

Grace Evangelistic Ministries

Summer Conference

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How to Build a Healthy Marriage

Day Two - Section Three - Moses Onwubiko

Modeling Marriage After Christ's Marriage to the Church

In our study of “How to Build a Healthy Marriage,” we reserved the question “How?” to the last section. As building blocks leading to a healthy marriage, we took time and covered several topics along the way. We looked at God’s purpose in marriage, highlighted His supreme purpose—His glory. We considered Satan’s assault on marriage. There we learned about his ultimate objective—to devour every Christian marriage and make God a liar.

We examined the role of husband and wife in marriage and learned that God in His wisdom assigned each a role in marriage. We saw that fear can impede married life. Adding to that, we examined the power of love in marriage. We hammered the truth down that love is the engine of marriage and when turned off, marriage comes to a screeching halt.

In our building blocks we also took a look at forgiveness in marriage. It’s apparent to us that without forgiveness marriage will come short of fulfilling the purpose for which God instituted it. Forgiveness is a must.

Modeling marriage after Christ’s marriage to the church is the road for your marriage to enter the marriage hall of fame. It’s the ultimate trophy displaying God’s infinite wisdom and the unsearchable riches of His grace clothed in glory. What we will learn in this last section, can and will define or redefine our marriage and bring it into the spotlight.

The Art of Modeling

Modeling is an art. A modeler strives to capture and portray the beauty and the glory of what is being modeled. Take for instance, modeling Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians highlights the truth. We "offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example" (2 Thess. 3:9).

The Greek word, *typos* correctly translated "model" in the NASB has the connotation of an imprint or a rubber stamp. Figuratively, it conveys the idea of imitation. Here the Apostle places his Role Model, Jesus Christ, in front of himself, copied Christ's way of life and then turns around and challenges us to model Christ. To the Corinthians, he wrote, "I exhort you therefore... Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1). To the Thessalonians, he claimed, "we are Christ's modelers."

Question: what is the importance of being a modeler?

The answer to this question is very important.

Modeling forsakes self-worth.

The modeler assumes the image and the character of his object, replacing his own image and character.

The modeler realizes that it's not about him, but about the one he is modeling.

In modeling Christ, self-worth is set aside, and Christ's glory is displayed.

In modeling Christ, it's not about us; it's all about Him!

Modeling destroys the "me", "my", "mine" and "I" syndrome of ego centric self-centeredness. The modeler is faced with the reality that no one can be a double-modeler—you cannot model self and Christ simultaneously. Invariably, we cannot be modelers of Christ in marriage and at the same time focus on ourselves. To try is to forgo the opportunity of building a healthy and glorious marriage.

Reality check: what is the nature of your marriage now? Are you modeling Christ or self in your marriage? We cannot model both at the same time. If modeling Christ, then we must deal with the obstacle to comfort in building a healthy marriage. We must let go of the "me", "my", "mine" and "I" syndrome of ego centric self-centeredness. Failure to do so will cripple our marriage.

Modeling Jesus Christ in Marriage

To model Jesus Christ's marriage to the church, we must learn everything we can about His unique marriage. To do this, we must answer five pertinent questions.

- In what state was the church before Jesus Christ sacrificed Himself for her?
- What motivated Jesus Christ to sacrifice His life for His bride, the church?
- How did Jesus Christ go about establishing a relationship with the church?
- How is He caring for His bride?
- What's His ultimate objective for His bride? Answering these questions will enable us to look into our own lives and determine whether we are modeling our marriage after Christ's marriage of the church.

1. In What State was the Church before Jesus Christ Sacrificed Himself for Her?

The answer to this question is critical in understanding grace and building a healthy marriage or any relationship. There was no church when Jesus Christ was hanging on the cross—everyone was God's enemy—totally depraved, stricken with the sting of sin. The implication is that nothing in man attracted Jesus Christ. *Nothing!*

That Jesus Christ came for us despite our sinful state highlights God's *love* expressed in His marvelous *grace*.

2. What Motivated Jesus Christ to Sacrifice His Life for the Church?

The answer in one word *love*.

Jesus Christ came to display the trophy of the riches of God's love. He exegeted the Father (John 1:18). "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:8). Think of it this way, Jesus's incarnation was to display the Father's love. We exist individually and in marriage to display the banner of Christ's love—"Jesus in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

Application

Consider Scripture. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25).

The mandate is for the husbands to love their wives with the same measure of love that Christ had for the church, even before she existed. Remember, the ~~would-be~~ **future** church is worthless,

and without merit before Christ came. In the same fashion, husbands' love for their wives should not be based on her worth, but on the value of Christ's love. In other words, you must love your wife not on the bases of who and what she is, but on the bases of the worth of agape love—the love of Christ.

Point of Truth

Husbands take note: God has given you the privilege of being the head of the household (Eph. 5:23). You are the architect and the builder in marriage. You have been called to lead. In building a healthy marriage, there must first be a spiritual soul rapport before there can be a physical rapport. Jesus Christ must “rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15) before He can transform your marriage.

This is true of everyone. Jesus Christ indwells you (Col. 1:27). Your spouse is also His bride. He wants to love your spouse through you in ways that you can't. He wants to show the world the dynamic power of God's love through you, “Jesus in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

The implication is wider. If you fail in your spiritual life, you invariably will fail in your marriage.

The Centrality of Christ's Love

Love was, and is and will forever remain the focal point of all that Jesus Christ did for us, and is doing for us now and or will forever do for you and me respectively. We cannot emphasize this truth enough. First and foremost, it's Jesus Christ's love for the Father that drove Him to abandon His throne room in Heaven and in obedience to the Father and come down to die as a substitute for our sins. We must emulate such love.

3. How did Jesus Christ go about establishing a relationship with the Church?

First, by paying the full price for her sins “while we were yet sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Second, He advocated the Father for the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to realize Christ's work on the cross.

4. How is He Caring for His Bride (the church)?

We are in Christ's mind constantly because we are dear to His heart. And why shouldn't we be? He gave up His life for us. He cares:

By allowing us to share in His peace. “Let the peace of Christ richly rule in your hearts” (Col. 3:15).

By constantly nourishing us through His Word.

By advocating for us (1 John 2:2).

By interceding for us before the throne room of the Father (Heb. 7:25).

By being with us constantly, “Lo, I am with you, always” (Matt. 18:20).

5. What is Jesus Christ’s Ultimate Objective for His Bride (the church)?

Scripture provides the only answer we need:

“He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault” (Eph. 5:27 NLT). What more can we ask for? Amazing! Our Lord is taking such good care of us, looking forward to the day of presentation. What a joy to look forward! What a glorious hope.

Jesus Christ is looking forward to complete His Father’s assignment regarding the church.

Husbands are you looking forward to completing your assignment of loving your wife as Christ loved you and gave His life for you (Eph. 5:25)?

Wives are you looking forward to fulfilling your assignment of respect, submission and obedience as unto the Lord (Eph. 5:22-23)? As we do, our marriage will become a trophy of God’s glory. Then we can say like the apostle Paul,

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me--the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. And the prize is not just for me but for all who eagerly look forward to his appearing (2 Tim 4:7-8 NLT).

