

# The Meaning of Marriage

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [TrinityGraceAthens.com](http://TrinityGraceAthens.com).

Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. For context, I'm going to begin reading in verse 25, but our focus is going to be on verses 31 through 33.

Ephesians 5 verse 25. Husbands, love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church.

[ 1 : 35 ] However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Winston Churchill once said, It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

He was talking about Russia, but he could have been talking about a deeper mystery to which we'll give our attention this morning.

Proverbs 30 says, Three things are too wonderful for me. Four, I do not understand the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.

What is man? What is woman? Perhaps a more perplexing question for certain people in our country. What is the meaning of their relations, their love?

[ 2 : 41 ] What is love, true love after all? What is it that draws the two together into a blinding bliss? What is it that they fall into and live happily ever after?

Tis mystery all, Charles Wesley said, talking about Jesus Christ, but he could have been talking about a way of a man with a woman. And yet in these verses, the Apostle Paul unravels the unsolved mystery.

The deepest meaning for why we're made male and female. The deepest meaning for why we fall in love. The deepest meaning for why we're often better together. And the covenant of marriage is not what we imagined.

It is not primarily because two are better than one. Companionship better than loneliness.

Partnership better than going alone. It's not primarily because opposites attract like yin and yang. Because we want to have an equal but different counterpart. It's not even primarily because of the responsibility and privilege of raising a family. It's because our maleness and our femaleness and the joining together in covenant marriage is designed to reflect something else.

[ 3 : 59 ] The mystery, the wonder, the thrilling wonder of Christ's love for his bride. You know, the Bible begins and ends with a wedding.

The Lord compares his joy over his people to the joy of a bridegroom over his bride. The Lord Jesus performs his first miracle at a wedding.

He later describes himself as a bridegroom. And compares entrance into his kingdom as being welcomed to a wedding feast. But what does it all mean?

What does it mean that he's the bridegroom? It's not completely clear until these verses right here. As we said a few weeks ago, these are a household code which would have been common in the first century.

The idea of explaining the relations. How the relations inside a family work. But these household codes are a little bit different. Because they're trying to explain how the relations of a family should work. Now that you're born again in Christ.

[ 5 : 03 ] So all of it is for the sake of Christ. It's turned and roles are reinterpreted to align with the truth of the gospel. But this household code focuses even more significantly.

Because it focuses more directly, most specifically on marriage. It includes 155 words on marriage. 40 addressing wives. 150 addressing husbands.

Surely husbands and wives need all the help they can get. But that's not why it includes so much on husbands and wives. It includes so much because he's unpacking a mystery.

Now mystery biblically is not referring to something undiscovered and unsolved. Like the old show, Unsolved Mysteries. That I used to love as a kid. That's not primarily what it's talking about.

But it's something that cannot be understood apart from the revelation of God. And so he's explaining something important. Marriage is designed to reflect the overwhelmingly thrilling wonder of Christ's love for the church.

[ 6 : 09 ] Not just generally through the institution. But specifically through the ways every wife and husband relate. It's not just the meaning of marriage. It's the meaning of everything.

Everything. Is to be shot through with this wonder. And with following Christ and self-denial.

In a word, where we're going is the only truly happy marriage is built on self-denial for the sake of Christ and the display of the gospel. The only truly happy marriage, despite what the psychologist may say, is built on self-denial for the sake of Christ and the display of the gospel.

Now I think that will be clear by the time we're gone. But you could actually just say the only truly happy life is built on self-denial for the sake of Christ and the display of the gospel. And so we're going to break this out.

Three headings. The first is the purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage. The purpose of marriage unfolds in the opening pages of our Bible. It's very fascinating. Our Bible begins with all creation being made.

[ 7 : 18 ] Boom! And then a wedding. Ephesians 5 is unpacking roles and responsibilities within marriage. But suddenly Paul turns to the mystery behind it all when he quotes Genesis 2.24 right here in our passage.

The apostle Paul has taken us back to the beginning. He's taken us back to that first marriage. And if you remember that, you could open your Bible and read it today. The Lord fills the earth with good things.

He spoke all things into existence. So many good things. It was good. It was good. It was good. It was good. After all the days. It was very good after he created man and woman. But there was something in Genesis 2 that was not good.

It was not good that man was alone. So God went about fixing the problem. But he didn't do it immediately. God brought man all the animals of the earth two by two.

Now this is incredible. God, I imagine this pageant-like scene where, you know, Adam's kind of propped up with a lemonade. And naming all the animals of the earth. It's just incredible.

[ 8 : 24 ] They come two by two. You know, giraffes, rhinos. How about that, man? Seeing that for the first time. Squirrels, ostriches, all these things. Bob Dylan wrote a song on this when he was converted for three years called, Man Gave Names to All the Animals.

If you think that's, you know, he sings about so many things. It's pretty awesome to hear him sing about that. But that's a side note. But he notices them all coming out two by two. Two by two. Male and female. And he realizes he's just one. And one is the loneliest number. He realizes he has no one like him.

He doesn't just realize he needs a woman. He feels it. That's what I think is going on.

And then God goes to work and Adam falls asleep. God loves to work while you're asleep. Okay? So he upholds all things by the word of his power every night when you go to bed. So just chill out. And so he goes to work.

[ 9 : 29 ] He take, plucks out a rib and creates the rib into woman. Plucked out of him to show that she was like him. And then Adam, the Lord brings her.

The first father of the bride is the Lord himself. And he brings the woman to man. And as Etta James taught us to sing, at last, he says, bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. I think we have that for you. Genesis 2, 23. The man said, this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman. She was taken out of man. You know, surely Adam's joy captures the joy of every husband on that wedding day. But there's something else more significant. He's not just celebrating a love. He's celebrating finding a lover who is like him and yet also unlike him. She's like him. Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. You hear that in his refrain. He breaks out in poetry. As men do when they fall in love. You didn't know who's had Thoreau inside of him. [10:35] But it's coming out in poetry. But she's also unlike him. She's woman. She's different. In the same way that all the animals had a partner, male and female, so too man had woman. And then the scripture concludes after Adam's voice subsides and says, therefore man, we have that for you too, shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. The two shall become one flesh. Now you know that because we just read it in Ephesians 5. It makes clear that marriage is not a gradual development. It's not a gradual development of a society that's gaining some prosperity or something like that. It's not trial and error. We tried different things and then we landed on this. Marriage is not man's invention in any way. It is God's gift. And what we see right here is that marriage is the covenant union of one man and one woman to live one life together. Marriage is biblically one man and one woman. One man, one woman, one husband, one wife. Whatever same-sex unions are, they're not marriages. [11:44] Because God has designed sameness and differentness to be united in this institution. One man, one woman, one life. You see that, it says the man shall leave his father and mother. The nuclear family is suddenly disrupted. The goal was not to get all the clan on the compound. The goal was different. God was trying to build a new family out of this husband. And so, the man leaves his father and mother and holds fast to his wife. Now, that word holds fast is not just describing walking together, holding hands, or being physically affectionate. As wonderful as that is, it's saying something more significant. The exact word is glued together. The idea is that in this union, there is, there's an inseparableness. They are, they're joined together in such a way that every area of their life is shared. [12:46] It's not just physical closeness and inseparableness, if I can say it that way. But also, spiritual and emotional and financial. And so, their life is wonderfully shared. It's a unity. Celebrating the uniqueness of the relationship and the uniqueness of what happens in marriage, the scripture continues and says, and the two shall become one flesh. Now, I remember when I first became a Christian, I was raised in church, but did not read the Bible, didn't know anything about that. And I remember being invited to my first Christian wedding. Well, first wedding I went to after becoming a Christian. And on the front, it said, one plus one equals one. Like, that is the weirdest thing in the world. I do not recall ever reading that scripture. I thought that was very corny. That's what I thought. Corny with no significance. What is going on? But, but he was right. My friend Mike and Elizabeth, they were right. [13:48] They were coming together as one flesh. While physical intimacy is the most powerful expression of the one flesh relationship, the idea of two becoming one is far more significant to that. It's relational, emotional, spiritual in such a way that nothing rivals it. It's a unity created by God himself. Jesus said, if you remember when he was teaching about marriage, he said, they are no longer two but one flesh. He said, okay, we have that in Genesis. Then he says, what therefore God joins together. As the KJV used to say, let no man tear asunder. So this is not merely two people linking up on eHarmony and finding out they connect. This is a miracle of God. The husband and wife are not just one flesh when they are intimate or when they're in agreement.

Or when they're happy together. G.K. Chesterton humorously said it like this. That dear dreamy old bachelor notion, the notion that the unity of marriage, the being one flesh has something to do with being perfectly happy or being perfectly good or even with being perfectly and continuously affectionate.

[15:09] I tell you, an ordinary honest man is part of his wife even when he wishes he wasn't. I tell you, an ordinary good woman is part of her husband even when she wishes him at the bottom of the sea.

Now that's pretty funny, but you guys didn't laugh. All right. I think that's great. I tell you, whether the two people are for a moment friendly or angry, happy or unhappy, the thing marches on.

The great four-footed thing, the quadrupled of the home. I tell you, they are one flesh even when they are not one spirit. They're no longer two but one.

He's capturing it. There's nothing you can do to undo it. You know, in so many ways, it is a work of God. Let not man separate it. There's an important implication, though, behind this verse.

A primary purpose in making man male and female is for them to be joined together in marriage. A primary purpose of making man male and female.

[16:15] Genesis 2.24, which we have quoted in our passage this morning, so you don't have to move it to find it, is not a command. It's a statement of fact.

It's a statement of the way things will often occur. A primary purpose in making man male and woman female is for them to join together in marriage. It's saying the most normal and most common expression of being made man and being made female will be to be married.

Man and woman were both made in the image of God. They're fully in the image of God. They're compliments of one another. But man with woman is but the other half in some respects. And so, the most normal, most common call on every Christian is to seek to be married.

Now, you may say, why say that here? We got babies everywhere. We have marriages everywhere. Well, I say that because we live in a culture that's pushing hard against this.

Right now, there are more adults unmarried in America than married. That's what you call a problem. You know?

[17:31] You know, it's a societal problem. But biblically, it's a biblical problem. For 50 years, our culture says be wise, go to college, find a career, chase your dreams, wait till you get established, and then think about getting married.

Make sure you're ready before you make the big leap. In fact, just live with them beforehand. That way, you can test it out and make sure you're sure that you're really sure that you want to live your life with them.

And what's the result of 50 years of that? Less marriages than marriages. But you'll never be ready. You know, I've been listening to this song written about marriage, kind of talking about this. The song says, trust in your money, then call it wise.

Finish college, get a job, cross all your T's, dot all your I's. Make sure you're ready. Go have some fun. Don't let your conscience or your pastor tell you how you should grow up.

[18:35] He continues in the second verse. I don't blame you. You bought a lie. If you settle down before you're 30, you're going to ruin your whole life. No, you're not ready. Go have some fun.

Put yourself above all else. Take a breath. Don't look up. The verse or the chorus says, you'll never be ready. So dive right in. This side of heaven, there's no telling if you'll ever understand.

You'll never be ready. Don't be scared. Ain't no money or achievement going to help you be prepared. Follow God. Trust his word. Stay in prayer. Love your neighbor.

Don't forsake the church. You'll never be ready. I think that's a word in season right now in this culture. Young folks, I would say, be careful what you put before marriage.

You know, college is a wonderful thing. Be careful what you put before marriage. It may sound Christian at times, but it's not always wise. Parents, where does marriage rank among your priorities?

[19:36] You know, for your kid, is it get a job? Go to a good school. Get a good job. Is that the priority? Marriage way down the list. I think we'll just keep creating the problem if it continues to fall down the list.

I'm so grateful. I didn't wait until I got married. I love our story. I started dating Kim when I was raising money for campus ministry. I made \$8,000 a year.

Could barely pay the car insurance. You know, and I asked her dad, can I marry her? He said, do you have any money? You know, give me a W-2 or something like that. I said, my future is as bright as the promises of God. You know, because God's been faithful. I didn't really say that, but I thought it worked. But I said, you know what? The Lord's provided for me. And if I'll do anything I can do to provide for your daughter, she'll not be found wanting because of me.

[ 20 : 32 ] And we got married. The only thing I regret in marrying her is a seven-month engagement. That's the dumbest thing in the world. Who makes up this stuff?

That's the purpose of marriage for so many of us. Point two, the meaning of marriage. The meaning of marriage. In these verses, Paul does more than restate the purpose of marriage from Genesis. He unveils the meaning of marriage. Now, Genesis 2.24, you're going to have to hang with me for a minute, functions very importantly and incredibly in this text. Paul is using it. You know, with no introduction, he uses this citation from Genesis 2.24, our verse that everyone would have known, and you yourself know.

He uses it to say something important. Look back there with me. A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. Two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying it refers to Christ and the church.

Now, what is the mystery? Now, surely two becoming one is a mystery. That was the math I couldn't figure out when I first became a Christian.

[ 21 : 43 ] But he's talking about something more than something unsolved or unknown merely, but something previously hidden. That's the way mystery is used all throughout the book of Ephesians.

The mystery of something revealed, something God kept hidden for a certain time and then revealed it. And so, it's tied up in the mystery of Jesus Christ coming to rescue his people. But what does he mean when he says marriage is a mystery? What is the meaning of marriage? You know, the life, what he's saying is the lifelong union of marriage is a picture of the eternal union of Christ and the church. Now, if you look there, look back up there in verse 28.

So, he's given that command six times. You remember, husbands love your wife. At 28, he says, husbands should love their wives with their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

[ 22 : 47 ] 29, just as Christ does the church because we are members of his body. So, he says, the husband should love his wife, nourish and cherish her because she is his body.

She's a part of him. This one flesh mysterious relationship, she is a part of him. In the same way, Christ loves the church because we're members of his body.

So, maybe it's just an analogy. So, man should love his wife because she's a part of his body.

Christ loves the church because the church is a part of his body, members of his body.

But he goes a step further. From the book in Genesis, we know that husband and wife are one flesh. The two should become one. They're no longer two, but one. It's a mystery. It's a profound mystery, right?

We know that biblically. But has anyone ever stopped you and said, oh my goodness, you're married. I've never met one of you. Never met one of these crazy one flesh people.

[ 23 : 50 ] What are you doing? What's your name? No. Why? Because marriage is vanilla. It's running the mill. It's commonplace.

Despite all that the billion dollar wedding industry tries to tell you, your wedding is just another wedding. Marriage is not a mystery, therefore, because it's uncommon.

Because it's not uncommon. It's common. Marriage is a mystery because the common was meant to point to something extraordinary.

Christ's love for the church. And that's what Paul said. This mystery is profound. It is profound. One plus one equals one. But I am saying it refers to Christ and the church.

And so, the two becoming one flesh in marriage is a profound mystery because it points to the mystery of Christ's love and union with his church. Just hold on for just a minute.

[ 24 : 51 ] What he's saying is, why do people fall in love? Why do the leaves rustle? Why does romance begin? Why does attraction lead to an awkward pickup line?

Why does that lead to spending time together? Why does it lead to long walks hand in hand and long goodbyes at night? Why does it lead to poetry from someone you didn't expect poetry?

Or lead to dancing to our song? Why does it lead to the monster commitment of marriage? Well, there's a reason behind it all. And the reason is not what happened back in Genesis 2 that the man

should gather a woman, that the husband should find a wife.

That's not the mystery behind it all. The mystery behind it all is that the heart of the universe is God's love for his people. The only thing marriage is, as wonderful as it is, is just an institution meant to point to this.

To the unbelievably good and gracious love of Jesus Christ for his hell-deserving bride, the church. So we could take this one step further, and I won't take it any others.

[ 25 : 59 ] The reason God made us male and female then, the reason God gives us romantic passions and capacity for intense romantic pleasure, the reason God calls us to commitment in marriage and purity and singleness, the reason he does all that is so that he would be more knowable.

So that we would know him as this loving God who rejoices over his people like a bridegroom over his bride. But that's the reason. That's why he made it this way, so that we would know what it means when he says he rejoices over his bride.

And so that we would know what it means when he says, you've lost your first love. How can you leave me? We know what it feels like to be betrayed because we know that in human relationships. How much more betraying the almighty God who did not spare his own son. And so therefore marriage is not man's invention, it's God's gift, and it was given to reflect Christ's love for the church.

Marriage is a wonderful picture. Now lest we be confused, Paul is not saying the love of God for his people is like the love of a husband for a wife.

[ 27 : 11 ] He's not saying that. He's not saying it's like this. He's saying the love of a husband for his wife is like Christ's love for the people. And the two could not be more different. He's saying it was created to reflect that from the beginning.

That's what it was all designed. And so it is a profound mystery. Who can plummet deaths?

Marriage is a picture of something more beautiful and more wonderful.

Marriage is a metaphor of something more concrete and more real. Marriage is a parable of a story more wonderful, more breathtaking, and more true. Marriage, all it is, and I shouldn't say it like that. It's a wonderful thing, but marriage is just news of a better country. One of my friends, when he got married, he said they were on the honeymoon. And his wife said, I didn't know you were like that. So I was like, man, that's a goal in life. Don't have your wife say that four days after getting married. And I said, well, because marriage is not an arrival.

[ 28 : 16 ] If you find me someone who has no problems with their marriage, then you find me a liar. Because it's not meant to be.

All it is, as wonderful it is, it's just a metaphor. It's just an institution sent to carry something far more wonderful.

Christ's love for his bride. So your hope is that by the last day, you will grow together in all that wonderful stuff. And yet, when you get to heaven, you will exhale with wonder, because you're so glad you're there and not here anymore.

So, devote yourself to the picture. You know, in the midst of these household codes, which we're commanded to walk a certain way, he's helping us to see that our marriage is meant to be more of a window than a wall.

We look at a wall, we can enjoy a wall. Theoretically, I never really thought about this too much. It might be plum and sturdy. It might be beautifully adorned.

[ 29 : 39 ] Van Gogh might be up there. Mona Lisa might be hung. Monet's water lilies. But it's just a wall.

Like, you can't see what's on the other side of it. It's just a wall. What's on the other side may be much more beautiful than Van Gogh. But a window gives us a view.

We can see the sun. We can see birds swoop down for a morning snack. We can see an older neighbor walking his dog. We can see the neighborhood kids playing wiffle ball.

Your marriage is meant to be more of a window than a wall. Like, it's not meant to adorn things that show you got it figured out. It's meant to point to something that shows who's got it figured out.

You know, your marriage was created to display something. It's created to reflect something. You can have the best communication, the best house, the best vacation, the best whatever. But if you're not gripped with this reality, your marriage will not be satisfying.

[ 30 : 35 ] You can have all the gifts, but not be invited to the party. So your marriage was created to be a window than a wall. For this reason, your marriage should be to a fellow Christian.

It's not wise to missionary date, and it's sinful to missionary married. How can you unite yourself with other Christians? That's the way Apostle Paul uses it. Even more provokingly in 1 Corinthians 6, he says, you're one with the Lord.

You're members of Him. How can you unite the members of Christ with someone who's not of Christ? How can light be partnered with darkness?

And so, your marriage, if it's reflecting this picture, cannot be to a non-Christian. For this reason, your marriage should be lifelong. You know, we could say the biggest problem, the deepest grief of the no-fault divorce change in this country, in the high divorce rate, the deepest grief to it is not the broken families.

And that's a deep grief. It's not the broken families. It's not the broken up kids who don't have the same household. That's not the deepest grief. The deepest grief is it tells a lie. It tells a lie.

[ 31 : 49 ] Christ does not walk out when things don't go well. And so, the purpose, the meaning, what does it all mean?

The dynamic of marriage, thirdly, and singleness. The dynamic of marriage and singleness. After focusing on the purpose of marriage and the meaning of marriage, Paul returns to what I'm going to call the dynamic of marriage.

In verse 33, look down there with me. However, let each of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

However. Now, he's not saying, like, however, to discount everything he's just said. You know, sometimes I think we use the word more casually that way. He's saying, even though that thing is so wonderful, even though marriage is designed to point to Christ's love for the church, even though that's the unspeakable hidden mystery that took thousands of years to be revealed, even though all those things, your marriage should be lived still.

As a husband loves his wife and a wife respects her husband. So, he's saying the way to get that wonderful thing into concrete reality, into real life, is through a husband loving his wife and the wife respecting her husband.

[ 33 : 20 ] He adds, however, each one of you. So, he's looking you in the eye, so to speak. This would have been read to the church in Ephesus. He said, each one of you, like this applies to your marriage too.

Let the husband love his wife. Let the wife respect her husband. We've said this. These commands were designed to reverse the curse. Instead of selfish harshness, in which a husband lorded it over and bullied his wife, husbands should love and sacrifice.

The first one to die in your household should be you, men. But instead of selfish control, wives should respect and support.

This is the way you should die. What he's saying is that holding up these things together is helping us to see that the heart of marriage is the cross. A single man and single woman die and become one flesh.

They deny themselves. They take up the cross. The husband abandons his freedom to love and sacrifice for his wife. The wife abandons her freedom to respect and support her husband.

[ 34 : 28 ] That's the reality Christian marriages can offer to the world. A marriage built on selfishness in which one spouse says to the other, in effect, you do you, in which the spouse enters and exits, as long as it suits them, does not have anything to say to the world.

It has no message, but a marriage built on self-denial in which each spouse says, in effect, whatever happens, I'm not leaving. I will be faithful to you to the end.

I won't run when you sin. I won't run when you fail. I won't run when tragedy strikes. I won't run even when I want to. That kind of marriage has something to say.

When we first got married, it seemed like every conflict, we would end up saying, oh, do we even belong together? Was this a bad mistake? What did we do? How come no one told us? But thankfully, that's off the table now, which is why I told you last week, I love you and I'm sorry, you know, but that's off the table because we're being faithful to the end.

But with all this talk about marriage, doesn't Paul also tell us not to get married? 1 Corinthians 7, which we have for you, he says, I think, and that's not the Apostle Paul, I don't know, you know, talking like we do, offering a perspective.

[ 35 : 57 ] He's speaking authoritatively. In view of the present distress, it is good for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife?

Do not seek a wife. He continues, seek a wife only if you're aflame with passion. That's when we were all single, I'm aflame with, okay, you better go ahead and do it.

You know, it seemed like it was used like a trump card, which I don't think was what the Apostle had in mind. But what's going on? Is Paul losing his mind? I think Paul is bringing forward a very important qualification to what we've been saying.

While marriage is, as I just said, the most normal, most common expression of being made male and female, while most Christians should seek to be married, not everyone will be married. not everyone who wants to be married will be married, and not everyone will be called to be married.

[ 37 : 03 ] Now, in the hands of a sovereign God who works all things for good for those who love them, we can therefore say, singleness is not plan B. We must not view single men and women as incomplete, broken in some way, insufficient, or something like that.

Jesus was, after all, a single man. The Apostle Paul, a lot of people think he was married beforehand, but either way, at this stage in his life, he's not married.

And he says, singleness can be a tremendous gift if you spend your life in undivided devotion to the Lord. Singleness is better because you can devote yourself to undivided singleness to the Lord.

Now, we live in a culture that mocks pure, celibate singleness. It views purity and chastity as silly, prudish, and miserable 40-year virgin. You've seen that.

There are 40 days and 40 nights. There's a whole buffet of apps encouraging single people and married people, sadly, to enjoy relational intimacy, physical intimacy with those with whom they have no desire to commit and marry.

[ 38 : 19 ] While we should honor faithful marriages, we must also honor faithful, godly, single men and women. Paul concludes this section, though, with a provoking exhortation.

In the same paragraph, he says, we have for you 1 Corinthians 7, 29-31, this is what I mean, brothers. Okay, tell us what you meant.

The appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none. and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it.

For the present form of this world is passing away. Now, if it wasn't clear before that Paul was lost his mind, it's clear now. Let those who have wives live as though they have none.

Try that out today. It won't go well. What is he talking about? You know, this seems like another. The end of the world is coming tomorrow. So, focus on the main thing, exhortation.

[ 39 : 24 ] But that's not actually what's going on here. Paul's not calling us to live as if tomorrow or the world will end tomorrow. Rather, he's urging us to radically change the way we live in the world because of what Christ has done.

It's a provoking thing. He's saying, he's saying, for those who are in Christ, the kingdom has already come. And so, we live in this in-between world. Christ has come.

He's suffered his death and resurrection for us. He's brought us into his kingdom. He reigned in heaven as we talked about, far above our rule and authority and power and dominion, above every name that is named.

He summoned us from death to life in Jesus Christ. We will not die when it comes time to die because of that. And yet, we remain in this world. And all the allurements of this world, entice sin, disease, death, still linger on.

And while we're in this world waiting for him to usher in the kingdom in full, he says, in effect, live in this world but don't live for anything in this world.

[ 40 : 31 ] So he says to married people, let those who have wives or husbands live as though they had none.

Now he's not saying don't mind the spouse you have. Don't do what you want. Live free. Don't be anxious. Don't call when you're supposed to come home. That's not what he's saying but he's saying don't love your marriage too much.

Don't think about it too much. Don't work at it too much. Don't please your wife too much. Don't let caring for your spouse lead you away from creating honest relationships with others. We're called to

love our wife as Christ loved the church but we mustn't make them the sinner.

You know, the Christian life goes astray most often not by loving bad things but by loving good things too much. Your marriage is passing away.

It'd be the greatest shame in the world if you had a great marriage and a horrible eternity. It will soon be over. You'll be ushered into a marriage less eternity. As married couples in a church like ours that's pro-marriage pro-life pro-family pro-faithful parenting sometimes we must remember that our family is the church.

[ 41 : 48 ] Our ultimate family is not the folks gathered around our table. It's the worldwide multi-ethnic called people who love and follow Jesus Christ. and so live like you're not married. And what he would say I think I trust moving beyond his word here but nevertheless faithful what he says in the rest of 1 Corinthians let those who are single live as though they weren't.

Don't let your singleness lead to selfishness. I've not been single for 18 years but I can only imagine how difficult it is to be single in our self-absorbed self-focused culture.

Our culture encourages you to fulfill yourself and provides you all manner of opportunities to do so some of them baptized. Don't let your singleness lead you to love yourself too much.

Don't let your singleness be permission to isolate yourself. Don't view it as authorization to be uncommitted and unreliable. Don't view it as clearance to build your life around your interests.

Don't let your singleness lead to selfishness. Instead let it lead to Jesus Christ. Marriage is a wonderful picture of Christ and his loving relationship with the church and you have the opportunity to present a different picture.

[ 43 : 10 ] In the midst of our sex of Seth's culture you have a chance to say my relationship with Christ is so much more satisfying than cheap sex. Is it hard?

Yeah. But as seasons come and go Christ is sweeter still and the world needs your story. What's he saying? Marriage is momentary. Singleness is momentary too.

Christ is eternal. We're all sojourners here. This past week we went up to the Sovereign Grace Pastors College where Daniel will be enrolled in a few weeks as a student.

That was a fun happy thought while we were up there studying eschatology so you can bring all your questions to Taylor because he asked all of them in the class. He's ready for you but you know we drove into town.

We, we, you know everybody is so weird. You live in someone's house for the week. Could there be anything more creepy and somehow we all do it you know. Sleeping in their bed.

[ 44 : 11 ] But I do bring my pillow so I'm not, that's thus far no further. You know but you know every meal we ate out we didn't like buy a house.

We didn't go furniture shopping. We did no civic duty while we were there. We didn't study what the governor is doing or what things are going on in the house or anything like that.

We're just travelers and that's what you are. You're a sojourner. Charles Spurgeon said the Christian life should be one of waiting.

That is he defines holding with a loose hand all earthly things even marriage. Hold it loose.

Otherwise it'll kill you. The only truly happy marriage is the one built on self-denial for the sake of Christ and the display of gospel.

[ 45 : 12 ] Let's run after that. Father in heaven we thank you for the privilege of considering your word sitting under your word. We thank you for these texts. Lord I pray anything helpful would be remembered.

Anything unhelpful would be forgotten. Lord I pray for our marriages. Pray for our lives. Lord I pray for this dynamic to drive through every area of our life.

Self-denial for the glory of Christ. that we would follow you who denied yourself and bear massive fruit including the salvation of our souls.

So we offer ourselves to you sincerely completely. In Jesus name. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

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