

Marital Check-up



Looking in the Marital Mirror

Ephesians 5:22-33

It's good to be home from Brazil. Thank you for holding the rope of prayer while we were gone. We had record attendance at the RBBI. We gave out over eighty-one certificates to people who studied the Word of God with us. There were probably eight or ten people who studied part of the time with us, but didn't get awarded a certificate. So we had an all-time record attendance. Next time, the pastors are shooting to have over one hundred. They wanted me to tell you guys, *obrigado*, which means thank you for everything you did. These guys realize without you taking up that offering and making it possible for them to come, there would be no way many of them would be able to come. So thank you on behalf of the pastors.

We are going to continue our sermon series on family and marriage this morning, so open your bibles to Ephesians chapter 5. The purpose of this study is hopefully to challenge us to take our marriages to the gym in 2017. By taking our marriage to the gym, hopefully we can prevent our marriages to one day go to the hospital. Now you know that before you begin to exercise vigorously, if you're out of shape, all exercise programs encourage us to go to a doctor first to see if we are healthy enough to exercise. We knew many of you were going to take your marriage to the gym, publicly by enrolling in Grace Marriage, which starts next month. But those of us who didn't sign up for Grace Marriage felt a need in our heart to work on our marriage in the privacy of our own home in 2017. There are many of us here who are not married yet; we are single, either by choice or by circumstance. There is the possibility down the road that we might be married, or married again, so we want to make sure that before we start

taking our marriages to the gym, we go for a marital check-up. So we are actually standing in the presence of the divine physician, God. We are going to let Him take an x-ray this morning, so that we fully understand our responsibility as a husband and as a wife. You know it is just easy to get in shape physically and then to get out of shape. It's possible that at one point, you had a great marriage. But you have maybe neglected it over the last several months, or even years, so there's a need for you to get back into the gym. That is why we are continuing our marital check-up this morning.

So let's stand in the presence of God and understand what we are doing is bringing ourselves before the Lord. I am going to ask you as I read this, not to just read it through the lens of familiarity, but to listen afresh to what the Word of God says. This message was actually put together while I was traveling from Parintins to Manaus on a ten and a half hour boat ride down the Amazon River. I prayed for God to give me freshness. I've preached on this passage so much and you've heard my thoughts so much that I really wanted Kory to deliver this message. But he and I believe it was God's will for me to bring this part. You've heard me preach on this many, many times, but I am asking you to ask God for a freshness, as I asked Him for freshness as we approach this passage. We are standing on holy ground.

Scripture

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands, love your wives, 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 that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

God has hopefully led us this year to do a different method of study. Instead of what I've done in the past, and that is to first preach about the husband, and then the wife; we are going to do the check-up together since this is a marital check-up. The reason is because some of you may not be here next week. Or, you may hear this, and this part is about you, but you really want your spouse to hear their part. Then next week your spouse might not be here when I spoke on her part.

I will never forget the time I had done a marriage series on this passage and I had preached two Sundays to the husband. He had just brought his wife from a foreign country to Murray. He had been with me for several months, but it was his wife's first time to meet me when she came to Hardin, and I preached on a wife being submissive to her husband. It took six months for her to warm up to me after that message. It didn't matter how hard I tried to tell her what I had told her husband the two weeks before, she thought I was a male chauvinist. So here is what we are going to do. I want all of you couples to hear this together, and I want all you singles to hear this. If I were to title this message, here is what the message is: Looking into the Marital Mirror.

When Celisa and I first started out in our little trailer and then moved into our first house, neither were big enough to have a big bathroom, so we only had one sink that we shared. It had a mirror behind the sink. That worked out really well, but there finally came a time when I understood that it's really better in the marriage if I just get in there and get out, and then turn it over to her. But when we built the home of our dreams, we didn't like getting ready separately. So we did what many of you did, not because of luxury or standard of living, but because of the oneness in our

marriage, we actually put in a bathroom that was bigger so we could have a his and her sink. We could be together in the same bathroom with a full mirror behind those two sinks, from wall to wall. That mirror has six lights at the top of the mirror. We have a light above the vanity. There is my sink and then her sink. She has other mirrors that she uses and some of them have even more lights on them. One of my joys is when we are getting ready, and I'm standing on my side and she is standing on her side. There is a tendency when we are getting ready, because I just love her so much, that instead of really glancing at the mirror and seeing me, I like to glance in the mirror and see her. I like to watch her get ready. I'm going to ask you not to do that this morning. I'm going to ask you husbands to stay on your side and not even to look out of the corner of your eye at your wife. I want you to stand in front of the mirror and let the marital mirror reveal itself to you. I want you wives to do the same thing. I don't want you to see how your husband is doing in getting ready. I don't want you to be concerned in what he is seeing. I want you to see what you need to see this morning.

Because we are going to be looking into the marital mirror and because we are going to do this check-up together, it is still going to take two weeks. So this morning, we are going to look at the theology of marriage as we look into the marital mirror. Then next Sunday, we are going to see the practice of our theology. We will see what our theology looks like when we put it into action. But before we know how to behave right, we have to believe right. We are going to base all of our remarks on the Word of God. Husbands, if I were you, I would not elbow my wife right now, because you are going to get elbowed right back in just a few moments. I am going to ask you husbands to listen while your wife gets examined by the doctor. I'm going to ask you to listen, not criticize, not smirk, or take notes. I'm just going to ask you to pray for her. But really, I want you to be fearful. I want you to be just a little nervous. I want you to hope that her examination is going to take a long time, but because in just a few moments, we are going to turn from her and turn to you. And we men don't like to go to the doctor, no disrespect to doctors. Because of that, we men do not like to stand before God, and be examined by Him and His Word. Are you ready?

What God has done for us in Christ

I'm going to give you the big context. We are in the book of Ephesians. The first three chapters of Ephesians tell us what God has done for us in Christ. Then chapters 4-6 tell us what we ought to be doing for God since we are in Christ. That is the context. We aren't in the part where we are talking about what God has done for us in Christ. We are in the part where we, as Christians, should now be doing for God since we are in Christ. Does everyone understand? So there is a proper response for what God has done for us in Christ. Now in particular, we are in the fifth chapter. The context of the fifth chapter is the Bible is telling us that since we are in Christ, each one of us as Christians, male and female, ought to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. We should never be under the influence of alcohol; we should be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. To be under the Holy Spirit means we are under the control of, in submission to the Holy Spirit of God. We are following Him; He is not following us.

Then the Bible gives five evidences, or characteristics, of a Christian who is filled with the Spirit of God.

Filled at Church

We will address one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We will be singing and making melody in our heart to the Lord. We will be giving thanks in all things. We will be submissive, one to another, in the fear of the Lord. So if I'm under the control of the Holy Spirit, when I come together in the public assembly, I ought to address the person worshipping with me by taking the hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs that have been chosen and I should sing those songs to the Lord. The melody shouldn't be coming from the musical instruments; the melody should be coming from my heart to the Lord. And in the assembling of the saints, there ought to be just a giving of thanks to God for everything. Then there should be this mutual submissiveness where when I'm in the public assembly, I defer to someone else. I'm selfless, not selfish. Hear that. If I'm under the control of God's Holy Spirit, I will not see the Church from my perspective, I'll see the Church from the perspective of other people and I'll not be selfish; I'll

be selfless. Does that make sense? Personally, I think that sounds like a public worship service.

Spirit-filled at Home and Work

But the writer knows that when we assemble together, there is a time when the assembly must quit assembling and we must go home, and go back to work. So he will now tell us what being filled with the Spirit looks like at home and at work. He talks about the three most important relationships in the biblical world, which was the husband/wife relationship; parent/child relationship; and master/servant relationship. The Apostle Paul has been talking about how the evidence of being under the control of the Holy Spirit is this mutual submissiveness under the body, so when His Spirit takes control of a person, that person isn't thinking about themselves, they are thinking about other people. Because of that, Paul starts this from, not the husband/wife perspective, but the wife/husband perspective, then the child/parent perspective, and then servant/master. He starts with the relationship that really mirrors and really pictures submissiveness. That is why he deals with the wives first. I want you wives to understand that he differentiates the relationship that you have with your husband from the relationship that you have with your child, and the relationship you have whether you are a master or a servant. Notice he tells children to obey their parents. Notice he tells servants to obey their masters. But he never tells a wife to obey her husband. He tells the wife to submit to her husband. This isn't implying that men are superior and women are inferior. This is not saying women are to submit to men, no. It is saying in that personal relationship of marriage, the wife is to submit to her own husband.

This word, "submit," is a military word. It is a word that literally means 'to be under for order, for harmony.' It is the picture of the military going into battle. Now, in the military, all of those military people are equal in person, equal in relationship. But so that an army can function as an army is intended, so that there will be order on the battlefield, which is designed for the safety of all not just the soldiers but those they are protecting, there has to be order in the military. So there is rank in the military. Rank refers to responsibility, and there is a difference in responsibility and rank.

Wives

Please hear this; in the home, when it comes to our relationship of personhood, husbands and wives are equal. There is no difference, male or female in relationship before God. Salvation is for both, equally. But for the safety of the home and of the relationship, so that we can accomplish what God has intended for us to accomplish, there are responsibilities, and those responsibilities are different. Ladies, I know you don't want chaos in your marriage. You don't want chaos in your home. You want order; therefore, when you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, and you leave the public assembly and go home, God has ordained you submit to your husband.

Now the word, "obey," is a compound word. It means 'to be under to hear.' So when the Bible tells children to obey their parents and a servant to obey their master, it is implying there is order in those relationships because parents are instructing the children as the master instructs servants. But when it comes to the home, the husband is not the instructor. The wife is not under him so she can learn; she is under him for order. Does that make sense? So wives, if you want to talk to me about your relationship with the Lord, and how you are under the control of God's Holy Spirit, let me tell you where that will flesh itself out. That will flesh itself out at home, and in public, it ought to be obvious that you submit to your husband as to the Lord.

Scholars are kind of divided on exactly what "*as to the Lord*" means. It can mean 'as a wife follows Christ.' In other words, she follows her husband the same way she follows Christ. Or, it can mean that a wife follows her husband because she knows following her husband is the right thing to do because the Lord has ordained for her to follow him.

- **Submissiveness to your Husband**

Now, this is about the theology of marriage; we aren't talking about the practice of it. We will talk about that next week. Ladies, look at these statements about submission.

1. You submit to your husband for HIS sake, not his sake. Do not let feminist theology teach you that this church is telling you this is about your

husband. No, the church is telling you, this is about HIM. You are doing your part in the marriage, accepting this responsibility for HIS sake, not his sake.

2. Submission isn't about the LORD, and you; it is not about him. You aren't doing this for your husband. This does not make the home a man's world. This does not make the world a man's world. It does not make the Church a man's world. This picture says what we believe to be truth, theologically, and that is the glory of marriage is that marriage is ultimately about Christ and His relationship with His Church.

3. Submission is not so he will get his way, but so HE will get HIS way. Do you understand that? I thought that was good...If you've been on a speedboat, which is still a slow boat, down the Amazon River for ten and a half years, it is amazing what the Lord can reveal to you!

4. You submit to your husband because he is the head of you. You are in a unique relationship that you have never been in before. You are actually one with someone. You were never one with your mom and your dad, but you are now one with him. You are the body, and he is the head, "*as Christ is the head of the Church, His body, and is Himself its Savior.*" Your body has a head; it is your husband. As the church submits to Christ, so the wife should submit to her own husband. What is your example of submissiveness? It is the example of the Church.

Now, I want to cut you ladies a little slack. I am not being negative or critical of my home church, but I was raised in a church where I didn't grow up seeing a church really submit to Christ. I was raised in a church where we fussed and fought, fussed and fought. This side wanted their way, and the other side wanted their way. If the two main granddaddies got together, the rest of us got together. When the two main granddaddies were at war, we were all at war, and we never had a pastor more than a couple of years.

I think many of you wives have been looking into the mirror of your own church experience; therefore, you think fussing and fighting is ok. You think being rebellious is ok. You think you have to put your foot down and stand up for your rights. If you have been at Hardin the last thirty-three

years; that is not the picture you've seen. You've seen the picture of a church trying it's best to follow Christ, not just here in Hardin, but to end of the world, where the membership lays down their own way of looking at things and defer to the body because we are not self-centered anymore, we are Christ-centered.

The reason we've got so many divorces in our marriages is because we have so many Baptist churches dividing, splitting, and starting their own life again with people who are just like them! When you stand in front of the mirror, I don't want you to be peering over at your husband to see what he is seeing. I want you to look in the mirror and see the Church in her trueness, the true Church of Jesus Christ submitting to Christ. That is your example.

5. The fifth thing the Bible says about submitting to you husband is that it is "*in everything*." It is not just in the small things that don't matter; it is in the big things that matter. It's not just in the things you agree on; it's even on the things you disagree on. To reveal that spiritual-ness that you have of following the Lord and being filled, under the control of the Holy Spirit, you follow him in every decision. Ladies, this just frees you up to be you. God never ordained you to be the head; He ordained you to be the body.

I'll never forget, about ten or so years ago, when Celisa and I got ready to make big decisions she would just look at me and say, "Whew, I'm glad that this is on you! I'm glad it doesn't really matter what I want to do." She would unload that on me and I knew I would have to make the decision. I know how it turns out for our home will reveal whether it was of God or not. Let me just say this; I had rather fail all of you as a church than I had to fail my wife. It would break my heart not to know God's will and fail you, but it would really break my heart to fail her. Then all of a sudden, she is gone and doing her thing and it is just me and the Lord. Do you know what I do then? I am now tracking her down and say, "Hey hon, before I make this decision, I need the female side of this. Would you tell me how this looks from your perspective." Then she shares it with me and I have her perspective and my perspective. I get ready to make the decision and she is gone doing her thing, and it is all on me. I can't tell you how freeing that

is to a lady. Can I just ask you ladies something? How are you doing? I didn't ask you how he is doing. How are you doing?

Husbands

Husbands, I want to be honest with you. If I was in the flesh and not in the Spirit, this is sounding really good! Now, I'm ready, let's drive the nail home! Husbands, boss you wives! Husbands, tell her what she is supposed to do! Husbands, tell her what you want to do!

1. It doesn't say that though...it doesn't say, husbands, lord over your wives. It doesn't say, husbands, now exercise your authority. It says, "*Husbands, (house-bands) love your wives...*" The way that is arranged in the Greek, it is telling every husband in the church of Ephesus who has a wife to love his own wife. Now aren't you glad you didn't elbow her? See, I'm now standing in front of the mirror as a husband, and I'm not looking at the Church and how the Church follows Christ. I'm not seeing my image; I'm seeing the image of Christ in the mirror. The Bible doesn't say for me to love my wife as my daddy loved my momma, or as my granddaddy loved my granny. It tells me to love my wife as Christ loved the Church. Wow!

To be totally honest with you, I need to comb my hair. I need to shave. I am now looking at Christ's love for the Church, and I'm seeing me...I go home from counseling and tell my wife how lucky she is to have me because she could have had someone just like you. ☺ Some of you guys are just stupid. You are idiots. That never comforts my wife. She doesn't want me to be a better version of you, or a better version of me; she just wants me to be like Christ.

2. The Bible then says, "*...and gave Himself up for her...*" Honestly, I understand the feminists getting all upset about the Bible. If I was a married woman and read verses 22-24, and I didn't have a relationship with the Lord and thought this was coming from human nature and it was flesh oriented, it looks like you have to give yourself up for him. It looks like it is all about him. But this verse tells me that in being submissive, she is not the one who gives herself up. The husband is the one who gives himself up. It is not a man's home. It is not a man's Church. It is a

woman's home. I am supposed to give myself up for her, just like Christ gave Himself up for me. How is it that in a Christian man's home today, the husband has all the hobbies and spare time, and the wife feels like she is going 24/7? It is because we don't have men looking in the mirror and seeing a real man, Christ. I don't know who you are looking at, but it's wrong. The Bible doesn't say that Celisa gives up her life for me. The Bible says I give up my life for her.

3. Then the Bible will tell me about the love of Christ because Christ is my example. Why did He give Himself up for her (the Church)? It was so that *"...He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the Word, so that He might present her to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."*

a. As I stand in front of the mirror of God's Word and looking into the love of Christ, I realize that the love Christ had for the Church set the Church apart, it made her different from all of the other people of the world! Do you know what I know Scripture teaches? I know this has caused theological problems for a lot of people, but there is a general love that God has for the world. He put Jesus on the cross, so that on that cross, Jesus died for all people making salvation available. But while He was dying on the cross in a general way for the sins of the whole world, He was also dying on the cross in a particular way to redeem His bride from their sin. So He didn't die to make salvation available to the Church, He died to make salvation a reality for the Church! His bride had been chosen for him by God before the foundation of the world. So when He went to that cross, He went to set her apart.

So the husband doesn't love his wife like he loves his mother. He doesn't love her like he does his daughter. He doesn't love her like he loves any other woman. He loves her with a one of a kind love that sets her apart, she knows she is the love of his life and she's special, and there is no other woman in his life like her! That is what I'm looking at when I am looking in the marital mirror. Yes, early in my marriage I heard, "You love your momma more than you love me." But ask her that now...

b. "...*having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word...*" It is not just my actions. Yes, I need to have that act of sacrificial love, but what really sets her apart, cleanses her, and demonstrates the love of Christ is my words to her. This is why Paul, writing to the church in Colossians, gives a mini-version and says husbands, love you wives and do not be harsh, do not be critical, do not be judging of them!

c. The reason is because I am making a presentation of her to myself, just as Christ did His bride. Christ took sinners and redeemed them with His love, and as He loved them, He transformed them from sinners to saints. The next thing you know, there is a person in His bride who used to be dominated by sin but now sins less because of His mighty love. That is what my love should do for my wife.

Can I just be honest with you? No matter how good a mom and dad does, a mom and dad can never do what a husband can do, because that little girl is never supposed to be one with her daddy. And if you are one with your daddy, God help you! That is only reserved for your mother. You men, if you liked her when you married her, but you don't like her now, it is probably your fault, unless she has a spiritual handicap. Celisa has lived with me far longer than she lived with her mom and dad. To brag just a little bit, when you see that woman and you see her without spot, wrinkle, and blemish, you are looking at a woman who has been loved with the love of Christ. Her daddy and mamma couldn't love her that way. Only her husband can love her that way. After thirty-six and a half years of marriage, I take full responsibility for any blemishes in my wife. I accept full responsibility.

Love Her as Yourself

"*In the same way...*" Wow! In the same way Christ loves His wife, I love my wife. The Bible says I ought to love my wife as my own body. I used to think that meant that the way I love and take care of my body, I should take care of her. That is not what it means. She is my body! That is why I have a sign on me that says, "No trespassing." Violators...no, they won't be prosecuted; they will be shot, on the spot! That is my body. Theologically, I don't want any of you men checking out my body. We have a word for

that, and it's, "yucky." Amen? Celisa is my body, she is mine, and I am hers. We are one, therefore, I should nourish her, and I should cherish her. We will talk about this next week. Basically, theologically, this is saying my wife should never be hungry physically, spiritually, or psychologically, because I am feeding her as her husband. I can't tell you how many men send their wife out into the world and they are starving emotionally, and they are starving spiritually! Then you wonder why she has such an attraction to spiritual people. You wonder why she fell prey to it. It's because you sent her out into the world starving! Have you ever seen someone that is really hungry? Man, they will grab ahold of all the food they can get and just gulp it down! They have no restraint, no control. A person that goes out into the world satisfied can sit down at a buffet and be disciplined. Nourish your body! Cherish your body! Set it up on a pedestal and cherish her, because we are members of the body of Christ. We are Christians.

Now ultimately, this picture is pointing toward Christ and the relationship He has with the Church and that is the glory of marriage. But after telling us about the glory of marriage, and not to let us off the hook, Paul finishes by saying, however, (now he starts with us husbands) let the husband love his wife as his own body. When you love her, you love you because she is you. Let the wife see that she respects her husband because he is your head.

How are we doing?

How are you doing? Let's start with us men. When you compare your love for your wife to the love of Christ, how are you doing? Do not walk away condemned; walk away convicted. How about you, wives? How are you doing? Next week we will learn how to behave what we believe about marriage. We will look at our marriage practically and see how to have a marriage that points people to the marriage relationship of Christ to the Church. The examination is not over. Be back next week and cancel what you have scheduled to be here next week. it is that important.

