



TEXT: Ephesians 5:22-32

SUBJECT: The Gospel Changes Everything #3: Marriage

Today, with God' s blessing, we will move on in our study called, *The Gospel Changes Everything*. I don' t know who came up with the slogan, but it is Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York, who made it popular. Much of what he says about it can be found in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*, which is one of the best books I know of. Without being childish or silly, it is an easy read, and well worth your time.

The Gospel Changes Everything maybe hard to apply at times, but it is easy to explain. I' ve told you the big idea already, but it bears repeating:

The Gospel is the power of God for salvation, and salvation is the believer' s whole life.

In other words, the Gospel fixes what' s wrong with us. Other things *promise* to fix us, but they don' t fix us—not what' s really wrong with us and not for long.

Let me illustrate. Is overeating a spiritual problem? It is—not obesity, but overeating. Do diet books and personal trainers help people to eat less and better? Most of them don' t. The reason we have a million diet books on the market is because people have tried other ones, and failed. But some do work, don' t they, some of the time? Sure they do. We' ve all known a few success stories in the ocean of failures!

How do they do it? For the most part, they do it by playing on overeaters' guilt, fears, and vanity. ' You' re gross; you' re going to die, and if you drop a hundred pounds, you' re going to be smokin' hot!' .

Some people respond to the appeals and lose weight (though most don' t). But have the books and trainers really helped them? They' ve made them thinner people, but better people? I don' t think so. They' re still focussed on themselves. They' re still trying to justify themselves by being ' fitter than thou' . Some questions:

- In light of Romans 8:1, should an overweight Christian live in guilt and a sense of condemnation?

- In light of I Corinthians 15:55, should an overweight Christian live in fear of death?
- In light of Ephesians 5:27, should an overweight Christian feel ‘ ugly and gross and repulsive’ ?

But the Gospel? It addresses the underlying issues, and in doing that (when rightly and consistently believed) it breaks the power of compulsive eating. This doesn’ t mean we’ ll all look like movie stars, but that’ s okay. God has something better for us—

Those He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

The Law of God does not fix what’ s wrong with us—no less human wisdom—but—

What the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3).

TODAY’ S TOPIC

If the Gospel changes *everything*, there is nothing it changes more than marriage—in theory, I mean. In practice, most Christian couples are as untouched by the Gospel as their unbelieving neighbors. Oh, they want to stay married, of course, and, they want a happier and more peaceful home. But where do they look for peace and happiness and permanence?

They look to common sense and counseling.

A young husband and wife have their first big fight. Where does the woman go first? She goes to her mother, ‘ Mom, What do I do?’ When that doesn’ t work, she goes to her minister, ‘ Pastor, What do I do?’ When he doesn’ t know, she goes to a professional, ‘ Doctor, What do I do?’

The woman is looking for Rules. She ought to be looking for a Savior. Rules have their place, but they don’ t work until they’ re put there—*inside the Gospel*. The woman will never know ‘ What to do’ until she first understands, What God has done for her in Christ! Reciting the Apostles’ Creed is not enough. She has to see how His saving work saves her from the pride or despair or laziness or selfishness or anger or whatever is hurting her marriage.

This takes wisdom. And that takes prayer—

If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men freely, and does not upbraid them. But let him ask in faith...

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

To apply the Gospel to marriage, we have to know what the Gospel is. Narrowly, it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But, true and necessary as these things are, they make no sense unless they' re put into the bigger picture. Which is displayed in three panels:

- God made the world good.
- Because of human sin, God' s good creation has been marred—not ' destroyed' , but ' defaced' , like a mustache on the Mona Lisa.
- By the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ, God is restoring the world to its pristine goodness and more.

THE THREE PANELS AND MARRIAGE

When applied to marriage, the three panels go a long way toward fixing it. No matter how bad it has gotten.

Marriage is a good thing—not ' marriage' in the abstract—but your marriage is a good thing. This means (1) it cannot be lightly discarded, because you' re bored with it, because your wife has gained weight, because your husband doesn' t spend as much time with the kids as he ought to, and so on. It also means (2) it' s worth working for, and so you cannot simply drop out: ' paper marriages' are not acceptable! If marriage is a created thing, you cannot look to it for the satisfaction only God can give. Yes, it is a picture of the union of Christ and His Church, but it is not the thing itself. When marriage is worshiped as a god, it becomes a devil.

Marriage is a fallen thing. Knowing this properly lowers the expectations you put on your spouse. And it reminds you that you' re part of the problem as well. Thus, if you' re going to be happily married, you' ve got to (1) overlook many faults without a word; (2) forgive many sins; (3) be patient, because sanctification is a slow process and allows for much backsliding; (4) be humble. Very few marriage problems are one way only. Even when a husband, let' s say, starts the problem, a wife will often make it worse by responding to it sinfully.

Marriage is a redeemed thing. God is at work in your marriage, and though He doesn't work on your schedule, He is working on His own. The wife's faults have not been totally eliminated, and one reason they haven't been is because they're good for you—teaching patience and forgiveness, and giving you the chance to love a very imperfect wife, just as Christ loves a very imperfect Bride.

Because God is at work in your marriage, there is no place for despair.

A woman once told me, 'It's going to take a miracle to change my husband'. I asked her if she was praying for one. She replied by rolling her eyes. Maybe she had not because she asked not.

MARRIAGE BUSTERS

What are the main breakers of marriage? I thought of three: infidelity, indifference, and control. The Gospel address all three and gives us the insight and power to resist them.

Infidelity. How can I be unfaithful to my wife when Jesus is faithful to His? How can I look for satisfaction in the other woman when I know my only satisfaction will be in Christ?

Indifference. How can I ignore my wife when Jesus never ignores His Bride? How can she not matter to me—or matter less than my hobbies or buddies when we so mattered to Christ He sacrificed—not His poker night—but His all to save us? How can I allow the wrinkles on her face, the gray in her hair the extra pounds on the scale make me love her less when the Church's flaws don't make Christ love us any less?

Control. Does Jesus control the Church? In a way He does, but how it does it is what matters? He rules the Church in love, in the same way He tells husband to rule their wives—by forgetting himself and pouring all His energy into her.

THE TEXT

This brings us to our text. How can Paul ask a wife to submit to her husband? Or a husband to love his wife 'as Christ loved the church'? The demands seem way too high for reason and well past our ability to comply. And so they are...

Till we remember the Gospel. By submitting to her husband, the wife does not give herself up to him, but to Christ who first gave Himself up for her. She obeys and respects her husband—not because he's always right—but because she trusts the Lord who is.

The same is true of the husband. How can he love His wife? By remembering Christ' s love for him, in all his ugliness and ingratitude.

[Home Page](#) |

Sermons provided by www.GraceBaptist.ws