headed in two different directions into what the Bible calls one flesh.

And so, what is it that this woman wants from you? Look at Genesis chapter three, verse 16. "After the fall, God said to the woman, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing. With pain you will give birth to children. Your desire," Your desire, your desire, your desire, "Will be for your husband. And he will rule over you." And so, this word desire is best understood as a desire bordering on disease. Yeah. I mean that's literally, if you get into the Hebrew language, it's literally like a desire that's bordering on disease. It's just on the verge, it's just on the verge of turning into jealousy. It's just on the verge of turning into a dependency. It's just on the verge of being too clingy, too needy. And what this verse tells us, that a woman's greatest need is for her husband.

A woman's greatest need is for intimacy with her husband. A wife, a wife by her nature, is going to give you the first place in her life. That's what we know from scripture. A wife, your wife is by nature, going to give you the first place in her life. And the reason that God tells you to love her, is because by nature, you're not going to give her the first place in your life. So, the Bible tells the wife to respect her husband, but the Bible tells the husband to love the wife. In other words, to give her the intimacy that she will by nature respond and give to you. That's the way, and that's how God structured marriage.

And so, you were alone. You know, what can a marriage give you that you can get no other way? You're alone and a marriage gives you a companion. Someone you can love and care for. Someone you can protect. Someone you can provide for. You need help. You need a helper and so you need support and so marriage gives you someone to help you share the load. Someone, if you want to have a family, you kind of need some help with that.

And then, even though she loves you, naturally needs you naturally, you have that same impulse to love a woman and give your life to her, and so, one of the things that you can get from a marriage that you can't get any way else is love. An intimate friend. An intimate friend with whom you can build a life together. And then when you think about some of the other things that a marriage is, you think about the propagation of the species. It's the fabric, the family is the fabric of civilizations. And so, marriage is this most sacred bond, that is the primary institution of God's creation and so because of all that, this idea of giving ourselves wholly and completely to this relationship is something that we all have on our minds at the beginning and then of course, we get distracted by all the other things.

But if you want to get back to the, your, maybe you're already there and you want to maintain it, having your wife as your best friend, then the answer is to biblically give her the thing that she most desires and that is for you to give her the first place in your life, in the way that she is naturally disposed to give you the first place in her life. And if you drift away, if you drift away from each other, and her disposition is not to drift away, and your disposition is less so, if you do drift away, then why do you think that happens?

Do you think it's her fault? In some cases it is. You know, I have known a few wicked women in my day. But generally speaking, when the marriage relationship, when two partners begin to drift away, it's because the man was not meeting the woman's need for intimacy. And that's why the Big Idea today is that after God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.

#### HOW CAN YOU MAKE YOUR WIFE YOUR TOP PRIORITY?

And then finally, you know, how can you do this? How can you make your wife your top priority? I want to give you a few ideas. Turn with me to First Corinthians, chapter 13, if you would please. First Corinthians, chapter 13, and in First Corinthians chapter 13, Paul starts out and he talks and he talks about showing us the most excellent way, he says, "If I speak in tongues, but have not love, I'm only a resounding gong or clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can't fathom all the mysteries and all the knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am no thing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gained nothing." And then in the next four, five, six and seven, and eight, the most regal description of love. And as we read this, for every ... We say, I read the word love, why don't you just put your name? Just put your name. Probably happen six or seven times.

"Love is patient." Pat is patient. "Love is kind." Pat is kind. "It does not envy." Pat does not envy. "It does not boast." Pat does not boast. "It is not proud." Pat is not proud. "It is not rude." Eh, most of the time, Pat is not rude. "It is not self-seeking." Pat is not self-seeking. "It is not easily angered." Pat is easily angered, but would like to be not so easily angered. "It keeps no record of wrongs." Pat keeps no record of wrongs because he can't remember things anyway. "Love does not delight in evil." Pat doesn't delight in evil. "But rejoices with the truth." Pat always protects. Pat always trusts. Pat always hopes. Pat always perseveres. Pat never fails. "Love never fails."

And so, if you, the first way we can make our wives our top priority is to love her the way that Jesus loves us. Love her like we love our own bodies. And love her the way that's described here in First Corinthians 13. All right, so practically speaking, how do we do that? So the single most valuable, practical idea that I've ever heard of, is called the emotional bank account or the emotional tank. And so, I like emotional bank account being from a business background. But the concept is really very simple, that every human being, your wife, your woman, the woman you're going to marry, the woman you're married to, every woman has an emotional bank into which ... You know, it's right here somewhere in her, where her soul is, where her heart is, and every interaction, every interaction that we have with our wives we are either making a deposit into her emotional bank account, or we're making a withdrawal. And this is every word we speak, but it's also every gesture we make. Every minute that we give her or every minute that we don't give her. Everything about the relationship is either a deposit into her emotional bank account, or a withdrawal from it.

So a couple of examples. You come home from work, it's been a long day, you're exhausted. You don't want to engage with anyone and so, you have felt this way before and you have a system. A way of letting your wife know that you don't have any more extra. You don't have anything extra left over. And so, when you come in the door, you let out this deep heavy sigh ... Imitating the sound of a large zoo animal, signaling to her, "I've had a tough day, I really don't want to be bothered by anybody and anything, and whatever you have had to go through today, I've had to go through a lot worse and don't bother me." So now, is this a deposit, or a withdrawal when it comes to your wife's emotional bank account? Okay, that's what [inaudible 00:29:14]. Okay. You get the idea.

All right, now the next morning, you feel like a slug. Yeah, because you are. And so, you bring her coffee in bed trying to make it up. And after she wakes up the second time, you know with the smelling salts because she's so shocked that you'd do this. What does she recognize that to be? A deposit or a withdrawal from her emotional bank account? Of course, that's a deposit into her emotional bank account. Now, I think that would probably be enough of an idea for you to take it and run with it. But, there are some examples that could be given in addition to that. So in a survey that I did of this group many years ago, time and meaningful conversation were the two top issues that your wives told me were on their minds. Number one, that we don't spend enough time together and then when we are together, our conversation is not meaningful. Those were the two biggest issues.

And so, you could make deposits in your wife's emotional bank account by figuring out how to spend time together in meaningful ways. So that could be reading parties. It could be sitting close to each other so you're physically touching. Non-sexual touching is another deposit, by the way, into your wife's emotional bank account. One of Gary Chapman's five love languages, physical touch. Sit next to each other when you're watching television together. Put your arm around her, or hold hands and spend time together in that way.

My wife Patsy and I, our big thing has been taking 20 minutes after dinner for some meaningful conversation. So, that has shifted now, I kind of do that last thing before going to bed at night. Taking, you know, 20 or 30 minutes and just talking about whatever, but it's the idea of spending time together and then having meaningful conversation. And by the way, meaningful conversation of the listening kind is probably more valuable than the telling kind. Because, for lots of different reasons. And then I want to, do two more things. I want to quickly say to you, another way you can make your wife your top priority is by lowering expectations for what the marriage ought to be doing.

Freedman, a family assistance scholar, says that in reality, no marriage is better than 70%. 70%. So if you're expecting to have a 95% marriage, or a 100% marriage, of course I don't think anybody would be foolish enough to expect 100%, but 70%, in other words, Freedman's saying, "Hey, the best marriages are about 70%." How many days in a week are there? Seven. What's 70% of seven? Five days. So hey look, if you've got a five day a week great marriage, that's about as good as it gets. That's about as good. You should be expecting two crappy days.

All right. Erase that. Erase that. Too late. Too late. Now, the ... I'm really trying to give you here, oh there's only 30 minutes or 35 minutes. So I'm really trying to give you some of the premier ideas right? Loving her this way, like your body. This emotional bank account. Adjusting the expectations. And then this marriage prayer. So I've written three separate books on marriage and have a chapter on marriage in numerous different books. A lot has been done in this area. This book, The Marriage Prayer, has a prayer that you can pray and she can pray. Now here's the latest. Last year about nine months ago, I had an epiphany one morning when I was reading The Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer does not say My father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give me this day my daily bread, forgive me my sins as I forgive. Keep me from temptation. It's a we and an us prayer. It's not an I prayer. And I said, "Oh my gosh! How did I miss this? I've been a Christian for four decades. How did I miss this?"

That Jesus is telling us when we pray, we pray on behalf of us, not on behalf of ourselves. So I've been doing this now for, since last, you know whenever it was, nine months ago. And I've been doing it in all of my prayers. So even when I start the day, I don't pray anymore at the beginning, Father ... In the morning, I don't say, "Father, I come to meet with you and abide with you." I say, "Father, we come to meet with you and we come to abide in you." And my vision now, is all of the sudden, I'm thinking about family. You guys. Leadership. The ministry. Field people. I just, my mind just runs rampant. And all of the sudden, the capacity of my prayer life has grown so much, so exponentially, I don't even know how it could be put into words.

And then, I said, "Oh my gosh, I'm praying the marriage prayer." My version. What would a couple's version look like? And so, I'm presenting to you this morning, for the first time ever, the marriage prayer, couple's edition. I'm gonna read through the prayer and then I'm gonna tell you how to use it. Or suggest how to use it.

Father, we said til death do us part. We want to mean it. Help us to love you more than each other and each other more than anyone or anything else. Is that any different than what's already in there? All right. So I think once we get past the first sentence, the first sentence is the old one, the original one is "I want to mean it." You know, "Help me to love you more." So "Father, we said." In fact, I think it's even "Father, I said." Right? So this is a total transition from I and me to us and we.

Father we said til death do us part. Help us to mean it. We want to love you more than each other and each other more than anyone or anything else. Help us bring each other into your presence today. Make us three in one, like you are three in one. We want to hear each other, serve each, cherish each other and serve each other so we both would love you more and bring you glory.

Is that amazing? Is that amazing? Now, so I started praying this and I told my wife about it. And then one day, I said, "Hey, let's pray the marriage prayer together." Oh my gosh, that is the most intimidating thing I have done in forever. To pray out loud with my wife, and by the way, I still can't do it everyday, but we have been doing it about once a week. More spirit led than, but there's Patsy and we're praying "Father, we said til death do us part. We mean it. We love you more than each other and each other more than anyone or anything else. Lord help us bring each other into your presence today. Make us one like you are three in one. We want to hear you. We want to hear each other. We want to cherish each other. We want to serve each other. So that we both would love you more and can bring you glory."

And when I say this, about loving each other more than anyone or anything else, you know what goes through my mind? "Gosh, I hope she loves me that way." And you know what that reminds me of? She hopes I love her that way, because that's way she's made. Her desire, her desire is for her husband. And then that's the couple's edition and by the way, there's a pro version. There's a pro version. And this takes out the wanting and just states it that it's matter of fact. And this is actually the way I pray. These are the 70, I think it's like 71 words now. This is the way I pray it, I don't pray it "We want to mean it." I say, you know, "We mean it." And I don't pray, "Help us to love you more." Help us to love you more. I say, "We love you more than." You know, and so, we're way beyond wanting it. You know, we're there. We're there. And I hope you're there too.

But whether you're there or not, especially if you're not, the Big Idea today is this, after God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for this grand topic as part of lives that is really above all other parts of our lives. Lord, some of us just needed to be reminded of this this morning, of something we're already doing, others of us needed to be reminded of this this morning, to make an adjustment for and make correction. Some of us, this was good input for the future of a new or an upcoming marriage or a future marriage, whatever the case, Lord I do pray that after you Lord, but before anyone or anything else, that we each would make our wives our top priority. I pray this Jesus, in your name, Amen.