

Marriage as a Means to Become Like Christ

Series: 5 Words --- Week 2

James 1:2-4; Philippians 2:1-7

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- August 29, 2021

Well, good morning, people of Grace! Thank you for joining us today, and thank you for joining us online.

Before we get going with our learning time, I want to say something just so you'll know. I have a disease in my right ear that sometimes causes me violence. They've cured some of the symptoms, but it's an incurable thing. So, every once in a while, I'll get dizzy. And sometimes I am blessed with violent vertigo. It happened yesterday. So, it just means that I'm going to stumble around, probably fall down, and then that sometimes leads to other things. So, I'm telling you that because, if you see me and that happens, you don't need to worry. We don't need to care about Matt. Just two or three Benadryl and it's all good. I'll wake up tomorrow.

Anyway, I just wanted you to know that's a possibility today. You can now spend a few seconds talking to someone next to you about what the odds are of me getting through today's lesson. It's also a way to keep the tension so that you keep looking up here to see what's going to happen next. It's kind of a gag.

Well, let's start with our learning time today. A little more than ten years ago, a group of leaders at Grace were coming back from a mission trip. And when we were on the plane I was sitting next to this young man, and we did that thing where he says, "What do you do for a living?" In my business it kills more conversations than just about anything.

So--- *Yeah, I'm a pastor.*

Ring the bell. *Stewardess, can I sit somewhere else? I'm in a hostile row here.*

But he was one of the minority people that just said --- (I just start telling people that I'm an architect. That worked in other places.) This guy, when I told him I was a pastor, said, "Oh, fine." He wasn't threatened by that. He wasn't going to be strange about it. He'd been married about three years and he said, "Let's talk about my marriage."

And I said, "Well, let's do that." I said, "Did you do premarital counseling?"

"No, I didn't. We just argue about everything. Do you have any advice?"

I said, “Well, I think I do.” I had a napkin and a pen. I said, “Here it is: six principles, five words. Just do these.” And I wrote down the words: Break, Bond, One, Love, Respect. I said, “There’s a sixth principle in there as well, but you do these, and if you get a humble heart towards these, God can change your marriage and make it everything it was meant to be.”

And we talked about what each word meant and how it applied, and by the time we landed, he said, “This is awesome. I can’t wait to give this a try. Can I have that napkin?”

I said, “No, I just made this up. This is really good stuff! It’ll preach!” And so, it’s here. I’m preaching it. So, I made him a copy and he took that home.

Principle #1: Marriage Is a Means to Becoming Like Christ

Six principles, five words. Here’s the first principle. Here’s what you absolutely need to know about marriage. One: that marriage is the means to become like Christ. You have to see marriage in its purpose, and that purpose is to make us like Christ.

A quick review from last week, because it applies to this week as well: human beings have difficulties in relationships with each other, but especially in marriage, because our souls are deeply broken. At their core they are bent the wrong way. We’re not designed this way. It’s not God’s fault. It is our fault, and we broke it. And now—the way we were meant to be—we’re not that way.

Our original design—the way we say it here at Grace—is to “face out.” That is, to look at all of life by looking out on that; gazing, we say, gazing at the glory of God and His majesty; gazing at nature and enjoying that God made that and He’s really good at art; gazing into other human souls, every human soul in its uniqueness, that we might know them and love them and make them all that they were meant to be; serving other people.

And so, our design was to be self-forgetful. Our design was to be innocent and proud of that innocence. Our design was to be ambitious, but not selfish ambition. It was a beautiful plan. It’s a beautiful mold. It’s a great design. But we broke that design.

Romans 8:29

For those who God foreknew, He also predestined to become transformed to the likeness of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

And because of that, our life purpose, in many respects, is a journey. It's a journey back to the Garden of Eden. We need to get back to our original design. Adam, or even better, second Adam—His name is Jesus Christ. And it is our destiny, friends. It says in the Bible, "For whom God foreknew, He predestined to become transformed into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ." God's destiny for us is to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. That's His plan for us. We need to get on that so that we can start facing out like that.

Problem: We Are Self-Centered

And here's the thing—we see it in life. Nothing works the way it's supposed to work when people are facing in on themselves. When we're self-centered, ego-driven, those sorts of thing, nothing works. It doesn't work in relationships, it doesn't work in sports, it doesn't work in the Church. It doesn't work in the way we're meant to be, because we're proud and we're self-centered. Everything's about us.

But life does work when we find ourselves being visited by God's Spirit and we start looking out. And in that looking out, we're gazing at other people and we're not the big issue here. Then two things happen. One, we become united with God, with nature, and with others. And then we get very productive. Because in unity, there's process. And you can produce some things, but not the journey there. But when you have a group of people turning out, they're united while producing things, and they're enjoying the journey of getting production done. We can get things done and be happy about it.

There was a runaway best-selling book called *Ego is the Enemy*. It's not a Christian book at all. It's by Ryan Holiday. And the book *Ego Is the Enemy* was so profound that now it's given out and required reading for some major corporations and for a lot of professional sports teams. And that's because the people that are on top making these decisions to hand this book out understand, *If we can just get these egos out of the way and we can be faced out and serve one another, we can get a lot done and enjoy doing it on our journey.*

Facing out—it’s the way we were meant to be. Facing in—it’s all about me. Facing in is a cancer in our soul, in the deepest part, in its recesses. And it curses everything. It curses relationship, it curses work, it curses church. It curses church.

There’s a fun video of a “facing in” church. *Church is all about me.* Look what it looks like. Why don’t you play that?

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“Me Church” Video

<https://www.ignitermedia.com/products/8652-mechurch-2>

Voiceover: Imagine a church where every member is passionately, whole-heartedly, and recklessly calling the shots. [Scan of empty pews at a church.]

Runner: *[Woman in workout clothes, tying her shoes]* I don’t know who sets the worship center temperature, but why does it have to be so cold?

[She runs off.]

Voiceover: Why do you have to be so right? Heated chairs are now being installed.

[Young married couple sit side by side. The wife is scowling and in a bathrobe, holding a baby girl. The husband is upbeat and wearing a casual shirt and ballcap.]

Husband: This one *[points at his wife]* wants a small church. But I’m afraid if it’s too small, they’re going to make me volunteer like crazy. And I don’t stack chairs, do I?

[Wife frowns and deflects the husband’s kiss, which he then bestows on the baby.]

Voiceover: It makes total sense. Join now and we’ll let you decide the size of our church.

[Group of six men and women presumably in their twenties, seated casually on and around a table. Most are looking at their phones, one is drinking coffee.]

Guy with glasses and cool socks: We’re millennials. We want a church that ...

Voiceover: Say no more. Any request you have will be granted immediately.

[All six people listen up and look at the camera and smile and nod happily.]

Woman in parking lot: Parking is horrible. It takes me almost six minutes to get from my car to the building. *[Noise of frustration as she walks off.]*

Voiceover: It's going to take me six seconds to tell you a valet service is on the way. *[In the background a valet opens a car door as the driver gets out right in front a building.]*

[Young man sits at a desk surrounded by stacks of books. He takes off his glasses.]

Bible scholar: My pastor's preaching is all over the map. I say—I don't know—stick with the books of the Bible. We should only be exe-da-getical. *[He puts his glasses back on and his attention returns to his pile of books.]*

Voiceover: Okay. Next week we start John chapter 1, verse 1. And we'll even start pronouncing the word the way you said it. *[On screen the word "exegetical" separates and makes room in the middle for the extra syllable "da." Pronunciation (ek-si-duh-jeet-ik-ul) is shown beneath the word.]*

[Man around forty years of age is dressed athletically. Behind him are four other men talking together with large trees in the background. They appear to be in a park.]

Sermon Length Man: Hey, I'd like the sermon to be no longer than thirty minutes.

Voiceover: How does fifteen minutes sound?

Sermon Length Man: Hey, anybody willing to go to fifteen should be willing to go to ten.

Voiceover: *[chuckling]* You drive a hard bargain. *[Someone hands off a football to the man.]*

But from now on, five-minute sermons it is.

Sermon Length Man: Ha ha! Now you're talking. *[Downs the football.]* Hut!

Voiceover: Me church—where it's all about you. *[A scenic view of a church steeple against a blue sky.]*

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Based on a true story. Well, I'm done with my ten minutes. I've got to go.

[Laughter.]

Look, the church of Jesus Christ, the bride of the King, is supposed to be a beacon of what it looks like for people that are dedicated to turning out, gazing upon God and nature and our fellow human beings, so that we can enjoy the humility of that and enjoy getting things done. In our unity—when we’re facing out the way we’re meant to be, we become unified, and we do what God wants us to do, and we enjoy the process of getting it done.

So, watch how Saint Paul writes to a church, his favorite church in many respects—Philippians. And they’re having some unity issues. But he prays for them. He’s praying for you, he’s praying for me in this prayer. Watch how he’s praying for us to face out and to be like Christ in all of life.

Philippians 2:1

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy ...

So it starts like this: “So if there’s any encouragement in Christ”—well, sure there is. It’s assuming “yes” on these. “Is there any comfort from love?” You bet. “Any participation in the Spirit?” Absolutely. “Any affection and sympathy?” Amen.

Philippians 2:2-4

... complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Now look how’s he’s saying to turn out, face out. “Complete my joy by being of the same mind”—unified—“in the same love”—unified—“being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

See? He’s telling us to look at other people’s needs first. Man, I just wish there was some kind of role model or example we could follow ... next verse.

Philippians 2:5-7

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant ...

“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God”—the essence of God—“did not count equality with God as something to be grasped”—or held onto—“but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant.”

Wow. I don't know what we're holding onto when we turn in, but Jesus is the God-man who says, *I'm going to leave that here and not take advantage of that. I'm going to face out. I'm going to leave my rights here so that I can serve the will of my Father.* That's what it looks like.

Examples of Jesus's Compassion

When we talk about becoming like Christ in all of life, that's the end game. And marriage is a primary means of doing that. Jesus has a way of showing us in His life—you can just follow this in the gospels. Look at when He shows compassion to people. He shows compassion just to give and just to serve. And there's no agenda for Him. He's just doing it because that's what people need to have happen in their lives.

Maybe it's just me, but when I give and when I serve and maybe sacrifice for other people, there's just this underlying, nasty, subliminal, nagging infestation of ulterior motives. *I hope this gets found out ... maybe somebody will recognize this later.*

And sometimes we don't even know it's in the soup until we don't get any recognition. And we kind of say, *Well, what about me? I was there stacking chairs, you know. I was in that ...anyway, maybe, maybe that's just the way it is. I hope I get noticed.*

That's not being self-forgetful. That's a sign of facing in. And that's a sign of a disease.

So, the point is that our souls are not right. And they're very broken. They're bent. Facing out was the original design and now we have this addiction of facing in. And the process of becoming like Christ, starting here, at self-centeredness, and becoming like Christ, humbling

Himself to become like a man—that is called sanctification. It's the theological word of that process.

And that process is this: it's real change from inside out. You have to change what motivates you. There, that's rough. It changes what motivates you. And this illness we have—here's the point. This illness we have is so demented that only the power of God's Spirit can change us. There is no hope except for hope in God's Spirit. It is our destiny. The Father says, *You are destined to become like Christ*. But it's the Spirit that we need to make it work. We can't fix this without it. And relationships, especially marriage, show us all of those needs where we need the Holy Spirit applied to this---in buckets. That's the point of marriage. Marriage is a means to become like Christ.

Marriage is the merciless revealer, the great white searchlight turned on the darkest places of human nature.

---- Katherine Anne Porter

And no relationship is quite like marriage. That's one of the themes here. I love what Katherine Porter says: "Marriage is the merciless revealer, the great white searchlight turned onto the darkest places of our human nature." Amen. It is the great white searchlight to the darkest recesses of our human nature. She's talking about original sin. The depth of our sin can't be fully appreciated until you get married. And your mate will tell you all about it.

Let me put it another way. Marriage is purgatory. I know, that's flattering. I'm going to say more about marriage. Marriage is the place that you find yourself getting ready, becoming holy, to face God face to face. You might enjoy His presence as the way that you were meant to be. Marriage is going to be the means of doing that.

Marriage is a trap. There, it keeps getting better. For you single people, you're probably going to make decisions to never get married. It's purgatory, it's a trap. Here's why it's a trap. Because when you're single you maybe have three other roommates. And you may have a little spat going back and forth and it gets kind of elevated. There's a big argument. You just go back into your room and you close the door and you lay on the bed and think, *They're wrong*. You just go Napoleon—*Everybody's wrong and I'm right. Maybe they'll find their way*.

Marriage is a trap, because when you go to your room, it's not your room. It's y'all's room. It sounds like people have been to this room. And that person just follows you in and says, Uh-uh, no, we're going to keep talking about this. This is not going away. And so, you're on the couch. And you know what happens when you're on the couch? You're back being right again. *Look at me. You know, I'm right. I could use a blanket right now. I'm kind of cold. But she's going to see ... a couple more nights on the couch and she's going to see.*

No, that's not what happens. You've got to work this stuff out.

In summary, our souls are broken and bent—not in a way that three weeks of therapy is going to help. You have to have the power of the Holy Spirit getting in there. You have to become like Christ. And in becoming like Christ, when you start turning out, when you start facing out, you, in your humility and self-forgetfulness, will become united. And in that unity, you will produce what God wants for you in marriage and in yourselves. And you'll enjoy the production process. It's the way we're designed. It's the way we were made.

We Need the Power of God's Spirit in Our Marriages

So, what does that look like? Five principles, right? Five words and six principles. Five words we'll look at, coming up. And the first principle is the foundation that you put these five pillars on. And the principle is this: that we have to get the power of God's Spirit into our marriage. We have to get the power of God's Spirit into our lives. Because it's required. It's the only way it will work.

1. Blueprint for Marriage

And we need to do this for two reasons. Why do we need the power of God's Spirit in us? One, because He designed the blueprints for marriage. Marriage is a set of blueprints. This is what marriage is supposed to be—five words. And He knows. He invented it. And if you don't go by that blueprint, what happens is a guy comes into a marriage and says, *I'm going to do everything my parents did.* Or, *I'm going to do the opposite of everything my parents did.* And the bride walks in and says, *I'm going to do what my parents did, or the opposite of what my parents did.*

Anyway, the point is that we don't have a plan. And you can't build without a plan. You have to have a blueprint. If you can imagine being a contractor, and a husband and wife come in and say, *Hey, we're going to build a house. It's going to be great.*

The guy rolls out the blueprints of a three-story glass and steel building and says, *Oh, yeah, it's going to be that modern look. I can't wait.*

Then she brings her own blueprints and says, *Yeah, I was thinking more of a Victorian style with a wrap-around porch. You know, really quaint?*

The contractor says, *Nah. I'm not touching this. You guys figure out what y'all want, and then maybe I'll do something ... but probably not with you guys.*

Here's the thing. God comes into this picture and says, *I designed man and I designed woman. I know how they're made. I designed marriage. This is how marriage works. This is how it looks. Go to the electrical page. That's on forgiveness. Here's how you give forgiveness. Here's when you give forgiveness. Here's how you respond to forgiveness. Go to the framing pages. Here's compassion. Here's how to give compassion. Here's when to give compassion. Here's how to receive compassion.*

We just have all these ways of knowing what we were meant to do, and when we do it according to plan---I know it sounds obvious—but people don't do it. God wrote the blueprints. And the blueprints are: Break, Bond, One, Love, Respect. It's right there on the bumper sticker. Break, Bond, One, Love, and Respect.



As a matter of fact, the youth committee got ahold of this stuff and they made stickers, because that's what they do. Kevin and Sarah and Tammy get ahold of stuff and they make it fun and they make it pretty. So, these will be out—I think they're around campus in the Sunday school classes. You put them on your little jug or refrigerator and when you have something going on, you just point to--here's where we're arguing, right here. I thought it'd be fun.

That's the blueprint: Break, Bond, One, Love, Respect. That's how it works.

What's funny about this blueprint is that it is so absolutely true in every culture, in every race, in every epic of time, that you can send this to people that are not Bible readers and don't attend church; but when they work the five words, they get a lot more than these churchgoers

who don't read the blueprints. Because this is the way marriage works. Understand the blueprints.

Understand this: that marriage is a means to make you more like Christ in all of life, perfect, complete, and lacking in nothing. When you see this is the means and this is the end, you can start appreciating marriage for what it is. The five words—if you could study these together as a couple and as couples together study them, apply them, look at the final product and you're going to see the way God is working in your life to bring you to the place where you're destined to be.

2. The Power to Change

The second reason we need the power of God's Spirit in our lives is this. This is very important. The Spirit, as I mentioned before, is needed for the power of change. The change we're talking about is way more than habitual. It's more than just disciplines. In a marriage, it's two people, each one of them having the absolute power to destroy the marriage. They're both bent, turned in, and they can light it up anytime with that attitude of selfishness. But if they both choose to humbly submit to the will of God and what God is having for them, and they each acknowledge that they are the problem and want to be surrendered to Him, then a great marriage is about to happen.

Great marriages are formed when people are trying to get fixed vertically and then apply it horizontally. They're going to get fixed vertically and then apply it horizontally. Even the best marriages, friends ... I'm assuming that there's no ill motive in arguing back and forth, there's no malicious intent—just good marriages with two kind people—they still cause a lot of injuries. And if it's a good marriage, the injuries are deep, because you're trusting that other person, and when they do something, it cuts deeper than a normal relationship would.

So, I just want to show you in a few sentences that marriage is this unusual opportunity to really grow in your relationship with God and to become what you were predestined to become. Just a few sentences ... you've probably seen these passages and you've applied them to hard times. I want you to see that these passages also apply to hard and difficult marriages.

James 1:2

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds ...

This is James. This is how he starts his book. James chapter 1, verse 2: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.” So, sure, it’s easy to look at “trials of any kind” and say, *Well, yeah, when a Christian’s being persecuted or has long-term unemployment, or a various trial could be a long-term illness.* Right. And so, consider it a joy to be experiencing that, because good things can happen.

What if I told you that it also means marriage? One of the various trials that you’re having to endure is marriage, because marriage is trying to take you to Philippians chapter 2 where we’re like Christ and seeking other people first, not only focusing on our own needs. What is one of the trials is the death to the narcissistic nature of our deep soul? That’s a trial ... sure.

James 1:3-4

... because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Here’s what he’s trying to help us with. “Because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” How does it end? “Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete and lacking in nothing.” What another way of saying that? Like Christ in all of life.

So, again, it’s easy to see that the testing of your faith during trials like physical persecution, loss of income, illness—it’s testing your faith. What’s it testing your faith in? Well, it’s testing your faith in the nature of God. Is God kind, is He loving, is He aware of what’s going on here? Does He have any power to get me out of this trouble? Sure, that works for this passage.

But what if one of the “various trials” is marriage, and the trial is trying to become a changed human being like Christ, and the testing of your faith is those things? But also, does God have the power to change me? How powerful is the Spirit of God that could make me a

humble man? I sometimes doubt that. And God says, *No, try me. I can lead you to places that will give you a chance to be humble. I'll humiliate you. And maybe you can learn from that.*

So, God can take us to place where we can have a trial where we're addicted to security. And He brings that trial in our life so that we can trust in His faithfulness to find our trust in Him for our security, not in our provisions. You see? That's a trial where we're trusting God.

Marriage is like the ultimate twelve-step program. I'd walk in a twelve-step program and say, *Yeah, I cannot become like who I'm supposed to be. I'm powerless over this.* Step two: the Holy Spirit has the power to make you the way you were meant to be. He can make you like Christ. There's step one and two.

I'm just going to walk in a twelve-step program and say, "Hi, my name's Matt, and I'm married." I don't think that's going to ring true or make sense.

How about this? "My name is Matt, and I'm addicted to self-centered 'bent in'-ess, and I cannot become what I'm destined to become for my wife's sake."

"Hi, Matt."

That sounds like a twelve-step program. I can't do this—only God's Spirit can.

Marriage is a place where we can heal and we can grow. And we get this vertically so we can get it out horizontally. We have to be healed and we have to grow in our areas of weakness by receiving that from the promises of God and the glory of God. We get that and we get it from God, and it overflows into our other relationships.

In your relationship with your wife or your husband, how are you going to love them if your source of love is horizontal? Where are you going to go? Just—I don't know---watch a lot of Hallmark movies or something and just get feeling like you should love more?

What if you tapped into the power of God's love for you and studied that to the point where it's absolutely changing your soul from the inside out. I'll tell you, if you need a thimbleful of that love for you, God will give you gallons of love. And you'll want to know, *What do I do with all this left over?* There it is. That's what you bring to your family. The source of the love is God's love for you. And you say, *I've got to get this stuff out. I've got to bring it to my wife.*

Not just love, but acceptance and approval. A lot of arguments that we have back and forth in our living rooms are "I need to be accepted" and "I need you to accept me" and going

back and forth, and we're just trying to exchange what we don't have from each other because of our insecurities.

But what if we spent an extended amount of time trying to believe the promises of God about what He says about us being accepted? What if we went vertical for a while before we went horizontal and found out that He cannot possibly, logically love us any more than He does. He can't love us any less. Wow.

And that He calls us ... Look at these positional statements. He calls us His son, His daughter. We have inherited His righteousness. Now we come with this security—not insecurity—and we get to trade in this overflow of security and trade promises with our mate about *Here's what it looks like for you, honey*.

So, the first principle is that we've got to get the power of God's Spirit into our marriage because we need the blueprint and we need the power to change intrinsically, completely. Watch how this rolls up: so much of this is so that we can be the primary minister in our home. At Grace Covenant Church every member's a minister, right? We say that all the time. I'm just the pastor, you guys are the ministers. So, we're always looking for ministry. There's a lot of ministry in your living room. If you see that God's working in your life vertically so that you give horizontally, you can be the co-pastor of the relationships under your roof. And I would say this—that you are uniquely able to bring ministry there that sometimes no one else can do. Because sometimes in life—this is God working on the destiny of your mate and they're not learning and God does what He has to do, nothing more or nothing less that He has to do to get a person to be teachable, to listen, to look up. Maybe the famous line from heaven is, “How's that working for you? No?”

So, there are just times in our life when we think, *What is happening? Nothing is working. My kids hate me, my dog won't even come when I call. I've got telemarketers hanging up on me. No, wait, no ... let's talk!* And that's that whole Napoleon thing where you just find yourself thinking, *Everybody's wrong and I'm right and I don't know why ...* And then there's anger and resentment and now we're collecting names of people that we want to get back—that whole thing.

So, that's happening because, left to ourselves, we can turn in and just keep turning in. And then, this co-minister to the family, this person that understands that one, marriage is a

means to becoming like Christ, and two, the Spirit of God is the way that's going to happen and I am the minister of this message.

So, in a soft voice and with a kind heart overflowing with compassion towards that mate, you come in and say, *All these things you are fighting are not the fight. You're wrestling with God. There are too many things going wrong to just be circumstantial. There's a plan here. He's breaking you. I think He's just grown tired. His patience is worn out. And He's growing tired of your pride or your greed or your need for other people's approval, whatever it is. So, He's just putting you in time out. So, everything you touch turns to dirt. He's just putting you in time out. Now, here's the problem, baby. He'll leave you here as long as necessary, because you're destined to become like His son. And so, you can sit and sulk and it can take weeks. It can take months. I've seen it take years. And I'm here. If we lose the house, we can live in a mobile home, if we leave the mobile home we can probably live in that Suburban. But that's not the thing here. Here's the thing. You're going to come out of this thing on the other side with a limp for a lifetime. But you'll be better. You'll be better with a limp than proud without one. So, honey, I'm going to leave you to yourself, I'm going to let you pray about this. Why don't you seek God on how He's using these events to help you be not so concerned about yourself, but to concern yourself with others? For even though He was in equality with God, He left that and humbled Himself and became like a man. What if you were to humble yourself like Christ? That's your destiny. And I, as your husband (or wife), want to be on that path to bring you to that place.*

That's courageous ministry, isn't it? You need God's Spirit to be a courageous minister in your house. Otherwise it's just anger versus anger, insecurity versus insecurity.

Let me just make it clear. Marriage is a means of helping us become like Christ in all of life—Him humbled, perfect, complete, lacking in nothing. And we need to seize the opportunity for that. I hope that's clear.

How to Seize the Moment in This Series

How do you seize this moment? We have a moment right here in this series. How do we seize this series? It starts with this: today's application is for this to be a call to surrender, a call to dedication, a call to humility, a call to start over for some.

Okay, this is the day, I get it now.

How's it working?

It ain't working!

Okay, good. Could we try the blueprint and the Spirit of God's power? Let's try that.

So, today's a call of commitment on that. So there. I'd ask you not to miss another week of the series. Bring a friend too. This is a blueprint that works for every marriage. Why do the singles keep coming back? I'll tell you why—because some day they might be married and this is the blueprint. Or, every believer's a minister. This is great ministry skill stuff. You could be on the airline, whether you're single or married, and say, *Oh, yeah, here it is. Break, Bond, One, Love and Respect. Can I have that napkin?*

So, I'd get involved. I'd get the study guide that we have with it. It's gorgeous. Boy, the guys that did this put a lot of work into it. We have chapter supplements from other people who write on this subject matter. You could get a bumper sticker, too ... I don't know. If you're online, you can download the pdf and print it out.

And one of the reasons I'm loving the pdf part is the next application is to get in a small group. We have a lot of small groups available. If you just leave the auditorium after this service and cross the hallway over by the coffee bar, there's a place for you to join a small group, and they'll discuss today's lesson in that small group.

Many of our adult communities are doing this, because they are all applying it in different life stages. Do that.

Third, start your own small group. Call your friends, call your family, call neighbors—the whole Skype thing. Now you can do the whole thing with the pdf and watching it online and just going through the questions together. Let's go through life together making marriages the way they ought to be according to the blueprint.

The fourth application I want you to know about is a beautiful ministry that we have here. Jeremiah mentioned it earlier. It's called ReEngage. ReEngage is a ministry to the city of Austin. Jeremiah told me this week that about forty percent of the people who attend don't go to Grace. We have no heartburn over that. We like that. A lot of the churches don't have the resources we have, some don't have the values about marriage. Whatever the reason is, we don't care; we want to serve as many people in the community as possible. Not everyone who comes is a believer. A lot of them don't even care about being a believer. That's okay. I would encourage you to consider ReEngage. It's free childcare, it's Monday nights. It's like a great date where there's a planned thing going on. You get mentored by someone, sometimes by someone who

wrecked their marriage worse than you can ever imagine. And they're going to work you through yours. It's a beautiful ministry. It's very inspirational. There's a table in the lobby—I think Jeremiah's working at that table. Go by and see him and see what it happens.

Do you know what you could do if you're in a home group now? Your whole home group could go. Make it Monday nights. Childcare is provided. We've seen that happen too.

Do something—thirty-five minutes a week is not going to be enough for life change. You have to apply it each week.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with this. All good things ... you have to work for. And a marriage is a great thing. And it's going to require a lot of work. You've got two egos clashing regularly, and guess what? The ego is the enemy. A best-selling book says so. Not *that* best-selling book—the Bible. *That* best-selling book. And it's going to require divine intervention.

“Hi, I'm Matt. And I'm a husband that cannot become what God wants me to become. But God's Spirit can make me do that.”

“Hi, Matt.”

Love must be learned, and learned again and again; there is no end to it. Hate needs no instruction, but waits only to be provoked.

--- Katherine Anne Porter

The goal is the true and the beautiful. Not personal happiness, but fulfillment in our destiny to become like Christ in all of life. And our primary attribute that we're trying to attain is love. And I'll use the same quote as last week: “Love must be learned and learned again and again. There is no end to it. Hate needs no instruction but waits only to be provoked.”

Don't settle. Don't settle in your marriage. Dream and seek God's ambition for your marriage, that it would be the means of you understanding the depth of love and being loved, of knowing someone and being known by someone deeply. And the way to get there is the power of the Holy Spirit making you like Christ in all of life, so that you would have stories to tell on heaven and on earth about what God has done for your life. Let's pray to that goal.

Lord, first and foremost, I pray for surrender. I pray to the Spirit of God. I pray for the Holy Spirit to come into our lives and overwhelm us with love and understanding and power—the power to change this bentness in us. Lord, it's Paul's prayer for us to become like You in Your humility, so that we might experience unity that can only be acknowledged in the context of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unity—that kind of unity. We could have a taste of that here with a husband or a wife, a brother and a sister. That is our ambition. So, Lord, I'd ask that Your Spirit would root out and convict us of sin, the sin of selfishness or egocentricity—whatever—so that we could start anew. There are some men and women in here that want to just start over. I'd ask that You would give them the encouragement to do that.

And Lord, let us be a church that loves what marriage could look like; that when done well, it glorifies You in its harmony and laughter, joy, and even in suffering and sorrow. Lord, I'd ask that You would bless this church in that way.

To God be the glory. And all God's people said ... Amen.