

Christ's Culture: Becoming One Flesh

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

We have identified that in the Culture of Christ marriage is a spiritual union of two people through Holy matrimony rather than a temporal “contract” overseen by civil government. That differentiation identifies who has authority to define marriage; God versus the civil government.

You and Christ

Accepting Christ as your Savior and Lord defines what it means to be a husband, wife and child, because He has defined those roles in His Word. Relationships in many Christian marriages and families are not reflective of Christ and what He has ordained for marriage and family. One of the reasons for this is that foundational principles for marriage too frequently are not taught. If you are not taught these principles, including having them modeled to you, it will be difficult for you to apply them.

When the application of a Biblical principle is turned over to God, that is, you have given up trying to do what only God can, than the Holy Spirit sets you on the path of “process” which will bring you in line with what He has in mind. Some call this kind of belief “simplistic”. (The inference is that it is too simple to be True.) I believe God has given us a simple process in being who He has made us to be. Understanding who God would have us to be and how He would bring us there is not difficult. The difficulty comes with the battle between the mind of the flesh and the mind of the Spirit which we possess. That is the battle we often fight, rather than the one of understanding.

Understand

It is vital to understand that changing the framework of your marriage and family is a “process”, not an event. If you are among the norm, you have lived for years without His standard of marriage and family as your model, and, in a very practical sense, it will take years for that model to be replaced.

It is also vital to understand that changing models for marriage and family is a process which you are unable to effect. Your role in the transformation of your marriage and family is to: fix your eyes on Jesus (**Hebrews 12:1-2**), allow the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and guide (**John 14:26, 16:13**) and to obey what He teaches you about yourself (**John 14:21**).

Marriage

Two major concepts of marriage, for the most part abandoned by modern society, establish the entire framework for marriage; the concepts of the two becoming one flesh and the wife being the helpmate of the husband. I believe the abandonment of these two concepts has brought about the collapse of marriage and family as God has ordained it.

I believe most marriages could be saved, and many would never have the trouble they have had, if the concepts of oneness and the wife as a helpmate were understood, taught and applied.

One Flesh

Genesis 2:24 is not a new Scripture for most of us: **“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”** How would you answer the question, “In what way are you ‘one’ with your spouse?”

Some think of this passage only in the sense of the physical union between husband and wife during sexual intercourse. Although I am confident that view is included in this passage, it is not the full meaning of the passage. The question was placed to Jesus, **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?”** **Matthew 19:3** After quoting the passage in Genesis, Jesus said, **“Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”** **Matthew 19:6** It is obvious the “oneness” is in the marriage, not just the physical union between the husband and wife.

The entire concept of a husband and wife being one is widely ignored by American culture. Where it isn't ignored it is harshly criticized. One of the reasons for strong opposition is the impact it has on the American concept of individualism. How do you become one with your spouse without losing who "you" are? Doesn't one lose their identity to the person who is dominate?

These are natural questions when considering the joining of a man and woman together in a temporal arrangement of marriage. In the Culture of Christ, is it important to remember, the union is spiritual, reflected in the temporal. In the well rehearsed Scripture in **Ephesians 5** where Paul defines the relationship between a husband and wife, he too quotes the Genesis passage and makes this revelation, "**This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.**" **Ephesians 5:31-32** Paul is putting the relationship in its proper spiritual perspective. Marriage is to reflect the relationship to Christ with the Church.

When you received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, did you "lose" your identity? No, you became one with Him. He is abiding in you and you in Him. The same concept is applied in your marriage relationship. You are one, intricately related to each other. In the same way that who you are is altered by your relationship in Christ who you are is modified because of your relationship with your spouse. In both cases, you are no longer an "individual" in the American sense. You are no longer free to make decisions based on the selfishness with which you were born. Every aspect of your life is to be defined by the lifetime commitments you have made with Christ and with your spouse.

Decision-Making

If you were to look at a diagram of decision making for a married person you would see a number of "filters." The first filter in making any decision is that of who you are in Christ. What Biblical principle(s) impact(s) the decision before you? EVERY decision has a Biblical principle at it's root. The question is not "What Would Jesus Do?" (WWJD), the question is, "Where is it written?" because that is the question Jesus would ask.

The next question in the filter for decision making is, "In what way can this decision be made which will reveal who I am in Christ reflected in the role He has given me in the marriage? This is where the understanding of your role in the marriage, from God's perspective, fits in. As a husband you are to be the head of the house, making loving decisions which are spiritually beneficial to your wife (**Ephesians 5:25-27**). As a wife you are to submit to your husband as to the Lord (**Ephesians 5:22**). Your decisions need to reflect that God-ordained role.

Relationship

The manner in which you "treat" your spouse shouldn't be any different from the manner in which you treat others. You are to consider them more important than yourself (**Philippians 2:3-4**), you are to consider how to stimulate them to love and good deeds (**Hebrews 10:24**) and you are to "one another" them.

Your "relationship" with your spouse, however, is completely different. To put it in God's words, you are one flesh. What does that mean? Look at your own body, see how each part works with each other part and you will understand the relationship you are to have with your spouse. Pain or pleasure for one part of your body brings the same sensation to other parts of your body. Making a decision of health or harm affects your entire being. It also affects your walk with the Lord and your oneness with your spouse.

In the same way it is difficult to live "in Christ" instead of in your selfishness, so too it is difficult to live as one with your spouse. Difficult does not make impossible.

Transparency

Infidelity in marriage, on any level, is a product of not being one with your spouse. That product comes through a process of independent living behind a facade of oneness. Living "independent" of your spouse, in any area, removes all effective barriers which God has placed there to protect your marriage. It is like a breach in a dam.

Being "one" with your spouse requires total transparency. This is reflected in **1 Corinthians 7:4** where Paul tells us that your body is not your own but that of your spouse. All your thoughts, your finances, your business dealings, your relationships with others, your hopes, your dreams, your fears and your faith are wrapped up in that body. Nothing can be "intentionally kept" from your spouse. Money worries, problems with the kids, a flirtatious boss or co-worker, your attraction to someone else – nothing is kept from your spouse! "I don't want to worry her with this." "She has enough on her mind already." "I'll wait for a more appropriate time." I have heard all the excuses for keeping things from the spouse. None of them fit with God ordaining the two to become one.

Being transparent requires you to be willing to share everything with your spouse, to allow Him to speak through you that which you should share. **“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”**
Colossians 4:6

Communication

Along with transparency must come communication. Communication is one of the most difficult things you do. To really communicate is to transfer a thought, belief or concept from one person to another. At times verbal, visual, sensual and audio stimulus is required to be successful.

Listening is a must for effective communication. To truly listen you must empty yourself sufficiently to “hear” your spouse on the level they are on.

Communication requires the investment of quality time and open emotions.

Thinking as “one” with your spouse requires the same denying of self of which Jesus spoke in **Luke 9:23**. The only way the two of you can think as one is by transparently communicating with each other.

Priority

Your relationship with your spouse should be second only to, and in conjunction with, your relationship with Christ. It must come before work, money, friends, position and success. Nothing can be allowed to interfere with that relationship.

Paul, in **Ephesians 5:28-30**, tells husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, to nourish and cherish her as Christ does the Church. What an apt description of the priority one has with their spouse.

Even as children are added to the family the priority is to be with the spouse as one flesh. Children are not one with their parents and must not be allowed to come between the them.