

THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

*“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.”
—EPHESIANS 5:31-32*

Marriage involves deeply knowing each other and that is a beautiful thing, but it takes time. Genesis 4:1 of the NIV says, “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain.” The King James Version says, “Adam knew Eve, his wife and she conceived and bore Cain.” The KJV points to an important idea in its translation. The Hebrew word for “knew” is ‘yada’, and the Hebrew definition of ‘yada’ is, “To know properly, to experience, to discover, to give, to have, to take, to be privy to and to be sure of.” This is the marriage Adam and Eve shared; a beautiful oneness of heart and soul.

How do we come by this today? What is the mystery that lies behind a loving marriage that lasts until death do us part? Paul writes, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27). The key in these verses is that the activity of the Holy Spirit within us is the source that brings us into that beautiful oneness of heart and soul.

Jesus Christ’s relationship with His church is the role model. That means “husbands give to your wives.” If we do not see this as the big

picture, then the gender roles become distorted and stretched. When reading verses such as Ephesians 5:24 which says, “Wives should submit to their husbands in everything,” we will have a mistaken interpretation if it is not understood in its context. The umbrella statement under which Paul writes this is, “Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). Paul is not only talking about marriage, but about family and business in which there needs to be two-way submission in these relationships.

The headship of Christ to His church and the headship of a husband to his wife is the source of life to her. The husband gives himself up to her and presents her radiant and blameless. This, says Paul, is the relationship Christ has to His church. The assumption of Paul’s writing about marriage is that the initiative lies with the husband to set a good environment in which his wife is responsive.

There is no hierarchy in marriage. It is an equal partnership, built on the hard times as well as the good. Throughout it all, we give of ourselves, seeking the well-being of each other, and in the giving is the receiving.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for all married couples to share the common bond of your indwelling Spirit to enrich and deepen their lives together. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I setting my spouse’s needs ahead of mine?