

The Necessity of Trust

Ephesians 5:22–33

Sometimes, when Norma and I are out shopping, my dear wife has trouble making up her mind. Should we buy Item A or Item B? She mulls over the costs and benefits of each option, wondering which would be best. Sometimes, as she goes through this painstaking process, I lean over and whisper, “Don’t worry, honey. This isn’t a life-changing decision.”

Today we are gathered for a wedding. In a few minutes Michael and Annie are going to take important vows before God and men. They have prayerfully considered this matter. They love one another and want to live the rest of their lives together. From this hour forward their lives will never be the same. They will be husband and wife. For Michael and Annie, this *is* a life-changing decision! Each has concluded that the other is honest and trustworthy—willing and able to keep their wedding vows in a lifelong union.

We have just heard the apostle Paul’s eloquent teaching on marriage. Here is what one author calls “the Christian ideal of the marriage relation . . . the loftiest conception of that relation that has ever come from human pen.” What we heard a few moments ago is not simply Paul’s opinion. He is the apostle of Christ speaking under divine inspiration. He articulates the word of the living God, the standard by which every human will one day be judged.

This passage is loaded with insights, but let’s highlight just three of special significance for Michael and Annie as they begin their new life together today. My points are these: (1) new home, (2) new roles, (3) one overarching goal. First,

1. New home

Marriage was ordained by God at the beginning of creation. It is his will for an orderly society. Paul quotes from Genesis chapter 2. God had created the cattle, the birds, and the beasts of the field. Each had their mates, the male and the female. But the man was all alone. So from Adam’s rib God made a woman. The verb that is used literally means *built*. It is the word used of building a house—the purposeful erection of a useful structure. From Adam’s rib God fashioned a lovely creature according to his plan foreordained before the creation of the world. Adam recognized her as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” suitable to be his lifetime companion. God brought her to the man, and she became his wife. Adam was delighted in her. Man was alone no more. He had a *companion*, a helper to help him in the work of taking dominion over the creation and establishing God’s kingdom upon earth.

At this point the inspired author of the creation account interjects: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” In our text from Ephesians Paul cites this key text from

Genesis. He grounds his teaching on marriage in the Old Testament, showing the unity of the Bible.

Here is the expression of the divine will, expressed in both Testaments: “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.” The word translated “man” in the original Hebrew means *adult male* or *husband*. It is a different word from the one used in Genesis 1: “God created *man* in his own image”—the generic word meaning *human being*. According to the Bible, only an adult male is qualified to be a husband. There was a time when this was generally accepted truth, something that nature itself teaches us, but mankind’s rebellion seems to be accelerating apace.

Both Moses and Paul teach that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. This leaving and joining creates a new family unit—a new home. This does not mean that the young couple beginning marriage have nothing more to do with their parents—far from it. Under Old Testament law parents are responsible to take care of their children when they are young, and children are responsible to take care of their parents when they are old. This is our Fifth Commandment duty: to honor our father and mother. But though part of a larger family or clan, the nuclear family established in marriage has the responsibility for procreation and the care and spiritual training of children. By entering into marriage today Michael and Annie are establishing a new home. Their primary responsibility henceforth will be to each other, and to the Lord. At the beginning of this wedding service Annie was escorted in by her father. The question was asked: Who gives this woman to be married to this man? The answer was given: “her mother and I.” Michael stepped up to receive his bride. The responsibility for Annie’s primary spiritual care was transferred to her husband. Annie will continue to love her father and mother who brought her into this world and nurtured her in the faith, but now she will look to Michael for spiritual guidance according to the teaching of Scripture. This wedding service establishes a new home.

Secondly, consider

2. New roles

Notice the repeated use of the terms *wife/wives* and *husband/husbands* in Paul’s text. Up until this hour Annie and Michael have been adult children of their respective parents. At the conclusion of this wedding service they will be introduced as husband and wife. They will have undertaken new roles.

Wife has the meaning *female partner in a marriage*. Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary gives the definition in more specifically Christian terms: “Wife: the lawful consort of a man; a woman who is united to a man in the lawful bonds of wedlock.” *Husband*, in turn, means *a man joined to a woman in marriage*.

In some circles today the terms *wife* and *husband* are held in contempt. Last month the Methodist Church of Great Britain labeled *husband* and *wife* “offensive”

—“hurtful language” that could offend groups it perceives as “marginalized.” It wants its leaders and parishioners to use the generic term *partner* and recognize that “relationships come in many varied expressions.” How sad that a group calling itself the church takes its cues from culture instead of God’s unchanging word! Culture cannot save; only the God of the Bible can save! “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

Marriage was ordained by God. It exists to show the glory of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom who is sanctifying and cleansing his bride the church with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself at the final day as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle but holy and without blemish. A husband’s love for his wife should at all times reflect Christ’s love for his church. He should love his wife exclusively, with tenderness and affection, cherishing her as God’s good gift to him. The Bible promises: “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor of the LORD.”

New roles involve new duties. Michael, from this day forward your responsibility is to love Annie as Christ loves the church. And if you do this faithfully it will be the greatest gift you can give yourself as well. As Paul puts it in our text today, “he who loves his wife loves himself.” A husband who is unfaithful to his wife harms himself as well as his wife. This is a very grave sin; not only is it an offense against the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”; it is also an offense against the third, “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” The vows that you and Annie are about to take are “before God.” The God of heaven is a witness to your vows.

Annie, your duty from this day forward is to submit to your husband “as to the Lord.” As you obey Michael’s lawful commands you are modeling the kind of obedience that a faithful church renders to her Lord Christ. Christ is the head of the church; a church that does not obey Christ is no true church.

We have briefly considered the first two points: *new home* and *new roles*; lastly, consider

3. One overarching goal

The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church; the wife is to submit to her husband as a faithful church submits to Christ. There is therefore one overarching goal in a Christian marriage: to *glorify Christ* by modeling a Christian marriage before a watching world.

All around us are people who are hurting, reeling from the effects of sin in a fallen world: broken homes, dysfunctional marriages, victims who have suffered abuse at the hands of family members. Jesus is the Light of the world, and he has commissioned us to be lights as well. He tells his people, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” It is his will that his people be “blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked

and perverse generation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world.” A Christian home is a beacon of hope in a world gone awry.

Michael and Annie, my prayer for you is that the home you are forming today becomes a beacon of hope before your watching friends and neighbors. It can be that, as you intentionally model Christ in your marriage. The goal of a Christian marriage is the same as the goal of an individual Christian: “to glorify God and enjoy him forever” in keeping with the biblical command, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The only way you can have a solid, lasting, committed, Christian marriage is through the power of Christ, who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.

What I have told you today is impossible to attain, humanly speaking. The only one who has ever measured up is the sinless one, the Lord Jesus Christ. *He* is altogether trustworthy. People disappoint us all the time. They make promises they cannot keep. They don’t keep their word. They tell us what they think we want to hear, so as to gain an advantage at our expense.

Plenty of people have come to the marriage altar starry-eyed, hoping for the best, but finding disappointment in the end. We live in an uncertain world. But *God* is trustworthy. Out of love he sent his Son into the world to die in the place of his people. Through Christ’s death he purchased salvation for all those who were given to him by the Father before the foundation of the world. The only way of salvation—the only hope of heaven—is to cry to him for mercy and put your trust in him, the Lamb of God, slain on behalf of undeserving sinners. Man cannot save you. You cannot save yourself. Your only hope is Christ.

But the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, is perfectly trustworthy. If you put your trust in him, you will never be disappointed. Amen.