

Christ Community Covenant Church
Authority in the Family: The dance of marriage
Pastor Dave Scherrer - June 30, 2013

Marriage as a dance

I've not done ball room dancing very much but enough to know that it is not as easy as they make it look. I know that in dance, like drama there are essentially two ways of performing. There is the scripted or choreographed and then there is the improvisation or free dance. One is practiced and designed before the dance performance even starts. And then there is the dance where the couple simply hears the music for the first time and the couple starts to dance and kind of make it up as they go. In this improvisational dancing, there is quite a dance within the dance. Not only do you have to know the steps to the dance form of waltz or foxtrot or samba but you have to be able to seamlessly follow each other so that your minds and bodies work as one, anticipating each other's movements. I really enjoy the art and the science of ballroom dancing.

I also think it is a terrific living word picture of the dance of marriage. The idea of leading and following in dance is not all that different in the dance that we call marriage. To help us get an idea of this I have asked Don and Susie Read to show as what this improv dancing looks like

Don and Susie follow-up questions:
What is harder leading or following?

What makes a good lead in dancing? (Besides having a great follower!)

Knowledge of the partner

Knowledge of the dance

Willingness to be firm, courage or confidence

To communicate well through cues and promptings

What makes a great follower?

In competition judging I am aware that there isn't any distinction or allowance for the individuals man or woman but is it all just about the couple moving as one. What is the judge looking for in a winning dance?

So today we want to take a look at the authority of wives and how husbands and wives are to dance the dance of marriage according to God's music. Let's look again at our passage in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:21-33

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

²⁷ 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 ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The purposes of husbands and wives

To experience intimacy and community, to come in some way to know the intimacy of the trinity

To create life and family, this is what God does and is, He creates and He is life

To glorify God and know Him better

The Transformation of Leading and Submission

The Transformation of "Leading"

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her (v25)

The call in verse 25 for husbands to "love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her" revolutionizes the way he leads. This is where we were three weeks ago when we saw in Luke 22:26 Jesus says, "Let the leader become as one who serves." In other words, husbands, don't stop leading, but turn all you're leading into serving. The responsibility of leadership is given not to puff yourself up, but to build your family up.

The Transformation of "Submission"

Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (v33).

Submission does not mean putting the husband in the place of Christ. Verse 21 says you submit out of reverence for Christ. Submission does not mean that the husband's word is absolute. Only Christ's word is absolute. No wife should follow a husband into sin. You can't do that in reverence to Christ. Submission does not mean surrendering thought. It does not mean no input on decisions or no influence on her husband. It does not come from ignorance or incompetence. It comes from what is fitting and appropriate and through yielding to God's created order and design (Colossians 3:18).

Submission is an inclination of the will to say yes to the husband's leadership and a disposition of the spirit to support his initiatives. The reason I say it's a disposition and an inclination is because there will be times when even the most submissive wife will hesitate at a husband's decision. It may look unwise to her.

Suppose its Susan and me. I am about to decide something foolish for the family, perhaps not all that unusual. At that moment Susan could express her submission something like this: "David, I know you've thought a lot about this, and I love it when you take the initiative to plan for us and take the responsibility like this, but I really don't have peace about this decision and I think we need to talk about it some more. Could we? Maybe tonight sometime?" Susan doesn't call me names, doesn't pout and mope around until I get the hint that maybe I goofed up. She doesn't play the silence card. She speaks up and seeks to redeem me and the decision. That may sound to you like leadership in the home and it is. Submitting one to another means, by definition, that there will also be shared leadership and influence and thought and prayer and direction. And leadership, as we have already discussed, is established through submission not coercion.

Think with me about what we have established so far in this series. I tried to show three weeks ago from Genesis 1–3 that the when sin entered the world, it ruined the harmony of marriage NOT because it brought headship and submission into existence, but because it twisted man's humble, loving serving headship as designed by God into hostile domination in some men and lazy indifference in others. And it twisted woman's intelligent, willing and Christ-like submission into manipulative obsequiousness in some women and brazen insubordination in others. Sin didn't create headship and submission; it ruined them and distorted them and made them ugly and destructive.

Now if what I suggest is true, then the redemption we experience with the coming of Christ is not the dismantling of the original, created order of loving headship and willing submission but a recovery of it from the ravages of sin. And that's just what we find in Ephesians 5. Wives, let your fallen submission be redeemed by modeling it after God's intention for the church! Husbands, let your fallen headship be redeemed by modeling it after God's intention for Christ!

Therefore, headship is not a right to command and control. It's a responsibility to love like Christ: to lay down your life for your wife in servant leadership. And submission is not slavish or coerced or cowering. Or

intimidated or fearful and manipulated by guilt. That's not the way Christ wants the church to respond to his leadership: he wants it to be free and willing and glad and refining and strengthening.

In other words what this passage of Scripture does is two things: it guards against the abuses of headship by telling husbands to love like Jesus; and it guards against the debasing of submission by telling wives to respond the way the church does to Christ. To take this just a step further we know that submission and serving do not constitute a four letter word. They are Godly words that come from the character of the Trinity and from the example on earth of the Son.

Submission is not a four letter word

1 Peter 4:10-11

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace; whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Acts 20:35

In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Galatians 5:13-14

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

John 13:12-14

When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Mark 10:44-45

And whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

What husbands need from their wives:

Respect

Encouragement

Prayer

Touch

We know that this is true for husbands because God placed that responsibility right into the relationship in verse 33 of our passage saying "wives respect your husbands". The word *respect* comes from the Greek word *timao*, meaning "honor, revere or venerate." It literally means "to place a great value on something." Interestingly, today we tend to place our values more on our personal rights rather than sacrificial love and willing respect. We remember that respect is to honor or to place value and that it comes from two sources; the respect comes from the position of the object of respect or it comes from the earned respect that the object has achieved. In the case of God we respect him for his position of majesty and power that is above all others and for his perfect faithfulness and character. In the case of husband our character and faithfulness is not all that perfect, so the respect is for the position. Of course husbands who are loving and self-sacrificing and perfectly faithful would be easier to respect, but most husbands are trying to love and be sacrificing. We are both fallible and many wives have failed to respect the position of honor that is the husband for a very long time.

When it comes to encouragement, words of affirmation, affirm their character and especially their character in Christ. Words of encouragement are huge and we will find our practice shallow if there is not discipline and intentionality in the practice.

Prayer is not third because it is third in importance. In the book by Stormie Omartain is a practical and inspirational piece and I found it complete online for reading. Praying for our spouses makes them human and broken and in need of God's touch and unleashes God's work in their lives. Husbands and wives need the prayers of their spouse.

Touch is critical. God designed the marriage relationship to be intimate and touch communicates intimacy. My friend Ron Hutchcraft used to call this Vitamin T. We all need it of course, and again we must be intentional.

Nothing that we say to one gender is so distinct that it does not apply to the other. I recognize that. Still there is a profound need to speak into the cultures that have stereo typed and demeaned the way God would have us treat each other.

The dance is hard and tricky. We are helped by discipline and practice. We are helped when we have good teachers. We are helped when the music of God's love provides the tempo and direction in our ears. And when we dance well together it changes the world. Really.

Learning to Dance

Domingo and Irene Garcia

He's a mechanic. She's a hair dresser. They have been foster parents to thirty-two children and have adopted sixteen. Domingo and Irene are in their late fifties and currently have eleven children living with them, and they tell me they would take more if they could. Anyone who has children knows they could be doing this only by the Spirit's power. Imagine the amount of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control it would take to pull this off.

Domingo and Irene take the command in James 1:27 (caring for orphans) more seriously than any other Americans I know. While other people their age are figuring out how to live most comfortably, they can't stop thinking of the 500,000 kids in America who need parents. And while they see these kids as a huge blessing, they are also very open about the hardships they face daily. Perseverance has been key, especially years ago when one of their adopted sons hung himself in their closet. While their days are filled with joy, there have also been many times when they persevered by sheer obedience.

God has provided for them over and over again. One time they needed to build an addition onto their house so that they could take in more children. They didn't have the money, so Irene prayed fervently. When she looked up from praying, the first thing she saw was a sign for a contractor. She immediately asked God "Is he the answer to my prayer?" Days later, one of the leaders in their church heard about their need and offered to build the addition for free. And you guessed it – he was the same contractor whose name Irene had seen on the sign.

One of the wonderful blessings they have enjoyed is watching their biological children follow in their footsteps. One of their sons had two biological and two adopted kids. They live such extraordinary lives that CBS news ran a story on them. Even the secular world notices the unusual and supernatural love these two have shown to those in need.

For those who may think that Domingo and Irene have always been as gracious as they are today, let me share some insight from their past (I have permission). Irene has shared publicly about the early days in their marriage and the hatred she felt toward Domingo. He was abusive, and she prayed regularly that he would die. She even daydreamed about him driving off a cliff because of the pain he inflicted on her. Now she calls him the godliest man she knows.

For anyone who thinks their own life or marriage is hopeless, remember Domingo and Irene. God loves to take people in the worst of situations and transform them by His Spirit.

Prayer

Recent rulings on family and marriage

<http://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/russellmoore/how-should-same-sex-marriage-change-the-church-witness.html>

The Supreme Court has now ruled on two monumental marriage cases, and the legal and cultural landscape has changed in this country. The court voted to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act and remand the decision of the Ninth Circuit in the Proposition 8 case, holding that California's Proposition 8 defenders didn't have standing. The Defense of Marriage Act decision used rather sweeping language about equal protection and human dignity as they apply to the recognition of same-sex unions. But what has changed for us, for our churches, and our witness to the gospel?

In one sense, nothing. Jesus of Nazareth is still alive. He is calling the cosmos toward his kingdom, and he will ultimately be Lord indeed. Regardless of what happens with marriage, the gospel doesn't need "family values" to flourish. In fact, it often thrives when it is in sharp contrast to the cultures around it. That's why the gospel rocketed out of the first-century from places such as Ephesus and Philippi and Corinth and Rome, which were hardly Mayberry.

In another sense, though, the marginalization of conjugal marriage in American culture has profound implications for our gospel witness. First of all, marriage isn't incidental to gospel preaching.

There's a reason why persons don't split apart like amoebas. We were all conceived in the union between a man and a woman. Beyond the natural reality, the gospel tells us there's a cosmic mystery (Eph. 5:32).

God designed the one-flesh union of marriage as an embedded icon of the union between Christ and his church. Marriage and sexuality, among the most powerful pulls in human existence, are designed to train humanity to recognize, in the fullness of time, what it means for Jesus to be one with his church, as a head with a body.

Same-sex marriage is on the march, even apart from these decisions, and is headed to your community, regardless of whether you are sitting where I am right now, on Capitol Hill, or in a rural hamlet in southwest Georgia or eastern Idaho. This is an opportunity for gospel witness.

For a long time in American culture, we've acted as though we could assume marriage. Even people from what were once called "broken homes" could watch stable marriages on television or movies. Boys and girls mostly assumed they had a wedding in their futures. As marriage is redefined, these assumptions will change. Let's not wring our hands about that.

This gives Christian churches the opportunity to do what Jesus called us to do with our marriages in the first place: to serve as a light in a dark place. Permanent, stable marriages with families with both a mother and a father may well make us seem freakish in 21st-century culture. But is there anything more "freakish" than a crucified cosmic ruler? Is there anything more "freakish" than a gospel that can forgive rebels like us and make us sons and daughters? Let's embrace the freakishness, and crucify our illusions of a moral majority.

That means that we must repent of our pathetic marriage cultures within the church. For too long, we've refused to discipline a divorce culture that has ravaged our cultures. For too long, we've quieted our voices on the biblical witness of the distinctive missions of fathers and mothers in favor of generic messages on "parenting."

For too long, we've acted as though the officers of Christ's church were Justices of the Peace, marrying people who have no accountability to the church, and in many cases were forbidden by Scripture to marry. Just because we don't have two brides or two grooms in front of us, that doesn't mean we've been holding to biblical marriage.

The dangerous winds of religious liberty suppression means that our nominal Bible Belt marrying parson ways are over. Good riddance. This means we have the opportunity, by God's grace, to take marriage as seriously as the gospel does, in a way that prompts the culture around us to ask why.

The increased attention to the question of marriage also gives us the opportunity to love our gay and lesbian neighbors as Jesus does. Some will capitulate on a Christian sexual ethic. There are always those professional "dissidents" who make a living espousing mainline Protestant shibboleths to an evangelical market. But the church will stand, and that means the gospel Jesus has handed down through the millennia. As we stand with conviction, we don't look at our gay and lesbian neighbors as our enemies. They are not.

The gay and lesbian people in your community aren't part of some global "Gay Agenda" conspiracy. They aren't super-villains in some cartoon. They are, like all of us, seeking a way that seems right to them. If we believe marriage is as resilient as Jesus says it is ([Mk. 10:6-9](#)), it cannot be eradicated by a vote of justices or a vote of a state legislature. Some will be disappointed by what they thought would answer their quest for meaning. Will our churches be ready to answer?

This also means we must change the way we preach. Those with same-sex attractions, who follow Christ, will be walking away from what their families and friends want for them: wedding cake and married life and the American Dream. Following Jesus will mean taking up a cross and following a hard narrow way. It always does.

If we're going to preach that sort of gospel, we must make it clear that this cross-bearing self-denial isn't just for homosexually-tempted Christians. It is for all of us, because that's what the gospel is. If your church has been preaching the American Dream, with eternal life at the end and Jesus as the means you use to get all that, you don't have a gospel that can reach your gay and lesbian neighbors—or anyone else for that matter.

Same-sex marriage is headed for your community. This is no time for fear or outrage or politicizing. It's a time for forgiven sinners, like us, to do what the people of Christ have always done. It's time for us to point beyond our family values and our culture wars to the cross of Christ as we say: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." And that's good news.