

A Missional Marriage

When I think of marriage, my heart is drawn to the biblical text of **Ephesians 5:25** ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. On the other hand, when I think of marriage as our culture views marriage, I think of a chapter title from Terrence Real's book, *The New Rules of Marriage*, entitled "Are you getting what you want from marriage?" or "How to give in order to get what you want."

Now, these are two stark contrasts in looking at the issue of marriage. I want to propose an idea that has been perusing through my brain as of late. That is that marriage ought to be a missional marriage. Let me clarify by defining my terms. I am of the conviction that the husband and wife's greatest responsibility is to be an emblem, an example, a type, a representation of the love that the Lord Jesus had for His church. It's that simple. Simple? Really?

Jesus Christ had a mission. When he came to earth – as in our youth group, we have been studying the Gospel of Mark and I have been pounding it into their heads – **Mark 10:45** ⁴⁵ "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." This verse hits me for I note that Jesus Himself said that he came not to be served, and note, that if anyone had ever deserved to be served it would have been our Lord. But rather, he came to serve and to give his life – that means "to die" – as a ransom for many. Thus, Jesus' mission while on this earth was to die. In a word, he was born to die. Jesus left his Father's side in heaven (where he had been from all eternity past) and emptied himself by taking on human flesh (Phil 2:5ff) for the sole purpose of dying as a ransom for sins to purchase people that He has chosen for Himself from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

Jesus had a commission. I argue that in marriage the same is true. Every marriage relationship has a mission. It is to be missional. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ loved the church. How exactly did Christ love the church? By serving. By giving. By loving. By caring. By leading. By protecting. If husbands did this today, it would invariably be missional for this would be completely opposite of what people see in the average marriage today.

This, of course, presupposes that the husband and wife are still together in their marriage relationship. The marriage bond is to be for life. Period. Jesus Himself notes this (quoting Gen. 2:24) **Matthew 19:5-6** 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh' ⁶ "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." So we find that what God has joined together, that is, the divinely ordained institution of

marriage, then no man is to separate that. So if husbands and wives are not together – living together and even the mundane acts of doing “things” together, which is far-fetched in this culture – then how can we be this kind of example?

So we see that we as believers are to be missional. Jesus Christ said just before he ascended to the Father, **Matthew 28:19–20** ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We are to make disciples by going, baptizing and teaching. We can make disciples by going, in that the way we live our lives and, husbands, relate to our wives, is a way we can make disciples. I am a firm believer in that when people see and hear the truth – yes, absolute, genuine, biblical truth – they will flock to it – not flee from it.

It is startling to me that so many Christian marriages are on the brink of separation, divorce, anger, violence, hatred, abuse – you name it, it happens. How does this happen when husbands and wives are to love each other and serve one another and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ (Eph 5:21). This ought not to be. Perhaps this is from ill-teaching from contemporary pulpits; perhaps it is from lack of application upon hearing biblical preaching; perhaps it is from a subtle denial that anything is wrong; or perhaps it is from outright and flagrant refusal to love each other biblically.

Marriage is more serious than we could ever imagine. Let me say something radical. I believe that we – as born-again and redeemed believers – can never make too big a deal of marriage. We can never express the glory of it to our young people. Yet, with this strong attraction to marriage that we have, we must always set the biblical view in marriage up front and let people know that this is a “relationship of reverence,” a “solemn and serving sanction,” a “self-abasing and self-sacrificial bond.”

May we as husbands, endeavor to love our wives and serve them to the glory of God. May we be missional in that we seek to love our wives as Christ loved the church in a sacrificial and supreme way before a watching and hurting post-modern culture that longs for, I believe, marriage the way God intended it to be.

Your pastor and friend,
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