



# 10 One Flesh (Harmony)

The following excerpts are taken from part 12 of "Building a Joyful Marriage." The full message is available on [FoodForYourSoul.net](http://FoodForYourSoul.net)



## The Meaning of "One Flesh"

When God introduces marriage to us in the beginning of the Bible He says it is two people becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:24). When Jesus spoke of marriage in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 He said "the two will become one flesh." When Paul taught about marriage in Ephesians 5 he said, "the two will become one flesh." The concept of one flesh even comes up in 1 Corinthians 6 in the context of sexual purity. One flesh is really the central hub around which the Bible instruction about marriage turns. Clearly this is a very important matter.

**And the two shall become one flesh**

To review what Genesis 2 revealed about the meaning of one flesh: *The one-flesh relationship is a union of body, soul, spirit, mind, will, affections, purpose, priority, motive, direction, possessions, and every other part of life in a degree and kind of oneness that is unique to the marriage relationship and that is designed to display the union of Christ and the Church. It is both a positional status possessed by all married couples and an ideal toward which all couples should strive.* One flesh, then, means being close to each other in every way – much closer than any other human relationship.

## Harmony

Of all the ways marriage reflects the relationship between God and His people, which is more wonderful than this one? Intimacy, emotional closeness, having nothing that puts any distance between you. It's a horrible thing to have your spouse be angry with you, right? How much worse to have God angry with you! Are there any words in the Bible more devastating than Romans 1:18? **The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men.** What could possibly be worse than to have Almighty God angry with you, and to be estranged from Him? Nothing. And so what words could possibly be sweeter than the words 4 chapters

later: **Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.** What words could be more precious than Colossians 1:21? **Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. <sup>22</sup>But now he has reconciled you.** What could possibly be more astonishing and breathtaking and delightful to our souls than the combination of verses 4 and 11 of Psalms 4? **O LORD ... I have sinned against you. ... <sup>11</sup>I know that you are pleased with me.**

Never be content to live with emotional distance or strife in your marriage. Fight with everything that is in you until the day you die to live up to the amazing mystery of being one flesh with your spouse so you can reflect the peace and intimacy that Christ died to enable between God and His people.

The most obvious thing we can say about the meaning of the one flesh relationship in marriage is that it is like the relationship of body parts within the body because that is what "flesh" means – the body. God made Eve from Adam's body, and so when Adam saw her the first thing he said was, "Behold, this is now flesh of my flesh ..." and then it goes on to say that for this reason couples will become one flesh. So because of the way God created Eve – that's why married couples become one flesh.

And when Paul discusses one flesh in Ephesians he shows us some of the significance of that. **Ephesians 5:28-31 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves 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."** So the one flesh relationship means that the man and wife should function together with a harmony and cooperation that is similar to the way body parts function together.

## Harmony in Purpose

In a Christian marriage the man and wife should have the same ultimate goals. A partnership does not work if you have conflicting objectives. Imagine two people pulling something up a hill with a rope. If they are perfectly aligned and they are both pulling in exactly the same direction, all their energy goes into pulling the load. But if he is pulling slightly to the left and she is pulling slightly to the right, some of their energy is taken away from pulling the load and is wasted countering the other partner. And if they get to the point where he's pulling straight north and she's pulling straight south, then no force is exerted on the load at all. It just stays still and all their energy is exerted pulling against each other.

All Christians have the same goal in life: the will of God (if that's not the goal of your life then you're not a Christian). So as Christians we have the same ultimate goal, but we aren't always agreed on the best way to reach that goal. Part of living as one flesh means living in harmony on that question. Being

in agreement and pulling the same direction with regard to questions like, "What is the wisest course? Which way should we go? What should we do right now?" When we are unified on those questions then we waste no energy pulling against each other, and we combine all our strength in the task God has given us. If your master gives you a rope and tells you and a fellow slave to pull a heavy load up the hill, he's not going to be happy if he returns and finds you and the fellow slave in a tug-a-war and the load still sitting there at the bottom of the hill.

And if you understand how God guides us through headship then you know this is possible. When you don't agree on which is the wisest course, the husband works hard at bringing about agreement and oneness of heart, and the wife, from the time the disagreement starts until the time it is resolved, during that interval of time where you disagree with one another, you respectfully offer your counsel, and then you joyfully, happily, enthusiastically submit to and support your husband's decision (unless it would be a sin to do so). And you can do that because you understand that God's way of leading you in the marriage is through your husband's decision making. So you don't have to second guess his decision, because you understand that it is God's will for you both to be unified in following the course your husband chooses unless it would be sin to do so.

When an experienced whitewater rafting guide is riding in a boat with a less experienced guide, and the novice chooses a bad line through the rapid, the experienced guide will enthusiastically follow his commands. In fact, he will paddle even harder than normal because he knows it's going to take some extra hard paddling to make it through on this bad line. Everybody in the boat being fully committed to a bad line is far better than everyone in the boat trying to paddle in different directions. It's better to support your husband even when he takes a poor line than to pull in a different direction—as long as doing so does not require you to sin.

And beyond that, you can be even more enthusiastic when you understand that God has promised to lead you through the decisions of those in authority over you. God has not given that promise to people in a raft, but He has given it to wives.

## Harmony in Spending

Money is a huge part of life, and so the couple that strives to live up to their one flesh status must function as one with their money. Husband and wife should not have separate bank accounts, and neither husband nor wife should make any non-routine purchase without discussing it with the spouse.

Some husbands may balk at this point, imagining that their headship exempts them from having to discuss decisions with his wife. But remember, leading is when you conceive of a good direction, and you help those under your

care to see the goodness of that direction, and then when they are on board you set the pace in going in that direction. If you are incapable of showing your wife the goodness of the idea, maybe the idea isn't actually all that good.

Strive for oneness in your finances that no energy at all is wasted pulling against your spouse. And if you think your husband's decisions are going to cause a disaster, paddle all the harder and support him all the more and the place all your trust in God.

### Harmony in Warfare

I believe one of the biggest problems with most Christian marriages is lack of fighting. There's not enough fighting! And where there is fighting, most couples aren't fighting hard enough. We need to become much more effective in our fighting, so that we win. And the most important way to become more effective in that area is to start fighting the right enemy.

I watched a movie recently in which some Nazis were trying to take over the world, and the Nazi leader said, "Hitler was a fool. You don't fight the United States and Russia; you get them to fight each other and destroy each other." And so came up with this plan to get Russia and the US to engage in a nuclear war against each other by setting off a nuclear bomb in the US that seemed like it came from Russia. Satan has the exact same strategy for destroying your marriage. He attacks your marriage, and then cons you into retaliating against your spouse!

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Your spouse is not the enemy. It is never a good thing to fight against your spouse. If you fight your own flesh, by definition you're guaranteed to lose! If you're one flesh with your spouse then what happens to your spouse happens to you. So if your spouse loses a fight that means you've suffered a loss. You literally can't win when you're fighting against your spouse.

We must never fight each other. However it is important that we fight hard and tenaciously against the enemy who is attacking our marriages. Stop fighting face to face and start fighting side by side. Instead of becoming angry at your spouse when some sin or problem invades your marriage, look at that sin or problem as a common enemy that you and your spouse need to team up to fight against. Every couple faces trials and difficulties that are a threat to the marriage. You don't have enough money to pay the bills. Or one of the kids is rebelling or being irresponsible. Or your system for keeping the house clean isn't working. Or the husband's job keeps him away from the family too much. Satan loves to use those trials as weapons against your marriage.

So you get angry at each other because of the money problem. You start to resent everything your spouse buys, or you get upset because your spouse doesn't seem to be taking the problem seriously. Or you get mad at your husband for being gone at work so much. And you get mad at

your wife for not understanding that you have to make a living, and that you don't have the option of just leaving work at whatever moment you please. Now Satan's has you fighting each other, face to face. Why not join hands with your spouse and fight back against Satan side by side as a team? You see this threat and instead of having anger toward your husband you have compassion and sympathy, because you understand the predicament his job situation puts him in. And the husband sees what's going on and is full of compassion and sympathy for his wife, who has to suffer because of this trial. So instead of attacking your spouse and defending yourself you can show compassion toward each other and support each other and encourage each other and strengthen each other and walk with each other through the trial. And Satan will be fighting against two superpowers at the same time and he will flee from you.

You can even have that attitude when the trial that is threatening your marriage is a sin. One spouse falls into some sin, and the other one has a response of compassion. And instead of being angry or bitter, you see this sin as an attack from Satan on your own flesh and bone, and you do all you can to stand by your spouse and fight against the sin as a common enemy. "Honey, I'm here for you. I know this area is hard for you - just like my areas of sin are hard for me. What can I do to help you gain strength against this temptation?" You have compassion and understanding. You know what it's like when you've been overtaken by sin, and in love you desire to do all you can to strengthen and encourage your spouse to rise up and fight against that sin. (For an in-depth study on how to bring your spouse to repentance and how and when to forgive see the sermon series titled "Forgiveness." ([http://foodforyoursoul.net/ffys\\_v2/?page\\_id=9](http://foodforyoursoul.net/ffys_v2/?page_id=9)))

### Harmony in Roles

Another area where we need to be in harmony is in our roles in the home. Talk it over and make sure you're in agreement on what it means for the man to be the head of the home and for the wife to be a suitable helper. *And* what does it mean for the wife to be the homemaker.

**1 Timothy 5:14 So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.**

The norm for a young woman is to get married, have kids, and *manage the home*. There are some unusual cases in which God calls a woman to remain single, or some unusual case in which God wants a couple to be childless. But the norm for a woman is to get married, have children, and manage the home.

**Titus 2:4-5 ...train the younger women to love their husbands and children, <sup>5</sup>to be self-controlled and pure, to be**

### busy at home...

While it's the man's role to take ultimate responsibility for the management of the entire household (1 Timothy 3:5), it is specifically the woman's area to care for, watch over, guard and manage the home. The idea that a woman's primary arena of operation is in the home is not chauvinistic. Whoever was the first person to suggest that homemaking was somehow a menial or degrading pursuit should have his head examined. Can you think of any concept or any word in the English language that has a more pleasant association to more people than the word *home*? Home is where you wish you were when you are tired or scared. Home is a place of safety, comfort, provision, warmth and love. A child running from neighborhood bullies is terrified up until the moment he steps inside the front door of his home. It's where he comes to eat, or to be sheltered from the weather. If he gets lost, the reason he is distressed is because he can't go home. It's fun to stay in a hotel once in a while, but it doesn't take too many nights of that and you get so you want more than anything just to be home. Kids at camp get homesick, but as much as kids love camp, I've never seen a kid get campsick when he was at home. Home is where you get home-cooking. Home is where you can relax, and take off your shoes and be yourself. So what on earth could possibly be a more noble pursuit than being a home *maker*? - to be the creator & maintainer of a place like that? What possible line of reasoning could lead a person to the conclusion that it is more noble and meaningful and fulfilling for a woman to go out and sell widgets - or manufacture widgets, or broker big widget deals, or be the senior VP in charge of widget operations? It's not glamorous and it's not applauded by our twisted, blind culture, and nobody pays you to do it. And like any job it has its mundane aspects. But look at what it accomplishes: the creation of a home! - which enables the nurture of a family!

This is why God made women more concerned than men on average about the environment they live in. Men sometimes resist spending any money on decoration and the aesthetics of the home. But your wife's desire for that rises from her God-given affections that delight in beautiful surroundings, and it is part of being a home-maker.

A woman's place in this world, then, is the most wonderful place God ever created in this world - the home. But what is the best way in your particular family to live that out? Which household chores make the most sense to fall to which partner? If there is a chore that both of you tend to think of as the responsibility of the other one, it's going to be a constant source of irritation. Or if there is something that the man thinks of as being the wife's job, so that if he does it occasionally he thinks of it as a special favor to her; but the wife thinks of it as just as much his responsibility as hers, so if he doesn't do it at least half the time it seems to her like he's neglecting his responsibility, then what he thinks is a special favor for his wife is actually a source of irritation to her. That's

why, again, it's so important for you to talk to each other about even small sources of irritation, so that differences like that can be ironed out. Because part of what it means to be one flesh is to function harmoniously, like the parts of a body. Function harmoniously in purpose, in warfare, and in roles.

### Fighting Against Fighting

What is it that usually steals warmth from your love? Isn't it usually either anger or apathy? Apathy kills intimacy because without constant nurture a love relationship will cool off. You just get so wrapped up in work, or a project, a hobby, the kids, ministry, etc. and you just don't put forth the effort to nurture your relationship with your spouse, and so the fires of your love die down. And when it goes unchecked the end result is you look at your spouse one day and there isn't slightest flicker of attraction or desire or delight.

If you feel yourself somewhere on that path of apathy, remember the importance of oneness and intimacy. God is not satisfied with mere avoidance of divorce. He calls for intimate and passionate love, and anything short of that is sin.

The other big killer of one flesh intimacy is anger. Anger is caused by pride (an inflated concept of your own self-importance) and covetousness (thinking you need something besides God to be happy, such as a certain kind of treatment from your spouse). For a message on how to overcome anger see part 5 of the sermon series titled "Forgiveness."

It's important that even small amounts of anger be rooted out of our hearts. Resentment is like corrosion on a car battery—once it begins, it builds and grows until it overtakes the heart and makes love seem impossible.

When a wife's heard has become bitter the husband can do some nice thing and all she can think is, "What an anomaly that was. It will never last. Sure, he does one good thing, but what about all these other things? He always does this - one little effort to change, then right back to his old patterns." And the next thing you know she is furious with him over this act of kindness! It is now impossible for her to acknowledge any progress.

For example, suppose a man and wife fight about him coming home late from work all the time. And so he makes some changes at work that he thinks will make a big difference. But the result isn't as big a difference as he hoped. Now he is coming home late 14 nights per month instead of 20. But his wife has built up so much resentment and bitterness that she is focused on those 14 nights and she can't see anything else. To her it seems like nothing has changed. Every one of those 14 nights adds to her resentment and anger. Every minute he is late she is thinking, *See, nothing ever changes*" - even though the reality is a 30% improvement.

It's vitally important that you never allow grievances to