

### Church and the Mystery of Marriage (3)

*I've talked to many people who grew up in the 60's. I was pretty young during that time, but have had a number of teens and young adults in our neighborhood who were in the midst of the 60's while it was happening and it truly was a counter cultural experience of drugs, free love, make peace not war, and hippie communes. It was partly a rebellion against the status quo. College campuses and the likes of Bill Ayers, Timothy Leary and others were promoting social revolution and "Turn on, Tune in and Drop out". Government and traditions did need a critical look and transformation at that time in fact we go through seasons like that. In fact, I think we are in a season like that right now, where it's a time at looking at what's going on and hopefully being able to come together as a people and look for a way forward together. The reality is right now though is, where are we? The disciples of the 60's have spread their gospel and are the leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in our government, in our churches, in our schools, in the media and other places of authority. **What do you see happening? What do you see taking place?***

#### **Excitement..Concern...A Vision fueled by idealism & rebellion**

For some there is certainly excitement. It is the beginning of the fulfillment of a vision that some have worked for decades. For others there is concern in what has taken place. It certainly has been a vision that has been fueled by idealism and partly by rebellion as well. And into the midst of that reality that we live right now I share with you words from Ephesians that seem like from an ancient time long, long ago that really have no application to today. **"Wives submit to your husbands."** There are a lot of preachers that would not even touch this with a ten-foot pole! But as you know, I've been doing a series on Church and the Mystery of Marriage. And I believe it is a very important word for us in this moment and us in this culture at this time. During the first week of this series, I spent some time reflecting with you on Ephesians 5 and Genesis 2 and God's word about how He created the male and female how at the very beginning of time it was not good for man to be alone. And so He created woman out of man and man was able to say, "At last this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" and we reflected on the reality that Adam and Eve were the first married couple and that marriage is a sacrament. It is sacred before God. It is a wonderful, wonderful institution. I also shared with you that week that if a man and a woman love each other enough that if they want to be together and want to share their lives together and want to be intimate with each other then they should get married before the altar of God and before His people. That we might pray for them and support them in the love that they have for one another; it's a wonderful thing.

Last week I reflected with you as Paul was writing this letter to the Ephesians that the Spirit of God gave him an AHA moment. That he began to understand by the Divine Revelation of the Holy Spirit that from the beginning of time before all eternity that God had in mind Christ's relationship with the Church, and that that was going to be the model for marriage, and not the other way around. And that Christ loving the Church and surrendering his life for the Church, and sacrificing himself for the Church was to be the model for the husband and the wife surrendering to that love and enjoying the fellowship of that love was to be the model for the wife as well. And one of the themes throughout this letter from Paul to the Ephesians is his idea of submit to one another out of the love for Christ, and to grow together in relationship with one another. **So God created the relationship of Christ in the Church as the model of Christian marriage. It is the basis as to which we are to live that relationship out by. And as the Church submits to Christ, so wives ought to submit to their husbands.** So why don't we take a moment to reflect on what it looks like as the Church for us to submit to Christ.

**Well the Church first submits to Christ as the head in terms of Christ being the supplier.** You know we as the Church who are gathered here and the body of Christ throughout the world we are talked about as the body of Christ; that we are talked about as the very body of Jesus: we are His hands, we are His feet, we are His embrace, and we are what complete the rest of His body. And Jesus is the head. That's a very important part of the whole reality of what we are. The head and the body need to go together. If you don't have a head without a body, you don't go anywhere. You need both of them together! And so the body is in need of a head and the head is in need of a body. And that is why Paul uses this wonderful image as Christ as the head of the Church. And one of the ways that Christ is the head is that He supplies the body with everything that it needs. He supplies it with direction; He supplies it with leadership; He supplies it with love; He supplies it with grace; He supplies it with nourishment; He supplies it with coordination. He supplies it with all these things that the body might move in unison together and head in the right direction under God's will and desire. Now we've all seen bodies that sometimes do that, bodies that move gracefully and bodies that move in the right direction and do wonderful things; we marvel at their ability. But we also at times have seen bodies that don't work together really well. Maybe there was a stroke; maybe there was some kind of accident where somebody was paralyzed from the neck down and the head is still working; the brain is still working but the body is paralyzed, but the body is not moving in coordination and it's just not working. So you see it's just so important for the body and the head to work together.

**So first of all the Church first submits to Christ as the head in terms as the supplier of all its needs. Ephesians 4:15 reads, "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow every way into Him who is the head."**

## **The Churches growth & goal is the HEAD**

**Secondly, the Church also submits to Christ as the head, in terms of His authority in the life of the Church.** Ephesians 1 beginning of verse 20 we read, **“God raised Him from the dead and made Him sit at His right hand in the Heavenly places far above every rule and authority and power and dominion above every name that is named, not only in this age but in every age to come. And he has put all things under his feet, and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”** And so as we read that text in Ephesians one of the things that you and I learn is that the reason why the Father has put everything under Christ’s feet is for the Church. You know one of the things you and I may not realize is how much we are a part of Jesus. You may not think about it very much; you may not consider that in your life very much; but you are a part of the body of Jesus. You are part of what makes him up in this world in this moment. And it is important again for you and I to surrender to His authority to the Church to follow His direction and lead; to honor His word; to surrender to the power of the Spirit; to actually be His body upon this earth. Guess who He’s going to move through upon the planet right now? He’s going to move through you! He’s going to move through His body; you are His hands; you are His feet; you are His mouth; you are the one through whom His spirit moves. And it is His body through whom He is going to reach the world. So we need to hear that here today. We need to hear that and need to accept that and embrace that.

As you and I as the Church truly and completely embrace the authority that Jesus has over us, and his headship in our lives, and surrender to that, wonderful things will happen; beautiful things will happen. We will move more and more in the Spirit. We will be able to have more grace to move in our lives and in our relationships with one another, and we will be more open to God doing more incredible things outside of these doors as well. But it’s only as you and I surrender to His direction and leadership in our lives

**John Piper shares “in the context of Ephesians, the husband’s headship implies he should accept greater responsibility for supplying the needs of his wife (material, protection and care) and he should accept greater responsibility of authority and leadership in the family”. He goes on to say in the scriptures, “this submission is limited as to the Lord. The authority of Jesus comes first in a wife’s life, and hence, she cannot yield to or follow her husband into sin.”** So let me ask you a question that I think is a most simple question but is so real... **Why do you and I have such a hard time submitting?** Why is it, that I even mention that word, why is it that when you even read that word something begins to stir inside of you and you just want to fight back? Right? I’m not going to ask for a show of hands because if everybody was honest, everybody’s hand in this place would go up, but I won’t put you through that. **But why is it that you and I buck against the idea of submission, surrender, and authority?** Well part of it is because of the 60’s. Ever since the 60’s in this country, we have been in rebellion against authority. And that has not changed. And we have following down that path, and we are at it right now going through some of the fruits of that. But part of it as well beloved, if we are going to be honest with ourselves, lies within our hearts. We are a rebellious people. God said to Israel time and time again that through the Prophets, he didn’t say to them, “Oh you’re so supple”. “You’re so open and honest and understanding, and surrendering to my love and submitting to what I want you to do.” That’s not what the Lord said to Israel, was it? What did He say to him? “You’re a stiff-necked people.” The same to be said for you and me! You are a stiff-necked people. Rebellious! I say “right”; you say “left”. I say “up”; you say “down”. I say “yes”; you say “no”. I seem to remember a song like that.

**Why does our Church, why do we in our relationships have such a problem submitting and surrendering to one another, yet alone a wife in her relationship to her husband? The reason why is because we want it our way. We just want it our way. We know better don't we?** And even if we don't know better, we won't admit that to the other person because we want to win, right? And we're gonna win no matter what. **Let me just say this; in a marriage relationship and in any relationship especially within the body of Christ as well, I believe each person should be heard. I think we should at least listen to one another.** Then maybe we would agree to disagree at that point, and then kind of try to pray it through and work on to a common ground of compromise. Maybe we get there; maybe we don't. One of the things Jan and I try to operate by (and notice that word 'try') if we can't come to agreement on something we just wait and pray it through and just try to work towards a place where we can compromise. **But one of the things you and I need to be careful of in any relationship, especially in the relationship of wife and husband is the root of rebellion.** Because what happens in a person's life is that, their life becomes shaped by whom they oppose. If there is a root of rebellion in a person's heart, it's not about listening, it's not about coming to a common understanding, it's not about surrendering to what the Lord wants for the relationship, it's about opposing the other person. It's about getting your way and it's about winning.

**Life is shaped by who you oppose...not who you are**

**And so one of the things you and I need to realize is that if there is a root of rebellion in your heart, that your life is being shaped by who you oppose; not by who you are; and that is two very different things.** Your life is being shaped by whom you oppose and not by who you are. And let me just say, I believe that Christ's relationship with the Church, He wants to form us based on our love relationship with Him. He wants to form and shape us based on who He always wanted us to be. And He wants to speak to us lovingly, tenderly, and compassionately, and encouragingly, and correctively, but it is always rooted in love, not in rebellion. **Who you really are will be formed in surrendered love.** That's where it will really take place. And if that has not taken place, let me just submit to you, that you have yet to become fully who God has called you to be because at this point you are simply someone based on you opposed.

God is calling us into identity that is shaped out of surrendered love and submitted love and out of relationship. And you know this can play out in so many different ways, and our relationship with one another; and in particular a relationship with a wife and a husband. This can happen in so many different ways.

And in closing today, I would like to share with you a true story about one event in a family's life, and how it played out for them.

*As a struggling young preacher, E. V. had trouble earning a living. That led him to invest the family's scarce resources, over Jane's objections, in the purchase of a service station. She felt her husband lacked the time and expertise to oversee his investment, which proved to be accurate. Eventually, the station went broke, and E. V. lost his shirt in the deal.*

*He had failed at something important, and his wife would have been justified in saying, "I told you so." But Jane had an intuitive understanding of her husband's vulnerability. Thus, when E. V. called to tell her that he had lost the station, she said simply, "All right."*

*E. V. came home that night expecting his wife to be pouting over his foolish investment. Instead, she sat down with him and said, "I've been doing some figuring. I figure that you don't smoke and you don't drink. If you smoked and drank, you would have lost as much as you lost in the service station. So, it's six in one hand and a half-dozen in the other. Let's forget it".*

*Jane could have shattered her husband's confidence at that delicate juncture. The male ego is surprisingly fragile, especially during times of failure and embarrassment. That's why E. V. needed to hear her say, "I still believe in you", and that is precisely the message she conveyed to him.*

*Shortly after the fiasco with the service station, E. V. came home one night and found the house dark. When he opened the door, he saw that Jane had prepared a candlelight dinner for two.*

*"What meanest thou this?" he said with characteristic humor.*

*"Well", said Jane, "we're going to eat by candlelight tonight". E.V. thought that was a great idea and went into the bathroom to wash his hands. He tried unsuccessfully to turn on the light. Then he felt his way into the bedroom and flipped another switch. Darkness prevailed. The young pastor went back to the dining room and asked Jane why the electricity was off. She began to cry.*

*"You work so hard, and we're trying", said Jane, "but it's pretty rough. I didn't have quite enough money to pay the light bill. I didn't want you to know about it, so I thought we would just eat by candlelight".*

*Dr. Hill described his wife's words with intense emotion: "She could have said, 'I've never been in this situation before. I was reared in the home of Dr. Caruthers, and we never had our electricity off.' She could have broken my spirit; she could have ruined me; she could have demoralized me. But instead, she said, 'Somehow or another we'll get these lights on. But let's eat tonight by candlelight.'"*

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