

The Lord Seeks a Godly Seed

SUNDAY SCHOOL

When Christ Says “I Do”

- **SLIDE**

- Ephesians 5:31-32 (NLT)

- 31)** As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.”

- 32)** **THIS IS A GREAT MYSTERY**, but it is an illustration of the way **CHRIST AND THE CHURCH ARE ONE**.

- We looked at this verse yesterday, but I would like to spend a little more time on it today...

- Paul is right when he says that this is a Mystery...

- I don't think that we will ever fully understand it

- We are all familiar with the idea of using the relationship between Christ and the Ecclesia in order to help us better understand our roles in Marriage

- Paul himself uses the example of Christ laying down his life for the Ecclesia, just like a Husband should sacrifice his own wants and desires to serve his wife

- But, for this morning's lesson, we would like to attempt to opposite of this lesson...

- We would like to look at the Mystery from the other side

- We who are married are intimately familiar with the institution of Marriage

- Even the unmarried have experienced the union of their parents

- We have spent some time this weekend reminding ourselves of the ideals behind marriage

- It stands to reason, therefore, that we can reverse the lesson, and get quite a bit out of it also...

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- This morning, I would like to look at how we can apply the **IDEALS OF MARRIAGE** to our **RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST**

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- Our goal will be to learn how to **BETTER FULFILL OUR ROLE AS THE BRIDE OF CHRIST** by examining our **ROLE IN MARRIAGE**

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- **MARRIAGE** is all about **FAITHFULNESS**, and is therefore one of our major **TESTS OF FAITH**

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- He that **REMAINS FAITHFUL IN MARRIAGE**, strengthens his **FAITH IN CHRIST** also

- Paul was concerned that the Corinthians had lost their faith

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- 2nd Corinthians 11:2-3 (Message)

- 2) The thing that has me so upset is that I care about you so much - this is the passion of God burning inside me! **I PROMISED YOUR HAND IN MARRIAGE TO CHRIST**, presented you as a pure virgin to her husband.
- 3) And now I'm afraid that exactly as the Snake seduced Eve with his smooth patter, you are being **LURED AWAY FROM THE SIMPLE PURITY OF YOUR LOVE** for Christ.

- We can't be lured away from the simple purity of our love for Christ

- **SLIDE**

- We need to **LEARN FROM THIS CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE** as much as possible, because we want to live the kind of life that is worthy of our calling

- We want to live the kind of life that our **"Husband"** would expect from us

- We want to learn to live the kind of life that Christ wants from us

- **SLIDE**

- We want to live the kind of life that allows Christ to meet us at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and say **“I DO!”**

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- First, let's look at the **WHY**
 - The Purpose of Marriage
- Starting from Malachi 2, and really all the way back to Genesis 2, we tried to show that...

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- The reason **GOD MADE MARRIAGE** is because He wants **US** to become a **GODLY SEED!**
- God understands that for Humans to succeed, they need **HELP**
 - For us to grow, and change, and mature, and become the kind of people that He wants us to become it requires great effort
 - While this is possible on your own, God understood from the very beginning that it is much better to have someone to help you
 - * God instituted Marriage so that the Husband can help the Wife, AND the Wife can help the Husband achieve their common goals of Service to Christ
- Well, oddly enough that is a good summary of the purpose behind our Lord's life and ministry

- **SLIDE**

- The reason **GOD SENT CHRIST** is because He wants **US** to become a **GODLY SEED!**
- God wants us to become like His Son
- We are involved in a relationship with Jesus to become more like Jesus
- This is the definition of **DISCIPLESHIP**
- In his book, *The Genius of Discipleship*, Brother Dennis Gillette defines Discipleship as,

- **SLIDE**

*“The process which transforms the disciple into the **FRIEND**, the witness and the **SERVANT** of the Master.”*

- I love the verses in 2nd Corinthians where Paul talks about the veil that covered the Jews understanding, so that they could not see this message from Jesus

- **SLIDE**

- 2nd Corinthians 3:16 & 18 (NLT)

16) But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, then the veil is taken away.

- When you enter into a relationship with Jesus, the veil of mystery is removed...

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18) And all of us have had that veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, **WE BECOME MORE AND MORE LIKE HIM** and reflect his glory even more.

- The reason we are given spouses is to help each one of us become more Christlike
- In a **VERY** real sense, the reason we are made the spouse of Christ is to become more Christlike
- Let's look at the Ways Your Spouse **HELPS** You, and see **HOW** our Lord helps us

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- **7 Ways Your Spouse HELPS You**

- **SLIDE**

- **7 Ways Christ HELPS You**

- **SLIDE**

- 1) Your Spouse **CHALLENGES** You to be Better

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- 1) Christ **CALLS** You to a Higher Level

- Just like your spouse wants the best from you
 - Jesus does also
- He sets a perfect example to us, and then asks us simply to ***“FOLLOW HIM”***

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2) Your Spouse Holds You **ACCOUNTABLE**

- When your spouse holds you accountable, it helps to control you sliding into sin

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2) Christ Will **JUDGE** You

- There is no better example of Accountability than standing before the Judgment Seat
- Christ calls us to a higher level, and then holds us responsible to strive for that
- We understand our Lord to be full of Grace and Mercy, but we also know that he is not pleased when we backslide into our old bad habits

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3) Your Spouse **COUNTER-BALANCES** You

- Married Couples benefit from the **MUTUALITY** of two people sharing the same burden

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3) Christ **SHARES** Your Burden With You

- Is there a better way to explain what Christ does for us?

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• Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV)

- 28)** Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- 29)** Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

30) For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

- We sometimes do not see Christ there, but always remember that yoke that we are carrying has two bows
- How heavy would our burden be if we truly were alone?

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4) Your Spouse **PRAYS** For You

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4) Christ **MEDIATES** For You

- Just like your Spouse prays for your best interests, our Lord is also bringing our needs before the Father

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5) Your Spouse Gives You Someone to **PLEASE**

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5) Christ Gives You Someone to **SERVE**

- We have a built-in desire to **SERVE** someone
- As humans, we enjoy having a target of our affections, we can rise to the occasion of trying to make our spouse happy
- With Christ we have a Lord that is pleased by our Service

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6) Your Spouse is **HONEST** With You

- In a good marriage, you get someone who is **REALLY** going to tell you what you are like

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6) Christ Asks You To Be **HONEST** With Him

- Every Sunday our Lord asks us to do one of the hardest things in life...

- 1st Corinthians 11:28 (KJV)

28) But let a man **EXAMINE HIMSELF**, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

- Nothing is more deceitful than the human heart, and Christ wants us to plumb those depths and learn what it is to be honest with him
- Which kind of brings us to the last point...

- **SLIDE**

7) Your Spouse Keeps You **HUMBLE**

- Humility is not thinking **LESS** of yourself, Humility is thinking of yourself **LESS**
- Marriage keeps you from thinking just about yourself

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7) Christ Wants You **HUMBLE**

- Christ can only work with us, when we are open to his instructions

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- Matthew 18:4 (KJV)

4) Whosoever therefore shall **HUMBLE** himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

- We can see that in a **VERY** real sense, the whole reason we are made the spouse of Christ is to become more Christlike
- Yesterday, we also talked about what Marriage life is like **AFTER You Say “I Do”**
- What can we learn about our relationship to our Lord from those lessons?
- The first principle for us to learn is from Ephesians 5

- **SLIDE**

- Ephesians 5:24 (NIV)

24) Now as **THE CHURCH SUBMITS TO CHRIST**, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

- Ah...
 - The **“S Word”**
- If you think that it’s hard for a woman to hear this word, consider what it means for us men to hear this same command
 - For we are both under the same command
- **ALL** of us are called to Submit to Christ
- It’s hard for us to think of Submission in our life in Christ
 - We’d much rather think of our life in Christ in terms of being victorious, succeeding, and conquering
 - We don’t like the idea of yielding, giving in or obeying...
- It conjures up negative images of the idea of **SURRENDER**
 - Yet **SURRENDER** is exactly what God wants from us!
 - A lifelong obedience to the concept, “Not my will, but **THINE** be done”
- **SLIDE**
- **The Heart of Worship is SURRENDER**
- What do you think of when you hear the word “Surrender”?
 - Surrender makes you think of defeat in battle, forfeiting a game, yielding to a stronger opponent...
 - Criminals “surrender” to authorities...
- But, Surrender is what God wants most from us
 - **Surrendering to God is Heart of Worship**
- We surrender ourselves to God, not out of fear or even out of duty...
 - We surrender in Love, because He first loved us...
- After spending the first 11 chapters of Hebrews explaining God’s grace to us, look what Paul tells us to do in chapter 12:

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• Romans 12:1 (NIV)

- 1) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as **LIVING SACRIFICES**, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship.

• Offering yourself to God as a living sacrifice is what worship is all about

• It's called many things in the Scriptures:

- Consecrating yourself to God
- Making Christ your Lord
- Taking up your Cross
- Denying your self

• It's all talking about this same process: Offering your Life to God

• Remember... You are a Living Sacrifice...

• The problem with a Living Sacrifice is that it can crawl off the altar

• You may have to re-surrender yourself 50 times a day

• It's not a one-time event

• You must take up your cross **DAILY** and follow Christ

• Some modern versions translate this verse as...

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• Ephesians 5:24 (CEV)

- 24) Wives should always put their husbands first, as **THE CHURCH PUTS CHRIST FIRST**.

• Putting Christ **FIRST** in your life is the key to avoiding much pain in the future

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• Accepting Christ's **AUTHORITY** in your life is the key to being **TRANSFORMED**

- This might sound simple to you...
 - Academically, we all accept the Authority of Christ in our lives
 - If we believe that Christ is our Lord, then logically it follows that we would accept his Authority in our lives
- But, this is not an Academic exercise
 - We are not looking for the answer that your mind gives
 - But, the commitment that your heart shows
- To accept the Christ as the Authority in your life means allowing him to become the standard in your life
 - That which all things are judged upon
 - The Compass that you rely on for direction
 - The Counsel that you turn to when making decisions
 - The Benchmark that you use for evaluating everything in your life
- That is what it means to **SUBMIT** to our Lord...
- We also talked yesterday about what happens when a marriage breaks down
- There are valuable lessons for us to learn about our relationship with our Lord from this also...
- **SLIDE**
- Just as there are those in the **ECCLESIA** who will prove to be **UNFAITHFUL** to Christ
- **SLIDE**
 - There are also those who will be **UNFAITHFUL** in **MARRIAGE**
- We often learn the value and importance of things by examining their opposites
- We see the righteousness of Christ by comparing him to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees
- We learn of the strength of King David by comparing him to the weakness of King Saul

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- We learn the **IMPORTANCE** God puts on **FAITHFULNESS**, by comparing it to how much **UNFAITHFULNESS** upsets Him
- To return once again to our opening verses from yesterday...

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- Malachi 2:16 (Message)

16) “**I HATE DIVORCE**,” says the GOD of Israel. GOD of-the-Angel-Armies says, “I hate the violent dismembering of the ‘one flesh’ of marriage.” So watch yourselves. Don’t let your guard down. Don’t cheat.

- **SLIDE**

- **UNFAITHFULNESS** is something that God **HATES!**
- Our relationship with Christ is important to Him
- It helps us in understanding the importance of **FAITHFULNESS** in God’s sight, by considering how much he **HATES UNFAITHFULNESS**
- The other point that we tried to make clear yesterday was...

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- **IF** a man or woman is **UNFAITHFUL** to their spouse, they are expected to **REPENT**

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- Therefore, **IF** there is **UNFAITHFULNESS** in a Marriage “In Christ”

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- And **IF** there is **REPENTANCE**

- **SLIDE**

- Both Parties are expected to **RECONCILE**

- **SLIDE**

- The **UNFAITHFUL** is expected to show **REPENTANCE**, and the **INJURED** is expected to show **FORGIVENESS**

- This is, in essence, the **HOPE** of our **SALVATION** in Jesus Christ!

- **SLIDE**

- **IF** we are **REPENTANT**, we can find **FORGIVENESS** in Christ

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- Christ is full of **GRACE**, and **RECONCILIATION** is his goal for our relationship

- Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians:

- **SLIDE**

- 2nd Corinthians 5:17-19 (NIV)

- 17)** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

- 18)** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION**:

- 19)** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the **MESSAGE OF RECONCILIATION**.

- We are called to Ministry of Reconciliation

- **SLIDE**

- The only reason that we exist, the only reason that we have a hope **AT ALL**, is because Christ **RECONCILED OUR RELATIONSHIP**

- Each one of us is worthy of nothing but Death, yet we have been saved, and given Eternal Life through the death of our Lord

- **THAT** is the example that Christ sets before us

- When we find ourselves in a relationship where faith has been broken, we need to look to **THAT** example, and find within ourselves the ability to forgive, and to **RECONCILE**

- **NOT** just in matters of Marriage!

- **SLIDE**

- **RECONCILIATION** needs to be a **HALLMARK** of our relationships with each other

- Remember what Christ told the Disciples?

- **SLIDE**

- John 13:35 (NLT)

35) Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

- Part of our preaching, part of our mission, part of our goal in life as an Ecclesia is to be known by those around us as a body of people that truly, honestly, **LOVES** each other
- So, when there is broken fellowship, this is a disgrace to our body, and doesn't fulfill one of God's greatest desires for us
- It took me too long in life to learn an important truth:

- **SLIDE**

- Don't Seek **RESOLUTION**

- **SLIDE**

- Seek **RECONCILIATION**

- It's unrealistic to expect everyone to agree about everything

- **RESOLUTION** focuses on the problem

- **RECONCILIATION** focuses on the relationship

- Focus on **RECONCILIATION**, and the problem often becomes irrelevant

- **You don't have to resolve the issue...**

- **Just the relationship**

- **SLIDE**

- Seek to **RECONCILE** your relationships, and you will become more **CHRISTLIKE**

- After all, isn't that really our goal?...

- **SLIDE**

- Before we close, I want to talk for a moment about **WHEN Christ Says “I Do”**

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- Specifically, **WHEN**
- To get the real lesson from this, I would like to spend a few minutes and talk about the Jewish tradition of **BETROTHAL**
- Betrothal (or *kiddushin* in Hebrew) was a much more formal concept in Jewish life than our modern idea of engagement
- A betrothed couple was, for all legal purposes, considered to be married
- The only respect in which this was not true was sexual - consummation of the marriage before the actual nuptials was forbidden
- Although it was not essential, the bride's consent was often asked for
- Once the terms of the Dowry (or *mohar* in Hebrew) had been specified and the father of the bride had agreed to them, the prospective bridegroom would pour a cup of wine for the prospective bride
- If the Bride agreed to the match, she would drink from the cup, indicating her acceptance
- In this manner, the covenant was sealed, and the couple was considered to be betrothed
- For the groom, the betrothal period was one of preparation
- The groom would depart, returning to his father's house to prepare the bridal chamber
- Sometimes this would require actually adding on a room to the father's house
- This construction project would take the better part of a year, ordinarily, and the father of the groom would be the judge of when it was finished (We can see the logic there - obviously, if it were up to the young man, he would just throw up some kind of modest structure and go get the girl!)
- The betrothal was, for the bride, a time of *purification* and *anticipation*
- The time of the betrothal was typically one year, adequate time to demonstrate the purity of the bride by showing that she was not pregnant

- The bride wore a veil whenever she stepped out of her house to indicate that she was spoken for - no longer available because she has been bought with a price
- She is set apart and consecrated to her bridegroom
- She will resist any other offers as she waits for her one true love who has bought and paid for her
- The bride anticipated the return of the groom, the exact time of which she did not know, and which could occur at any time
- When the father of the groom deemed that the bridal chamber was ready, he would give his approval for the groom to claim his bride
- The arrival of the groom at the bride's house signaled his intention of "taking her to wife."
- The formal process of consummating the marriage in the "taking" of the bride was referred to as *nissuin*, which literally means "taking"
- Typically, this "abduction" would occur in the middle of the night
- And that's the romantic part - all Jewish brides were 'stolen'
- What a thrill for the bride, to be 'abducted' and carried off into the night, not by a stranger but by one who loved her so much that he had paid a high price for her
- Although abduction was considered romantic, completely surprising the bride by bursting into her house in the middle of the night was not, so upon arrival at the house of the bride, the groom's party would announce their arrival with a shout - **"Behold, the bridegroom cometh!"**
- They return to the Groom's Father's House, and a great Marriage Feast is held...
- **The Lessons to us are obvious...**
- The New Covenant was initially sealed when the disciples shared a cup of wine with Jesus at Passover, and this symbolism is perpetuated to us in the communion
- By drinking this wine we acknowledge that we have chosen to be married to Christ, and that we are living a life of faithfulness waiting for his appearing
- **SLIDE**
- We are **BETROTHED** to Christ

- During our "Betrothal," Christ is engaged in preparing a place to which to bring us

- **SLIDE**

- John 14:1-3 (NLT)

- 1) "Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me.
- 2) There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly.
- 3) When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

- We wait anxiously for the return of the Christ

- Christ's Father is the one who decides when He can return for His bride

- At a time determined by the Father and unknown to the bride, Christ will return to "take" the bride, and his arrival will be announced by a shout

- **SLIDE**

- 1st Thessalonians 4:16-17 (KJV)

- 16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.
- 17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

- A great Marriage Feast will then be held to celebrate

- The Marriage Feast that we have looked forward to our entire lives...

- **SLIDE**

- Revelation 19:7-9 (NIV)

- 7) Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.
- 8) Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)
- 9) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

- Did you notice at what point Christ said “I Do”?
- It is the very first thing that happens!
- It’s not the last thing, like we are used to in our culture
- **SLIDE**
- **Christ has ALREADY said “I Do”**
- You are already betrothed to him
- A betrothed couple was, for all legal purposes, considered to be married
- The only respect in which this was not true was sexual - consummation of the marriage before the actual nuptials was forbidden
- **SLIDE**
- The only thing that we await is the **UNION** of our bodies
- The Joining of our physical bodies to become **ONE**
- We await the **TRANSFORMATION**
 - When this **MORTAL** shall put on **IMMORTALITY**
 - And this **CORRUPTIBLE** shall put on **INCORRUPTIBILITY**
- But, our Bridegroom has chosen us at his Bride already
 - He has committed himself to us, and we are faithful that he does not change
- He has bought us with a price, and we are his!
- **SLIDE**
- If you strive to remain faithful to him, he will forgive your mistakes, and his **GRACE** will always **RECONCILE** the relationship with him
- But, don’t leave him!
- **SLIDE**
- Don’t be **UNFAITHFUL** to him, and you will one day share in that glorious Marriage Supper and the wonderful life to come with him for eternity