

# Choosing Christ in Marriage

Colossians 3:18-19

## Intro

“Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation.” -C. S. Lewis

There is always risk involved in choosing to love like Jesus.

Before we even get started today I want to remind us that the central message of Christianity is not that we are bad people who simply need to learn to behave better. Christianity is not a religion of self-help nor self-improvement. Rather, the gospel teaches us that we are dead people who need a resurrection.

There is no way that we can possibly walk out the teachings principles of the gospel unless we have been resurrected by the presence of Christ in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is why we must utterly turn our backs on sin and the philosophy of the world (that is to repent) and believe in Jesus. Believing in Jesus means rejecting everything opposed to him which this world stands for and receiving his philosophy, his ethics, his word over and above everything else. Then, once we have been made alive and Christ we are called for the rest of our lives to work out what it means to live in this way, as people who have repented and believed in Jesus. Marriage is an important topic, because it becomes an epicenter in the battleground in our hearts within which we are waging war with sin and learning to follow Jesus rather than Satan.

A critical aspect of our discipleship is that we must change the way we think about marriage and family. This passage we find ourselves in today is all about the apostle Paul teaching us what it looks like to set our aims on Christ rather than on the world. There's a reason why he dedicates a significant portion of it to marriage, to family, and to work relationships. Relationships are where we brush up against other people, where people get to know us best, and particularly within the intimate relationship a husband and wife have together, that we prove our mettle so to speak. In these relationships we begin to see who we really are by observing the way we respond to others, communicate with others, and exercise our work ethic. These next few weeks are going to be good for us, even if some of what we have to endure will prick our hearts along the way. Any pricking that occurs will be only for our good if we are sons of God's kingdom through Christ.

The common misconception in our society today is that marriage is about two people coming together in pursuit of happiness. If that is your primary goal and coming into marriage, then you aren't coming into marriage with a Christian perspective.

Christian marriage is not about two people pursuing happiness together, Rather is about two people pursuing holiness together. A Christian marriage is the ultimate laboratory within which we observe and learn what it means to die to ourselves and become like Christ.

As a Christian, I don't go into a marriage looking for how my spouse can make me happy. That's a failing mindset that will always lead to disappointment. Tim Keller says that when we go into marriage expecting our spouse to make us happy, we are elevating that person to the position of a god in our lives and no one can possibly live up to that. Idolatry in marriage today is common and commonly leads to divorce.

Instead of expecting my wife to make me happy, I repent of my worldly expectations, die to myself, and ask the Lord how I can throw myself into making her happy as best as I can.

The wild part is that when you have two people who are utterly devoted to dying to themselves so that the other person might live, what you end up with is a healthy, fulfilling, joy-filled marriage. This isn't to say that there won't be challenges, or that there won't be days or even seasons when you wake up feeling like you don't feel like being married that day, but when you're aim it should be made into the image of Christ rather than to be nearly happy for a season, everything about the way that we approach marriage and endure hardship together changes. If Christ is not our center, we cannot succeed, at least not on the level that Christ has envisioned for us to do so.

## Discover

- I. Women turn their backs on sin by subjecting themselves to their husband's leadership in the home.
  - A. What God calls us to do is often opposite of our impulses and the world's wisdom, but His way is always the pathway to life.
  - B. Christ likens his church to a bride and to the extent that a woman submits to her husband she is acting out what life saving repentance looks like in real time.
  - C. By giving her husband respect, even when he might not be able to live up to it yet, she is building him up and enabling him to walk in repentance rather than embracing the passivity of Adam.

## II. Men turn our backs on sin by actively laying our lives down for our wives.

- A. Biblical husbandry is not about dominance over our wives, but about mastering ourselves for the sake of our wives.
  - 1. Rather than living for himself, the repentant husband seeks to intentionally fulfill his wife's every need as much as possible.
- B. Biblical husbands extend the same sort of grace Christ has extended towards us to our wives.
  - 1. Rather than crushing them under the weight of our wrath when they upset us, we take our wrath upon ourselves like Jesus and we own our wife's sin rather than punishing her for it.
  - 2. This act of extending grace towards our wives, taking ownership of problems we didn't create, and generally fighting to lift them up does wonders towards softening their hearts towards us and towards God.
- C. By loving our wives in this way, we are actually empowering them to overcome the sin pattern of Eve. We are making a life of repentance easier for them by being a man who is worth her following and pledging her life to.
  - 1. When I see an unhealthy marriage, often both parties are at fault in some way but the path to restoration almost always begins with a repentant husband who is willing to lay his life down for his wife even if he gets nothing back in return.
    - a) We are most identified with the Christ who loves us first and loves lled us while we were still enemies when we choose to love our wives like this.
    - b) "In short, the "secret" is not simply the fact of marriage per se. It is the message that what husbands should do for their wives is what Jesus did to bring us into union with himself. And what was that? Jesus gave himself up for us. Jesus the Son, though equal with the Father, gave up his glory and took on our human nature (Philippians 2:5ff). But further, he willingly went to the cross and paid the penalty for our sins, removing our guilt and condemnation, so that we could be united with him (Romans 6:5) and take on his nature (2 Peter 1:4). He gave up his glory and power and became a servant. He died to his own interests and looked to our needs and interests instead (Romans 15:1-3). Jesus's sacrificial service to us has brought us into a deep union with him and he with us. And that, Paul says, is the key not only to understanding marriage but to living it." -Tim & Kathy Keller (The Meaning of Marriage)

### III. When husbands and wives are actively repenting away from self and towards Christ and one another together, sparks fly.

- A. They are more fulfilled in the relationship when they aren't seeking personal fulfillment but rather the fulfillment of the other person.
- B. They grow closer to the heart of Christ and therefore the secret to having true and lasting joy in life.
- C. They become a healthy example for the culture around them, a beacon calling the miserable and lost to repentance.

## Nurture

Who is God? He is the Lord who has fit us for Himself.

What has God done? He has shown us in Christ what it looks like to love one another by laying ourselves down.

Who are we? We are those who have been given the good inheritance of a new life in Christ which we get to exercise through marriage.

What are we called to do? We are called to aim our lives towards Christ in everything, and especially in the way we do marriage.

## Act

Sexuality and marriage are great markers which point to who the Lord of our lives truly is. In everything we do, we must actively turn our backs on sin and aim ourselves towards Christ. We don't want to miss out on the abundant life He has for us and we don't want others to miss out because we were not faithful examples for them.