

Man, “Marriage” has certainly become a corrupted term in our culture and in our world, hasn’t it? Today, when you say the word marriage, it’s almost as if you have to bring a dictionary, a thesaurus or a bible dictionary along with you just to define it to people. In the world’s eyes, marriage is a contractual agreement. It’s a contract between two people. Homosexual couples are trying to make the marriage covenant into a simple legal agreement that allows them certain rights in the manner that one of their partner’s dies, or what have you.

The bride comes together with her groom before the marriage and they finagle, they bargain and they negotiate. In Hollywood marriages, these negotiations are a legal matter—called a pre-nuptial agreement. This is a contract that protects both parties’ just in case, for some reason, one of the people in the marriage doesn’t hold up their end of the agreement. A famous pre-nuptial agreement was forged between Kathryn Zeda Jones and Michael Douglas. Michael professedly was addicted to pornography. He openly and proudly admitted it to the world, even before marrying Kathryn. Now, I don’t know if these statements in regard to his perversion, or the fact that Michael cheated on his previous wife numerous times, is what drove Kathryn to put a pre-nup in their agreement or not.

The fact is, is that this contract stated, that if Michael cheated or didn’t live up to his end of the agreement in staying faithful, that Kathryn would get XX amount of millions of dollars, along with other things if a divorce ensued. From moment one, there was distrust, contract and legal binding in this so called marriage, but their wasn’t any love. There was commitment to a contract, but not to each other.

Now, maybe “regular people” don’t get fancy pre-nup’s but they display their contract mentality toward marriage during their dating or their vows. People today date FOREVER. Years—they live together—on and on.

You know why?

They’re weighing out that person...trying to figure out if that person is RIGHT for them. Selfish. Their whole search is driven by whether that person is going to fit into their life and meet their needs. That’s what dating is all about. Sizing the person up and making sure they’ll fit in with MY NEEDS< MY DREAMS< MY PLANS.

Vows used to be something sacred. They used to mean something. Both the groom and the bride during the vows used to dedicate themselves to each other “’til death do us part.” That’s the key phrase. “In sickness AND in health.” There’s another one. In those statements, both the groom and the bride are making commitments and Covenants with each other, not contracts. They’re saying to one another, “I don’t care how much you disappoint me, I don’t care if you get in a car accident in 5 minutes and wind up a vegetable; I don’t care if you become inconvenient, I don’t care how many things you do to annoy me—I’m committed to you and it’s going to take death to keep me from you.” This is covenant.

But today vows are filled with ooey gooey, messy, chewy meaningless phrases like; “Before I met you I wasn’t complete; you light up my life.” And these things are all well in good to say, but without a commitment they mean nothing. Just saying these words does not invoke commitment. There’s nothing about these phrases that considers the sacrifice that marriage brings.

With vows like these, what is going to happen when that spouse walks in their spouse on the commode in a not so “Light of my life” posture? They’ll be lighting up something, but it ain’t your life. What happens in those moments where your spouse is frustrated with you, annoyed at you or just plain fed up with you. It’s going to feel all day long like he/she is NOT completing your life—rather they are subtracting from it. That’s what it feels like. They’re depleting you, complicating you, and down right frustrating you. What about those times?

When these are the ends to the statements we make, and there are no words of self-sacrifice attached like: even when you do this I commit to you, I will always be there even when..., I will serve you no matter how selfish you are—if there’s not this, then we’re kidding ourselves. Because when things go wrong, suffering comes and annoyances present themselves, then our expectations get rocked. We find ourselves being bitter at our beloved because she’s no longer completing us, and we become confused with our betrothed because he’s no longer romancing us every 5 minutes, and our love simmers and we take a spiral down the tube of marital co-habitation, or divorce.

You see God modeled for us what commitment and covenant are—not contract, and it happened in the way He drew up a contract with Abraham. God promised Abraham blessings, honor, family, prominence etc., and to show Abraham his seriousness, God had Abraham divide some animals in half so that the blood poured down. Then the angel of the Lord came and walked through the blood. You know why? It was to display “til death do us part.” God was saying, “I’m true to my word even until death.” I sign it in blood. Jesus showed this in the cross, and because “God” cannot ultimately die (resurrection), we know that His covenant and marriage to us is final and can never be voided. There is no death that will end God’s marriage to us IF we have Him in our hearts.

And you know what Abraham promised God? Nothing! God’s commitment to Abraham and you is unconditional. It’s not based on what He gets or does not get from you. God promised to serve, love and commit to Abraham because God is God. He was swearing by His own word, and taking His own oath. He was exhibiting to all of us what marriage covenant and true relationship looks like. It’s in entering into marriage with a heart to serve, suffer and love DESPITE what the other person does good or bad, that shows real love. It’s coming to the marriage COMPLETE in who we are in Christ, not looking for our spouse to complete us. It’s coming in this way that we can freely serve our spouse regardless of what they do and do not do for us.

Now marriage is a wonderful blessing. It's rich with imagery and wonder. But, marriage is not something to be entered into lightly, and it's not something that will be easy. You don't trust me...ask Peter.

In the midst of an entire book dealing with suffering; In the midst of an entire book dealing with submission to leadership—making the hard choices, forging the hard character... Peter puts seven verses in here about marriage. Why here? Peter's just got done explaining the suffering that can come at the hands of leadership and he invited us and beckoned us to be like Christ when this happens; who though he suffered wrongly under bad leadership “entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.” Peter just got done explaining the wrongful suffering of Jesus at the hands of Pontius Pilate. He just got done describing the humility of Jesus in the midst of complete horror.

And then he comes to Vs. 1; “Wives **in the same way** be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives.”

In the same way Jesus did—wives. Now I'm going to get to the men in a second so don't worry. But wives, let's look at you first. You get to walk through the door first and use the bathroom first, so Peter is only being polite by coming to you first.

But wives!?!?!?! But wives what?!?! Submit in the same way Jesus did. Is Jesus??—is Peter?? likening marriage and being a wife to the injustice of the cross? Why sure he is. He's saying, wives you have your rose colored glasses on. You know, the one's that are telling you that he's never going to hurt you, disappoint you, annoy you, or flat out wrong you. Those glasses. You've got him built up in your mind as the perfect one. The one you want him to be. Your expectations of him are through the roof.

And into this perspective he's going to treat you unjustly one day. He's going to breathe in your face before brushing his teeth. He's going to breeze past you rudely after a hard day at work. He's going to overlook your needs, because he's selfish.

I'm not excusing his behavior; I'm just being honest. He's human.

There's going to be times and days where you are going to feel that his wounding of you equals the injustice that was done at the cross. You're going to feel as if you don't deserve it, and that you're entitled to more. And Christ beckons you to “trust the one who judges justly.” Trust the God who's working in your husband's life.

Now Peter makes an interesting statement here; “If any of them do not believe they will be won over by your behavior, your righteous living, your prayers.”

This passage implies that both believing husbands and non-Christian husbands are lumped in here. This passage is going to speak to the injustices that you ladies' deal with at the hands of your believing husbands or your un-believing ones. Now if you're married to an unbelieving husband I'm grieved for you. Your life is hard, and I beckon

your husband right now to repent and leave his life of sin and come back to Jesus who will make him into the husband he's supposed to be. But if you're married to an believing husband, I'm also deeply grieved for you. Just kidding :)

No, I'm excited for you because God's going to use His soft heart towards Jesus to bless and lead your family.

But Peter is not making a distinction about how a wife should act depending on the fact that her husband is a Christian or not. Whatever the circumstance, the same truth applies. The wife should win her husband over by her behavior, her righteous living and her prayers.

Before I get into how this looks, let me ask the wives a question. If you are a Christian what is your greatest desire for your husband? Whether he's a believer or not a believer your desire is for him to believe the Word of God and become like Jesus. For the more he becomes like Jesus, the greater he's going to love, cherish, and adore you...right? Well follow me here, you wives, are a representation to your husbands of Jesus. **You are to be a pure, fleshly, living and breathing example of God's word put into action. So your greatest desire in a situation SHOULD NOT be how you're treated or not treated, your greatest desire should be how God's character and WORD are displayed.**

This is important now. We shy away from suffering as humans and it's because we desire to preserve our life, our comfort and our safety more than anything else. We tend to reject the fight for God's truth as supreme because we're more concerned about our rights in a situation. However, God's word is most precious—to all of us. It's more precious than my life, and yours. Your comfort, your rights, and your reputation are not more important than God's word. God's glory is the most valuable thing to be maintained and portrayed.

Your greatest desire, wives, should be that your husband should love God's word. For in wanting him to love God's word, you are ensuring for yourself your other desire—you want a great husband. Well, if you fight back, rebel, or act out in the same unjust manner your husband is, you're actually fighting against him becoming a good husband. You're displaying to him that you're rebellious to God's Word yourself, and that's not going to encourage him toward you, but rather away from you. Therefore you may think you are rebelling, but you are really cooperating with him. You're encouraging him to become a worse husband.

Let's say your husband has an inconsiderate problem. He's not romantic, and he's just plain forgetful about your needs. If you react in anger, hostility, back-handed comments etc. you're actually making him worse. Again, I'm not justifying him—I'll get to him in a second...but you're responsible for your part. The way you are making him worse is not simply by merely aggravating the situation, but you are displaying to him your distrust in the Word of God—that he is the one that judges justly—not you. You're not allowing God to get even, you are, and in doing so you're killing yourself.

But rather if you responded in prayer, righteous living and love, you would be displaying Christ to your spouse. If he's inconsiderate, consider him even HARDER. If he's angry, be patient with Him even harder. If he's bitter and depressed, be forgiving and joyful a little harder. In displaying that you're under submission to God's word, he'll be drawn to you. He'll be drawn to become like you because something deep in his soul was created to respond to truth. In responding to you, he'll respond to Jesus and he'll become better for you in being more like Christ.

Now don't hear me wrong when it comes to a terrible leader like an abuser. We need to know how far to take this. If you're going through pain in your marriage you need to evaluate it and determine its severity. First you need to ask yourself if you're responding rightly to the pain you are suffering.

You see, most minor complications in marriages come from one or both spouses not responding rightly. There's been pain caused by one spouse and so the other spouse retaliates and the situation escalates. First, examine your contribution, and see if the nature of the situation is your fault. If you have fault in the pain your experiencing, then your right response to the pain in this situation would be for you to repent of your fault in escalating the fight. This will alleviate your conscience and situational pain.

But sometimes, you're under the hands of an abuser and responding rightly to your pain is not hitting back, nor is it rolling over. Your right response is three fold. You need to seek your retaliation positions: Prayer and Righteous living.

You need to pray, because you need the forces of God's army to "Sick em'." You need God's intervention, for He can get EVEN far better than you can. But you also need righteous living. Sometimes the righteous thing to do is get out, get a restraining order, get protection, get help, get counseling. Do something. God doesn't just want you to lay there.

Consider Jesus on the cross. Was Jesus just lying there—is that submission? Maybe it appears that way in his demeanor, but do you know the amount of warfare He must have been under. The demons were trying to convince him to call the angels down to rescue him. Jesus was undergoing some intense warfare. They were tempting Him to come down off that cross, thus forgoing the salvation of the world. It must have been difficult. Jesus wasn't taking it; he was fighting. He was fighting righteously. It was in the manner of which He was fighting that we need to take note. He was fighting powers, principalities and darkness on our behalf. His intercession, and prayers on that cross won the battle for us, and his righteous action redeemed us all.

And was Jesus still in full submission? You bet He was. He was submitted to the Father's will even while he was fighting the greatest battle in history.

Your prayers wives are vital to your husband loving Christ and growing to be like Him. I need my wife's prayers like I need oxygen. Her prayers have rescued me from so much;

I can't even begin to say. I am the man today that I am because my wife has prayed, and she's responded rightly. She is the woman in vs. 2; "When they see the purity and reverence of your lives."

My wife displays the Greek word that is used here for purity—*hagnós*. The word used for purity here means to be holy and pure to the utter core. It gives the image of someone who is completely without spoliation; completely uncontaminated, and without guilt or anything condemnable. And I love what it says; "When they see..." When your husband sees this ladies'. You get this. Purity is tangible. When a woman is committed to her submission to the Lord, it's tangible. That's why Godly men, attract to godly women, and even the vilest of husbands can be won over by the righteousness of his wife.

Godly men don't attract toward women in the world, because they can see, and sense TANGIBLY, that worldly women are impure. The world even knows that there are certain types of girls that you party with, and there are certain types of girls you settle down with. Even pagan men know there's a distinction.

If worldly women can be labeled with such distinction, how much greater is the effect of a Christ centered women? Vs. 3 "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."

Here Peter is contrasting some things—he's distinguishing between the worldly women and the Godly women. He's saying that women should not be all about their Outward appearance, but rather their inward appearance. Like queen Esther; "the King is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for his your lord..." women need to be taking care of what is inward, for this is what makes the outward truly pure. Then Peter contrasts Gold with unfading beauty. NO matter how costly gold is, it still fades and it is perishable. Once Jesus forges it in a heart, unfading beauty cannot go away.

Then he contrasts Man's sight vs. God's sight. Men and people look at the outside. Take a look when you walk down the street. 75% of the stores you'll see are restaurants (Feeding the Body), clothing (Clothing the body), cars (Transporting the body), cosmetic (Decorating the Body), Salons (Pruning the Body), and health care establishments (Gyms, Hospitals, Eye Care etc.—preserving and sculpting the body). The world is obsessed with the outside. But God is obsessed with your insides. Your character.

You know why? It comes in Peter's last contrast. God is concerned with His glory, and He seeks women that are after Him as their first priority. All that stuff out in the shopping centers is trying to exalt you—status symbols, brand names. It's all about you trying to promote your own glory. That stuff is not bad if we use it with the knowledge that we are first and foremost for Him. But when we pay more at a salon then we pay to feed the hungry, help the widow, adopt the fatherless, and edify the body of Christ, we've become concerned with our glory, not God's.

But Peter says a woman who is consumed with God's glory will be meek, gentle and quiet in spirit. This is her arsenal against any man, believing or not believing.

Meek is a hard word to translate for it does not mean weakness, but it refers to exercising God's strength under His control—demonstrating power without undue harshness. **God is a women enabler.** He did not make you to be weak. He made you to display His strength and His glory. Meaning, you could be the most powerful businesswomen in the world, and still be weak and hideous to God. He doesn't want strong women as we think of strong. He wants women who are meek and dependent upon His strength. Let me ask you women, which is harder to do—depend on God's strength or try to be strong in and of yourself? I would say depending on God is harder because it goes against our prideful nature, but once we depend on God for our strength, we see how insufficient our muscles really are.

For being of a gentle and quiet spirit, is not a natural feat. It speaks of a tranquility and peacefulness. It refers to you not using methods or words that will stir up needless friction. This is so hard to do isn't it ladies—especially underneath a man's leadership that is lacking. It's so easy to stir the situation up with gossip, or arguing.

Vs. 5-6 “For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.” Even though it's difficult, we can see from examples of women in the past that they took on these characteristics because their hope was in God first. That's what spurred them on. This is what made them submissive.

Likewise, It was Jesus' hope in His Father's goodness that drove him to submit in the work of the cross, even when it felt so unjust.

And this became Jesus' greatest weapon; His greatest retaliation and greatest rebellion. We don't think of Jesus' greatest strength as being His submission, but it was. It was what produced his meekness, His confidence and His love. I think sometimes we play off the strong women of our day, the rebellious political factions, or activist groups as being brave or bold. They're actually not. They're cowards. Anyone can do that. Doing good (*meaning what is powered by god—you can't do this on your own*). Try living powered by God and being kind when you want to hit someone; considering someone when they've overlooked you, building someone else up when they've torn you down. This is brave. This is love.

Now you may be wondering where the husbands are in this. You may feel I'm being a bit too harsh on the ladies. You may even feel like Peter is being too hard on the ladies' for he mentions them for six verses, and then only gets to the husbands in the last verse. Now...don't misunderstand Peter here. I think he's relating to the women's pain in stressing them here.

He's pointing them towards Jesus' example as a HEAD and LEADER. I think in Peter's day, like in our day, most of the women were going through un-needed suffering because of the faulty leadership of the men. I think Peter is addressing the women first, in order to affirm them in their struggle. As if to say, "your man is bad, but look at the perfect man, the one who died, married you and covenanted with you on that cross." He can wipe your tears. He's the perfect husband. Peter is drawing these women towards Jesus. That's what I'm trying to do. No matter what your marital situation is, I'm trying to get you to look at Jesus, for in doing so, you'll be able to obey these difficult principles.

We see this same technique Peter used by Peter here, used in our churches today. I, myself, would tend to overly comfort the women and highlight them first amidst suffering; for example, those who are involved in pornography and sexy advertising. I would comfort them, not because these women are innocent. They are sinning by allowing themselves to be flaunted, abused, and sexually exploited. But I would comfort them rather, because these women are struggling because of male leadership's abuse and neglect. Women would not feel a need to flaunt themselves or perform outwardly if men would just do the job they were meant and designed to do. Men's abuses and negligence in leadership produces a lot of pain for women—I'm sorry about that. God is sorry about that.

I think Peter realized that a lot of responsibility fell on the husbands. I think Peter knew that a lot of needless pain and harm can enter a home, a marriage and a community through the corruption of male leadership. And in judging by Peter's words in this last statement here, I kinda' can sense a tone to Peter's words. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

I can sense a tone of urgency, both in regard to Peter's desire for the men's welfare and that of their wives, but I can hear almost exasperation, or a "come on guys." Step up. Get it together.

Here we have Peter again saying "in the same way..." He's drawing us back to Christ on the cross and beckoning men to be like Christ, but he takes a different route here with the men. He doesn't implore men to model Christ's submission, but rather his consideration. Why the change?

I think the thought in this is that women tend to have a weakness in regard to submission and it tends to bring about suffering in their life. They tend to either see themselves as powerless and then they submit even to the point of being run over or abused, or they take the place of dominance and won't allow themselves to submit to anyone—THE EMPOWERED WOMEN. Men on the other hand tend to abuse consideration. They abuse their role as the HEAD or leader by becoming too passive, thus ignoring the needs of their wives, or they become dominant and instead of considering their wives needs they pounce on them, abuse their needs and act like they are not valid.

So Peter is gently encouraging both the women and the men to grow in their Christ-likeness. He's exhorting them to acknowledge their propensity toward their own unique weaknesses. Husbands:

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.

This is how men, you are to consider your wives. This word consideration is an interesting word because it indicates one person as being higher than the other—looking down to a lower place. It's a motion down toward an object. The other part of the word is *gnosis*, which means to understand. So if we were to break down consideration and describe it in a sentence, it would be “being driven or motioned toward someone below you, in understanding, care and concern.” Now this does not mean that we look down on someone and feel sorry for someone because they are less than us.

What it means, men, is that when you look at your wife, you need to consider her needs carefully from the position of leadership. You are not better than her, but your role is important in covering her and being over her in protection, direction and counsel. Think about Jesus. He was up on that cross, and he looked DOWN at his children from on the cross and said, “forgive them Father for they know not what they do.” This is not a statement of dominance as if Jesus is looking down on us and promoting how much better He is than us—even though He could. No. This statement is one of careful consideration and understanding.

As a valiant protector, Jesus observed our need. Jesus fought for us, and when he looked down on us as our leader He took it upon Himself to be our protector. As a decorated General, Calvary leader and director, he identified, that in that moment, what we needed most was forgiveness. Instead of using our needs against us, He chose to give Himself for them. Instead of pitying us, He chose to enable us. And as a skilled teacher he modeled for us the life we should be living—one of sacrifice, full-devotion, dependence and love for our Father. In this we were and are compelled to follow him because we

know that He understands us, strives to know us, and puts our best interests ahead of His own, even when it hurts.

Jesus didn't use His God-given mantle of leadership to put down, look down upon, and or destroy you. A lot of men use their position to do this. Nor did Christ forgo His leadership in a moment of pain. He put your needs above His own. This is what it means men to consider your wives. You are to look on them as a caring shepherd who is deeply invested in the welfare and needs of your sheep.

You are to consider them because you live with them. "Live with" means intercourse, sexual and physical—spiritual Oneness. The bond of marriage goes deeper than you know. In considering her, you are considering yourself. In leading her, you are leading yourself.

Consequently, in hating her, forgoing her, neglecting her, you're killing yourself!

You are supposed to honor her as the weaker one. Not spiritually weaker. Not mentally weaker, not even weaker in dignity or value—this word for weaker means physical strength. This means that God made her to be softer. He made her beauty and her character to be her strength, but she can't put on the gloves with you. She isn't going to handle problems, crises, demands etc. in the same manner, as you will. Don't expect her to. Consider her. Consider her like Christ considered you. You are "heirs together" in the gracious gift of life. As much as you're trying to know God and finish the race well, men, she is too. In the sacrifice on the cross, Christ didn't just die for men. Yeah, the cross was bloody, torturous; Brave-heart like—grunt, groan, man type stuff—This is for Christ to show us how He purchased men. He set an example for me as a man. But he also died for women. There was tenderness in the cross. John Piper named a book "Velvet, Steel." This is the cross. Hard as nails and as soft as flesh. This was to show us that Christ made women and men equal in the kingdom. He died for his sons and daughters. There's no race, class, or gender that's any better than another. Christ did it for all of us.

When you recognize this men—when you see yourself as a sojourner WITH your wife. NOT OVER your wife, or not THROUGH your wife, or not BEHIND your wife's back, but with her—then you'll treat her as you should.

So that nothing will hinder your prayers...

I thought about this a lot. How can your treatment of your wife determine the effectiveness of your prayers? Yes, I believe that leading and treating your wives with the utmost tender care is biblical and a command by God. If you are disobedient to this call, then there's a place where you're rebelling against God. I can see how this would hinder your prayers, sure. I'm sure you can see that too.

But there's something deeper. Think about prayer. We come to God with our needs, with the needs of others, and so forth. We come to Him for what? Consideration. We

want Him as our leader to look down on us in compassion—enter our pain—and meet us where we are. We want Him to forgive our sin and feel our hurt, and know our joy. That's prayer. It's relationship. If we don't get the consideration part of the cross—how Christ entered our pain, how Christ felt our need, and how Christ won our victory where we couldn't—we're not going to see Jesus or God in the right way. Therefore, our bad understanding of God is going to disrupt how we relate to Him. We won't pray. Why would we if Christ doesn't consider us? This hinders our prayers. And even if we do pray, we will internally think that He's not considering our needs. This will hinder our fervency, our desire to pray, and our need to pray.

Your prayers are hindered, cut in two. There is a sharp obstacle placed in your way in prayer when you don't get this. And I believe the way you treat your wife and the women in your life men, is a strong indication of your view of God and of prayer. I would venture, if you were passive in your marriage, or dominant in your marriage, that your prayer life probably follows suit. It sucks too. Sucks!!!

If I could see how you considered your wife, I could infer some things about your relationship with God. I could infer whether you understand or don't understand the cross simply by watching you with your wife. You don't get Jesus if your treatment of your wife doesn't reflect His attitude toward you on that cross.

Not only will your prayers be ineffective for obvious reasons, but your prayers will be ineffective for theological reasons. Your view of God—your theology determines your biography. Your bad view of God is going to play out through bad behavior.

Now through all this, can we infer that Marriage is much bigger than a contract? In light of this, without Jesus as the central motivator of our covenant in marriage—our model—marriage is HELL! Marriage is impossible. Without Jesus, marriage is impossible and when people try to do it without first considering Jesus, they wind up in Hell.

You see, the only way that the cross was redeemed... The only reason all that blood and torn flesh could become beautiful, filled with joy, and awesome, is through Jesus' redeeming of it. He took a seemingly horrible crucifixion and made it beautiful, intoxicating, and excruciatingly electrifying. And He did it through His resurrection. The only way that His suffering could be beautiful was if he could take that horrific nightmare and re-work it into a thing of art.

That was the purpose in the cross, and that was and is the purpose of marriage. Marriage without Jesus is just a cross. It's suffering. You know why, because the whole reason for the cross was to bring redemption. The whole reason for your marriage is to model redemption—*two imperfect people coming together and growing up in Christ as one.*

If Jesus isn't in there, you're welcoming a lot of suffering into your life for no purpose. No wonder people are getting divorces and settling for loose sex and meaningless dating. It's easier.

But marriage, with Jesus at the center, is beautiful. You know why? It's a work of redemption. God enters into your union at marriage, and He joins you both as husband and wife. Then He strategically uses you to refine each other. Mr. Husband, you're weak, selfish, angry, thoughtless, bone-headed, proud, and full of lust. Mrs. Wife, you're performancy, gossipy, proud, fearful of man, and full of insecurity. And He uses each of your weakness to aggravate, expose and purify your spouse. As your husband regretfully breezes by you after work ladies', your insecurity is exposed. Rather than taking it out on Him, take it to God. Confess your idolatrous need for your husband's love over that of God's love. Allow God to heal that and redeem that. Then go to your husband lovingly and tell him that you want him to notice you more when he comes through the door. In this way you don't need your husband's love, as if it sustains you because God has filled you, but your husband's love provides a nice little cherry on top of the dessert.

Husbands, when your wife needs to hear she's beautiful, desires to date you and wants your affection, God arouses your thoughtlessness, your selfishness and your pride and allows you to see it so you can confess it. When it's confessed, a part of you is made whole again and you can be a better lover of God and your wife.

This is how God uses marriage. It's to make you better. If you see marriage this way, you won't be surprised at how hard marriage is, or how seemingly different men and women are. You'll welcome it because you know in it, you're getting to love your spouse more, but you're also getting to experience your own redemption at the hand of Jesus. He's working in and through your marriage to remind you of the cross—to remind you of the gospel—and to keep you centered on the truth that anchors your soul amidst life's tragedies. This is why Peter mentions marriage in the middle of a book on suffering. It's because this is the glory of God's redemptive work in and through marriage. Through marriage God exposes sin, which ignites suffering. But through that, God is able to transform our pain, and use our weaknesses to grow us into Christ-likeness. This is the glory of Jesus.



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