

Greatest Love Story Ever Told

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2-7 Larry: Harvest. REAL. Rise. Young Adults. Fresh Hope. CR.
- B. Slide8 Stuff the Bus: This is a once a year program to come alongside **Operation Safehouse** by donating goods to fill their shelves for the upcoming year.
 1. **Operation Safehouse** provides emergency shelter, intervention, and outreach services to youth in crisis in Riv County, *including* victims of human trafficking.
 2. We only have 2 weeks to collect items. **Pick up flyer to see list of items or go online.** Questions see Kelly.
- C. Slide9 Project Touch: Support the HS group in collecting TP for Project Touch, a homeless prevention organization. Drop off by Mon.Nov.6th.
- D. Slide10 Fight Club: Books are in.

II. Slide11 Intro: Greatest Love Story Ever Told

- A. You are either...married, want to be, or don't ever want to be.
 1. **Avoid** clicking off "*doesn't apply to me*". **Avoid** hoping *your spouse* is listening.
 2. **Remember**, It's ultimately about *Christ & His Church*.
 3. Please give me grace, *I can't say everything about marriage in 45 minutes*.
- B. **Please also note**, as I will be talking about **gender roles** in a marriage, I need to bring up the topic of **gender confusion** today. **But** my desire is to deal with it **biblically & sensitively**, as many of our youth & many w/in the church are also confused by it today.
- C. **Also note** what is before & following this passage? *I believe this is the key to a great marriage*. The habitual filling with Spirit (5:18). The continual bombardment of spiritual warfare (6:11,12).
 1. **PRAY:**
- D. **This is** the longest & most detailed scripture on **marriage** in all the bible...
 1. Slide12 **But**, I confidently believe, *1st & foremost*, it is **not** about an **earthly marriage** that ties in a **heavenly marriage**; **but instead**, it's about a **heavenly marriage** that ties in **earthly marriage**. [read vs.32]

- a) (32) *The meaning of **human marriage** is based on another **greater marriage** designed by God in heaven before creation, namely, **the marriage of Christ to the church**. - The **mystery** *not* revealed fully in the OT was *that* the **one-flesh union** of human marriage is a picture of the **one-flesh union** of **Christ and his church**. Piper*
2. **So**, I am going to come at it from the **heavenly** meaning 1st, **so** as to really understand the **earthly**.

III. Slide13 **HEAVENLY MARRIAGE** *Christ & The Church*

A. Slide14a What Does It Mean to Be the Wife of Christ?

B. If we want to know what it means to *be the church* and to *live like the church* - then we need to learn from this passage what it means to be *the wife of Christ*. What does it mean to have Christ as our husband? [**4 things** that it means for us to be the wife of Christ]

1. Slide14b **Christ Loved Us Before We Were Attractive** (25-27)

- a) It means first that Christ loved us before we were attractive. *Unlike how we choose wives*. So, Christ did not choose His wife the way we do.
- b) He did not look for an **attractive** woman or an **intelligent** woman or a even a **faithful** woman. He chose an *unlikely* woman, and then He set out to *make her attractive* and **wise** and **faithful** *at the cost of His own life*.
- c) We already read, we were not **chosen** because He could see we were holy; He chose us because he planned to *make us* holy.
- (1) Before we could **look pretty**, or **sound wise**, or **be faithful**, *the electing love of God* chose us and *the regenerating love of God* raised us from the dead.

d) **So**, Christ Loved Us **Before We Were Attractive**.

2. Slide14c **Christ Gave Himself for the Church** (25)

- a) Christ did not *win his wife* the way men do today. He **paid a dowry** for her. **And** the dowry was **His life**.
- b) **And** it was a *self-sacrificing love* that **died** for us while we were **helpless** and **sinful** and **ungodly**, even **enemies**. [as Rom.5:8 says, *God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners*]

(1) In other words, He did not simply die for an **unworthy** woman or for a **reluctant** woman, but for a woman who **found him repulsive**.

c) So, Christ Loved Us Before We Were Attractive. And, Christ Gave Himself for the Church.

3. Slide14d Christ Loved the Church *Uniquely* (28,29)

a) In Jesus' dying he had **the church** especially in view. It was for her - uniquely for her, especially for her, peculiarly for her - that he died.

(1) God means for my wife Kelly to **experience** and to **enjoy** and to be **strengthened** and **secured** by a love coming from me, her husband, **that is peculiar to her**, and **different from** the *general* Christian love I may have for any other woman in the world.

(a) It is a great sadness when a wife only knows herself loved with the love that her husband has for *every woman*.

b) The powerful *saving, cleansing, sanctifying, beautifying effects* of **the cross** were directed to a **fiancée** who **not only** was **unattractive** in herself, **but** who found Christ Himself **repulsive** and did not have **any intention** of marrying him.

c) So, Christ Loved Us Before We Were Attractive. Christ Gave Himself for the Church. And, Christ Loved the Church **Uniquely**.

4. Slide14e Christ Cleansed the Church from the Guilt of Sin (25,26)

a) Being the wife of Christ means being **cleansed** by Him from the guilt of sin.

b) Yes, it is a *highly unflattering picture* that He must **bathe us** in order to **marry us**.

(1) We were **unattractive** not **beautiful**; we were **enemies** not **friends**; and we were **dirty** with *the guilt & moral filth of sin all over us & inside of us*.

c) The **water of baptism** is a representation of that *spiritual washing*.

(1) Notice that the **cleansing from sin** in vs.26 **comes from** the **self-sacrifice of Christ** in vs.25. So it is with baptism.

(2) It represents a **dying with Christ** as we are **buried** with him in water.

(3) It represents being **cleansed by Christ** through that very death in water.

- (a) So immersion in water provides a perfect symbolic combination of *dying* with Christ and being *cleansed* by Christ.
- (b) John combines them in 1Jn.1:7, *The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.*
- (4) Baptism represents a **burial** and a **bath**; because the **burial** is the **bath**.
- d) Slide15 Let me give you one of the *most graphic biblical pictures* of God's marriage to his people Israel. Ezekiel's Picture of God's Marriage to His People.
- e) I think we can see in it *a picture* of both the heavenly marriage & the earthly marriage. read Ez.16:1-14.
- (1) Vs.4 This description of caring for a newborn in eastern culture is one of the most complete statements in Scripture. Upon birth, the child's umbilical cord was cut & the midwife salted the child's skin for antiseptic purposes. The child was washed, rubbed with oil, & wrapped in cloths for 7 days. The process repeated for 40 days.
- (2) Vs.5 **Thrown into an open field** – Prob a ref to their sufferings in Egypt. She was in wretched shape when He called her & saved her.
- f) That is what it means to be the wife of God or the wife of Christ. *Cast out, bloody, dirty, as good as dead.* And then the Son of God walks by. Stops. Looks at this disgusting, filthy, aborted thing as good as dead and covered with blood, and says, *"At last! My wife. My beloved. My chosen one. Live!"*
- (1) And he comes again when she is **grown** and **covers** her nakedness and **washes** away her filth and makes a marriage covenant with her...and then beautifies her and prepares to present her to Himself in glory.
- g) So, Christ Loved Us **Before** We Were Attractive. Christ **Gave** Himself for the Church. Christ Loved the Church **Uniquely**. And, Christ **Cleansed** the Church from the Guilt of Sin.

IV. Slide16 **EARTHLY MARRIAGE** *Husbands & Wives*

- A. **Wives**, Submit to a Dead Man. **Husbands**, Love a Blemished Bride [wives get 3 vs, husbands get 8]
- B. Marriage is the **doing** of God & the **display** of God. [God Himself officiated the 1st Wedding]
- C. 2 Distortions of marriage: *tyranny* by the husband & *the usurping of authority* of the wife

1. The opposite is equally bad. Errors of *passivity or laziness* on the **husbands part**. Becoming entirely passive (doormat) on the **wife's part**.
 2. **Slide17** Wayne Grudem, ***Husbands, therefore, should aim for loving, considerate, thoughtful leadership in their families. Wives should aim for active, intelligent, joyful submission to their husbands' authority.***
- D. **Slide18a** **Submit** – *to line up one's self under*. Submission has the sense of voluntary yielding in love.
1. **Used in** a military sense of **soldiers** submitting to their superior. **Used in Jesus** subjecting Himself to His earthly parents. **Used in persons** to civil authorities. **Used in one Christian** to another.
- E. **Slide18b** For a wife to submit to her husband is to play out *the Jesus role* in her marriage.
1. **It is an expression of a God-ordained role.**
 - a) We see why in 1 Tim.2:13,14 *For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result.* [from Gen.3:16/*women's curse...and he shall rule over you*]
 - b) **Slide18c/d** The husband is the God-appointed leader of the home...**and he is held accountable** for that role. **Also** we remember this is *servant leadership*, which means being the head...he is responsible to **go 1st, to die-to-self 1st, to repent 1st, to love unconditionally 1st**, w/o waiting for, *or insisting on*, his wife's submitting 1st
 - (1) **Husbands...we are dead men. And dead men don't whine.**
Dead men don't live selfishly. Dead men don't live uncaringly. And Dead men take up their cross daily and follow Jesus.
 - c) It's interesting though, the **principle** is clear on the husband being a servant-leader, **but** the Bible gives almost **no details** about **how** that is expressed in concrete behavior. [bible doesn't give us a list of things men & women **must & must not do**. *eg. Women working outside the home. Men doing the finances. Men not washing clothes, doing dishes, or changing poopy diapers*] **Because?** The Bible was written for all centuries & for all cultures.
 2. **Note it's inferred:** She's **not** holy & clean. She's **not** glorious. She's **not** spot/wrinkle free. **Both Jesus' bride & man's bride.**

a) Yet note also, 2 things:

- (1) **Slide19a** The **bridal bath** was when a Jewish bride enters the *mikvah* (ritual bath) in order to be purified prior to the marriage ceremony. The cleansing here is *unlike* baptism as it is *perpetual* and is *from the Word*.
- (2) **Slide19b** SoS4:7 *You are altogether fair, my love, there is no blemish in you*
 - (a) **Experientially**, she is constantly needing washed in the Word.
Positionally see her as blemish free. [serious problem if you *only see & point out your wife's blemishes*...it only means you aren't doing your job]

F. **Slide20a** In marriage we enter *the Great Dance* of the universe as we submit to our own distinct, divinely ordained gender roles.

1. We understand **headship** and **submission** correctly as we look at **Jesus** as the perfect model of both.

G. Every human culture has found a way to interpret *male headship* in a way that has **marginalized and oppressed** women.

H. Whatever you identify as...an **egalitarian** (equal), a **feminist**, a **traditionalist**, a **complementarian**, the *difference* between men and women become an unavoidable issue in every marriage.

1. **Everyone** comes into marriage with their idea of **roles**. These are gathered from *our parents, current cultural norms, observing friends marriages, and fictional reading, TV, and movies*.

I. **Slide20b** The first mention of **gender** in the Bible, is in the **first chapter** of the bible, and also is the first mention of **humanity** itself. *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Gen.1:27

1. Jerry Brown signed a bill into law *this last Monday* that provides people with the ability to request a new birth certificate with a 3rd option (M&F), now there is a **nonbinary** category. **It is the first state to offer such an option.**

[non-binary = *bi-gender, tri, pan, 3rd, fluid*]

2. **Slide21a** Our gender is at the heart of our nature. Every cell of our bodies is stamped **XX or XY**.

- J. **Created equal? Yes!** Equal in the image of God, equally blessed, equal in personhood, equal in importance, equal in value. **But distinct/different in our roles.**
- K. **We have a beautiful complementary union.** *Adam alone, not good.*
1. Eve came from Adam's rib **and** he was given the responsibility of naming her.
 - a) **Both** of these elements r the basis for the NT statements about a husband's headship
 2. **Slide21b** Gen.2:18 *It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*
 - a) **Helper** = *ezer*. Not merely assisting someone. *Ezer* is almost always used in the Bible to describe **God himself**. **Or military help** such as reinforcements, w/o which a battle would be lost. **So it means to make up what is lacking in him with your strength. Woman was made to be a strong helper.** Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*, ch.6
 - b) **Comparable/neged** (suitable) - *lit. like opposite him*. Like 2 pieces of the puzzle that fit together **because** they're not exactly alike **nor** randomly different.
 - (1) **Marriage is a full embrace of the other sex.**
 - c) Often in **homosexual** relationships it's conveyed, *how much easier it is than dealing with someone of a different sex*. **This might be true.**
 - (1) A person of one's own sex is *not as likely* to have as much *otherness* to embrace. **But** God's plan for married couples involves **embracing the otherness** to make us **unified**.
 - (a) Even at the **atomic level**, all the universe is held together by the *attraction* of **positive** and negative forces.
 - (b) Christ embraced the ultimate **Other...sinful humanity**, **and** brought us into a new **unity** with Himself.
- L. **Slide22 Book Recommendation:** I would like to recommend my favorite Marriage Book by Timothy & Kathy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage* [Kathy wrote ch.6 on submission]
- M. *********
- N. **Slide23a-g 7 Ways to Destroy Your Marriage. Then 7 Ways to Save It¹**
- O. *Here are 7 ways to absolutely destroy your marriage that always works.*

¹ Perry Noble, former pastor, New Spring Church

1. **Refuse To Communicate** [Talk about the person and not to them **because** doing so will be awkward]
2. **Refuse To Listen** [Interrupt your spouse during conflict to immediately correct them]
3. **Always Assume The Absolute Worst About Your Spouse** [Always carry your thought to its **fullest illogical conclusion**. Don't EVER ask for an **explanation** or **clarification** as more open communication will lead to a stronger marriage]
4. **Make Sure The Goal Is To Win The Argument Rather Than Actually Settle The Dispute** [you must allow **pride** to dominate your thought life, thus unleashing a barrage of **accusations** that actually have nothing to do with your original argument/discussion] Win at all costs, even if it means saying things that hurt and wound deeply.
5. **You Must View Your Spouse As Your Enemy, NOT Your Friend** [view everything as a manipulative game. Make it a goal to **compete** with them and not actually complete them]
6. **Focus As Much As Possible On Their Inadequacies & Shortcomings** [You've GOT to talk about how much they are "**not meeting your needs**" and how they need to "**step up and do better**" as often as possible]
7. **Do NOT Have Fun Together** [You each need **your own** set of friends. **Don't** have mutual friends. **Don't** have date nights. **Don't** do anything fun as a family]

P. Slide24a-g 7 ways to Save your Marriage

1. Stop fighting **IN** it and start fighting **For** it.
2. Stop asking God to fix your spouse and ask Him to **fix you**.
3. **Ask For Help**. You're NOT the 1st married couple that has ever struggled, you **WON'T** be the last. The problem is that (especially in church), we are so obsessed with *what people may say or think* that we allow our relationships to *implode*. **We can't allow our desire to appear happy distort the reality that we need help.**
4. Ask the Lord to allow you to **see your spouse through His Eyes**.
5. **Choose** right now that you are always going to **believe the best** about your spouse. *Love always assumes the best about a person* (1 Cor.13)
6. Stop seeing your spouse as your **servant**, **But rather** your opportunity to **serve**
7. **Do whatever it takes** to make your marriage work.