

Bad Teaching:

1, $1 + 1 = 3$

2, Pie Are Square

3, ???

Curmudgeonly Librarian

*Bad Marriage Teaching In The Church Series
Curmudgeonly Librarian*

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And the Gileadites captured the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites. And when any of the fugitives of Ephraim said, "Let me go over," the men of Gilead said to him, "Are you an Ephraimite?" When he said, "No," they said to him, "Then say Shibboleth," and he said, "Sibboleth," for he could not pronounce it right. (Judges 12:5–6a, ESV)

And thus *shibboleth* passed into our English language:

Shibboleth: a slogan; catchword. a common saying or belief with little current meaning or truth.

When it comes to what passes for evangelical teaching, much of what we are taught is nothing more than the accepted *shibboleths* that pastors, teachers and writers hold forth as settled dogma. Yes, we have our creeds, but all too often, we are given lists of things to believe that we are told define our Christian life and thought. They are the accepted heterodoxy that we are expected to learn in order to define our beliefs.

For example, we are told that there are nine spiritual gifts. I know that this is true, but apparently I have been blessed with a different gifting, as a Christian, one that isn't one of the recognized nine. Apparently, my spiritual gift is the gift of asking "Why? Where does it say that?" (I'm pretty sure that Benny Hinn would say that I have the Gadfly Anointing.) Examples of teachings that I have questioned, examined, and discarded over the years include Calvinism and Dispensationalism. I freely admit to being a thorough-going Pelagian, having passed Arminius long ago (and without collecting \$200, I might add.) As well, I made the journey from Pre-Trib believer to Post-Trib believer painlessly.

These doctrinal *shibboleths* were jettisoned because I asked for biblical support for these teachings, not biblical cut-and-paste. For some reason, when we Christians say that we want to "rightly divide the Word of Truth," all too often we mean that we want to dismember it.

Anyway, for many years, I accepted the *shibboleths* about marriage and relationships that I had been taught, and even taught myself. However, upon early medical retirement and experiencing a whale of a lot of free time on my hands, and because Wife and I were experiencing a small bump in our marriage, I became interested in reading about marriage, marriage relationships and intimacy. As a result, I came to see that the Church has done a truly masterful job of creating a total cock-up on marriage. As a result, because everyone had a right to my opinion, I started writing a blog and began to do my own writing about marriage.

Shibboleths such as "Soulmates", "*Servant Leadership*," and "*Unconditional Love*" litter the theological/marital landscape, and are used to give truly rotten advice and teaching. I have written a number of articles/posts going after these bad teachings, but since I did them over a number of years, they are scattered about my blog. With this .pdf, I want to create a one-stop downloadable collection for my readers so that they won't have to go searching for them all.

This is a first-time effort for me to pull my thoughts and articles into some kind of organization (rather than the address-'em-as-I-think-of-them approach I have been using on my blog.) I hope this will be of help for you.

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As always, my disclaimer: I am not a counselor, doctor, or pastor. For that matter, Wife says I don't play well with others. My advice and comments come from my concern for hurting Christian husbands and wives. Someone once said to me, "Church shouldn't hurt", and I believe the same thing goes for marriage. I call 'em as I see 'em, but please, don't take my word as gospel. Yes, read what I say, pray about what I say, but be a Berean (Acts 17:11) and do your own "due diligence."

Chapter 1: Bad Teaching: Marriage Is To Make You Holy, Not Happy

(Most of what follows in this chapter appeared on a christian marriage forum where I have posted in the past.)

If you are a reader of my blog, then you realize that I am not a big fan of what the church has been trotting out as sound teaching about marriage. In this first chapter, I want to address one of the more popular *shibboleths* of our day, the trite platitude that “Marriage isn’t to make you happy, it’s to make you holy.” This sounds so holy and pious, and has the added benefit of seeming to want to make us better Christians, but in essence, it’s a crock.

Before you start to think I am a hedonist when it comes to marriage, let me say that like all legends, there is actually a kernel of truth buried under this trope which says that, ultimately, our spouse is not responsible for our joy, our happiness. And, yes, I agree that this is true, as long as you realize that it’s truth is that you weren’t created to be an emotional parasite whose self-worth is only derived by affirmations from another. After all, you stand before God on your own two legs, not someone else’s.

However, the message that is being propagated in this *Holiness, Not Happiness* teaching is that, in marriage, we are to find our happiness in God, and that we aren’t to look for happiness with another. As I said, this seems to sound ‘*holy*’ and ‘*spiritual*’; after all, as Christians, God is to be our all in all, and whenever we look to others for our joy and identity, we risk the sin of idolatry. But as I’ve pondered this teaching, I’ve come to the conclusion that this is merely passing the buck, the spiritual version of punting.

Sounding pious and spiritual is, oh, so easy to do, isn’t it? Mouth a few Christian platitudes, and suddenly you’re another saint dipped in alabaster. For example, when a church is faced with the need to make a decision, someone may stand and say something like, “If the Lord does not establish the house, they labor in vain that build it.” A second stands and says, “Amen, brother! We’ve got to pray and seek the mind of the Lord.” Then a third saint of God will stand up and offer godly counsel, “After all, we don’t want to be found working in the flesh.” I’m sorry, but does the mind of the Lord truly care about whether the new carpet in the fellowship hall is Teal or Royal Marine?

We know that God instituted marriage. When making all of creation, at the end of each day, God said, “It is good.” But when He created Adam, He realized that this creation was not complete. Instead, after creating Adam, He said that it is not good for man to dwell alone and created the perfect complement for him. And when Adam and Eve were joined by God, they were “one flesh.” And while not recorded in Genesis, I think we can agree that God said His final, “It is good.” Since the first couple up until today, we say and fervently hope that “what God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” God created marriage, “and it was good.”

But! (You knew there had to be a “but”, didn’t you?)

Now it seems that there is some dispute as to just how “good” marriage is. If you listen to some writers, you can get the idea that the wedding day is not a day of rejoicing but a day for the girding of one’s loins for battle. After all, they warn us, “God didn’t give us marriage to make us happy, but to make us holy. God is more concerned with your soul than with your happiness.”

So when the preacher says, “I now pronounce you husband and wife,” instead of rejoicing on the part of the bride and groom, each should be thinking, “Now, the real battle begins. Now I take up my cross and follow Christ to Calvary.”

Yeah, that’s good theology. Not!

Accepting the Responsibility For the World AND Each Other

Yes, we are to find our true self in God and not someone else; we are not to seek our worth from our husband/wife. But here’s an idea to think about; isn’t it possible that He has delegated some of the responsibility to us, as husbands and wives, to bring happiness and joy for our spouses?

After all, we say that God delegated to the church the task of saving the world, of telling the world about the good news of Christ, don’t we? That’s a pretty big task and responsibility, folks! One of our most common *shibboleths* is that God has no hands or feet here on earth but us Christians. We don’t bat an eyelash at accepting the responsibility of being witnesses for Him, ambassadors of the King of Kings, do we? We don’t say, “But people need to find their salvation in God, not us. People can’t be looking to us to know God.” No, we accept and shoulder the responsibility to live for Him before the world, taking His message to the world.

So who’s to say that God isn’t giving us the responsibility to be His surrogate in bringing joy and happiness to our spouse? In my reading of the Bible, I find that there is no support for the idea that somehow, our marriages are crucibles of testing for us. I know that the Bible says *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;....* (Rom. 5:3) but I find no support for the idea that marriage is one of the tribulations that God has for us in order to develop the Christian virtue of patience.

It is a common theme that everyone has a cross to bear in life. However, you can’t show me anywhere in the Bible that it was ever God’s intention that marriage be a cross in anyone’s life. There is no indication that suffering through a bad marriage is ever God’s plan for anyone. It just ludicrous, not to say cruel, to try to tell a man or woman that their bad marriage is God’s way of purifying them. The message of the Bible is that marriage is good and pleasurable, that He created it to be our resource for restoration and refuge.

In fact, I read in the Bible that that type of marriage is an absolute horror to be avoided. Twice in the same chapter, the book of Proverbs expresses pity for any man married to a quarrelsome, ill-tempered wife:

Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.
(Prov.21:9)

Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife. (Prov. 21:19)

To the writer of Proverbs, what we would call a time of tribulation and a tool for learning patience, is a fate to be avoided, worse than poverty and isolation.

Rejoice. Not Repent.

Contrasted with the idea that God's intentions for marriage are to test and try us in order to fit us for His Kingdom are Biblical statements that tell us we are to find joy and happiness in our marriages. Proverbs tells us that we are to find sexual happiness in our marriage beds:

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. (Prov. 5:18-19)

You got that, right? “Rejoice”? Not “Endure”, not “Bear with”, but “Rejoice.”

And in Deuteronomy, God told Moses that a newly married man was freed from military obligation so that he could make his wife happy:

If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married. (Deut. 24:5)

Are we really going to say, “But that was under Old Testament Law?”

Paul, in telling why he thought that the single state was better than the married state, said that the desire of the wife should be to please her husband:

But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. (1 Cor. 7:14)

(At least, he seems to be implying that she should be, especially as this comes after the section in which he says that spouses are not to defraud each other, sexually.)

In the Old Testament, the husband is to make his wife happy, in the New, the wife is to try to please her husband.... Are you sensing a pattern here? I know I am...

The cynic who wrote Ecclesiastes even gets in on this idea of marriage being for enjoyment and happiness, rather than tribulation, with ...

Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun. (Ecc. 9:9)

“Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love....” Even believing that life is meaningless, the writer of Ecclesiastes can speak of enjoying this meaningless life with someone you love. Marriage and love lift life to a place of enjoyment, even for the cynic.

When all has been heard, the conclusion of the matter is....

Be Happy

Two verses from Proverbs top this off, for me, convincing me that I do have a place and obligation to seek my wife’s best, her pleasure and joy, that is God-given.

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD. (Prov. 18:22)

If I find a wife, it is goodness to me, and favor. I’m pretty sure that the same thing can be said for a woman who finds a good husband. (And, yes, I know that this verse, and the verses I cite above, are male-centered. But can we really say that it is only men who would regret living with an ill-tempered, brawling wife, that a woman wouldn’t be beaten down by an ill-tempered, brawling husband?)

And Proverbs 12:4 gives us the contrast between the results of a good spouse and the effects of a bad spouse:

A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones. (12:4)

With all this as testimony, how can I deny the importance of my role to bring happiness and joy to my spouse? I have an opportunity to be the protector, provider and lover to the daughter of God that He has brought to me. How can I deny it? My wife has the opportunity to be my crown; why would she turn that opportunity into being a cancer, instead?

I believe that when we say “I do” at the wedding, we are saying to God that we are accepting the responsibility to do our best to provide happiness and joy to our spouses. Kate, at the close of her final speech in Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*, sums up my role and the role of every man and woman who enters into marriage:

“My hand is ready, may it do him ease.”

Chapter 2: Bad Teaching: Soulmates

Confession time: My wife and daughters think I'm a hopeless romantic. I know, I know; that doesn't sound like the Curmudgeon and Coot that you see on my blog, right? Well, they might have a good reason for their misguided assumptions. After all, my favorite movies are things like *You've Got Mail*, *50 First Dates*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (both the Gary Cooper original and the Adam Sandler remake), and *Notting Hill*.

One of my avocations is storytelling, and as a storyteller, I recognize the difference between reality and fiction. People will ask me how, as a Christian, I can tell stories that I know aren't true (fantasies, myths, etc.), and I have an answer: "Because they are such that I WISH that they could be true." Yes, I realize that they aren't real, but I could wish them to be true. Hence, my love of *Narnia*.

However, the Church has swallowed, almost whole, a teaching/concept that is a cross between Greek mythology and Hollywood lies, and is accepting it as gospel truth. I am referring to, of course, the idea of Soul Mates.

Platonic Myth

According to Wikipedia, in *The Symposium*, Plato has one of his characters describe the first people created by the gods as having four arms and legs, two sets of genitals and one head with two faces. When these people became too powerful, Zeus split them into two halves, each with a face, two arms, two legs and a set of genitals.

These split humans were in utter misery [and] would forever long for his/her other half; the other half of his/her soul. It is said that when the two find each other, there is an unspoken understanding of one another, that they feel unified and would lie with each other in unity and would know no greater joy than that.

From Plato directly to today, we have, without modification, the definition of what we believe about 'soulmates.'

"You Complete Me"

Remember that scene from Jerry Maguire where Tom Cruise tells Renee Zellweger "You complete me"? Anyone else want to barf? I know I do. We are awash in media today. If Newton Minnow could say that "television is a vast wasteland" in 1961, and Neil

Postman could write about how our culture is *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, in 1985, just how deep are we into today's media and its message? I'm not talking about the world, I'm talking about the Church. After all, you expect the world to act like the world, but the Church has a higher calling.

We are awash with media and the media's message, and we, all too often, give the media's message as much or more credence than that of the Bible. The Bible says, "don't be unequally yoked?" We respond with "But he's my soulmate", and engage in missionary dating. The Bible tells us that it is better to live in an attic than with a nagging wife, and what do we do? We find a wife really easy on the eyes but who is a demanding princess and marry her.

Believe it or not, the Bible actually gives pretty spot-on counsel to those who are seeking marriage, and pretty much contradicts everything Hollywood is selling us. Especially soulmates. In *South Pacific*, the show-stopper is *Some Enchanted Evening*, a song that is a classic in the *Great American Songbook*. The lyric goes,

Some enchanted evening
When you find your true love,
When you feel her call you
Across a crowded room,
Then fly to her side,
And make her your own

Compare that with the quote from Wikipedia, above, and you can see that Plato's "soulmate" is a direct ancestor of today's romantic ideal. Yes, *Some Enchanted Evening* is a beautiful song, and yes, I would like to think that there is such a thing as "love at first sight" (remember, as a storyteller, I thrive on suspension of disbelief), but I know that it's really nothing more than a load of sentimental tosh.

"This Is The One God Had For Me"

But the real problem for Christians is that the Church peddles its own brand of this tosh. We adopt Plato and Hollywood, mix it with our theology and adapt it to come up with our own version of "soulmates", one with a patina of holiness and sanctification but lacking Biblical support. We mix Plato and Calvin and tell ourselves that not only is our spouse our soulmate, but it's God who created and ordained that soulmate for me.

At one point in his little book, *Why: Making Sense of God's Will*, Adam Hamilton presents the paradox of missing God's will, and in doing so, screwing things up for people other than yourself. Using the example of God's will for a spouse, he posits a situation in which it was God's will for him to go to the University of Kansas, where he is supposed to meet and marry Miss Wright. But, missing God's will, he goes to Kansas State, never meeting Miss Wright, but does meet and marry Miss Wrong. Having missed Miss Wright, Miss Wright misses God's will, and meets and marries Mr. Wrong, who was supposed to marry a third person. So, by failing to follow God's will, Hamilton

messes up the will of God for five lives, not to mention the children that will result from missing God's will.

Ridiculous, isn't it? And yet, don't we blithely talk about how God led us to our soulmate, how this is the one that God had for us. I can't count the number of times I have read someone testifying about how God has created their marriage, ordained their soulmate for them. Oh, there might be horrible problems in the marriage, like abuse or refusal, but God brought them together. And they have testimony of just how miraculous their meeting was, so they know it was God! (God sure gets blamed for a lot, doesn't He? See the next section on "*What God Has Joined*").

The late, great comic legend, Milton Berle, was king of television back in the 50's. Berle was not a cerebral comic; in fact he was known for telling his writers to make his jokes "lappy". He wanted his jokes to be easily understood, he wanted to make them so open that it would be like laying it in the audience's lap. Hence, "lappy." The problem with Christians is that we want God to be "lappy", to lay everything in our laps, including a wife or husband.

Don't Just Sit There, Get Working

"So Brother CSL," I can hear someone asking, "don't you believe that God has someone for each of us, that He has created one special person for each of us? After all, He created Eve for Adam, right?"

Uh, no. I mean, yes, God created Eve for Adam, but no, He isn't creating one special person for each of us. After all, how many others has He fashioned from ribs, huh? I do believe that God has ordained marriage, but I also believe that He ordained His word and His ways, and that it is His intention and desire that we use them to live our lives for him. God moves in ways that are in keeping with His word, and we need to do the same thing. His ordaining is not going to contradict His word. And he is not going to lay everything in our laps. We are expected to learn His word and ways, and use them to live for His glory.

In discussing this with Wife, she reminded me of 1 Cor. 3.9 that says that we are co-workers with God. In *Why*, Hamilton gives the following illustration about creating our lives in God's will:

Hamilton co-writes books with another person, and the process usually begins with Hamilton writing an outline of the book, detailing the chapters to be included, and giving a very rough, incomplete skeleton of the book. This he sends to his co-author, who starts to fill in the chapters, outlining paragraphs, giving suggestions as to directions for the different points Hamilton wants to make. This gets returned to Hamilton, who begins the process of writing a more complete draft of the book, putting flesh on the bones of his friend's suggestions. He makes changes in content and direction if need be, and basically compiles a somewhat (nearly) final draft, and sends it

back. His co-author then reads it, proofs it, and makes possible editorial suggestions and returns it to Hamilton, who finishes the final polishing up of the manuscript, and sends it off to his publisher.

Together, Hamilton and friend create the book. In the same way, God gives the direction and guidelines to us, giving us His word and the knowledge of godly living. This He puts in our hands, and we, with our personal skills and abilities, begin to craft a life. We go to God for revisions and help in revisions, re-drafting our manuscript, and keep building our lives as we receive further direction (note, I said direction, not dictation!). God doesn't lay the manuscript in our lap, He consults with us and gives us guidance and direction, but we have input into the editorial process of our lives.

The highly irreverent Australian comic and singer Tim Minchin wrote a humorous song that gently debunks the idea of "soulmates", and if you are up for a laugh, and maybe some insight into the foolishness of the "soulmate" teaching, go to YouTube and search for the song "If I Didn't Have You." This set of lyrics sums up the foolishness of the myth:

And look, I'm not undervaluing what we've got when I say
That given the role chaos inevitably plays in the inherently flawed notion of "fate"
It's obtuse to deduce that I've found my soulmate at the age of seventeen
It's just mathematically unlikely that at a university in Perth
I happened to stumble on the one girl on Earth specifically designed for me

Chapter 3: “What God Has Joined...”

It's no secret that, for decades, the topic of divorce and remarriage has been one of the hot-button issues in the church, even longer than the same-sex debate. Hester Prine wore a scarlet letter for having a baby out of wedlock; for much of the 20th century, anyone who was divorced felt that they were wearing a scarlet “D” for divorce, in Christian circles.

With this article, I want to deal with a verse and teaching that is used to argue that marriage, once entered into, is sacred, is inviolable, and that divorce or no, marriage is, by Billy Bedamned Hangtree, *permanent!*

Intentional vs. Ontological

I believe that marriage is *intentional*, and not *ontological*. Right about now, I would expect a good Pentecostal brother to try to exercise the of interpretation of tongues, but let me forestall that by explaining what I'm saying. *Ontology* is the branch of philosophy that seeks to understand the nature of something's being, its existence and essence. I came across the discussion of *intentionality vs. ontology* in a series of articles that were a review of William Luck's *Divorce and Remarriage*. (link provided below.)

If you read the article at the link at the end of this section, you will see that I am in the camp of those who agree with Luck's understanding on the nature of marriage. By saying that I believe marriage is *intentional* and not *ontological*, I am saying that I believe that God and the couple who marry intend that the marriage be permanent, but that marriage, as an entity, is not in its essence *permanent*. It is this permanency, as an attribute of marriage, that I don't accept.

When I was a child, I was told by the nuns that we needed grace to be saved, and that since saints had extra grace, the part that they didn't need could be used to help those who didn't quite earn enough grace to make it into Heaven. If a saint had 150 grace points and you only needed 100 to get into Heaven, there were 50 grace points that could be applied to others, in the form of indulgences, that could give them a boost. (After all, God Himself is a good steward and didn't make grace just so it could be squandered.) Grace was a spiritual commodity, with its own essence and existence. It seems to me that many proponents of marriage have done the same thing, endowing marriage with an essence and existence separate from God.

Yes, marriage is presented as an institution created by God, but some seem to want to not only honor its divine origin, but to endow marriage with its own divinity. The understanding of these marriage proponents is that marriage has the divine attribute of eternity as part of its essence. The argument goes, “When a man and a woman enter into a marriage, the marriage is permanent. Anything that they do to end the marriage is

wrong and is a sin, and is futile. After all, they entered into marriage and marriage is forever.” They teach that even if the couple, whether through sin, selfishness or just plain bullheadedness, gets divorced, they are still married in the eyes of God. According to man’s law, they are no longer married, but according to God’s law, they are still married.

What God Has Joined . . .

One of the verses that is often cited to justify this teaching that marriage is permanent in God’s eyes is “*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*” (Mk. 10:9)

“Well, there it is,” I hear. “God joined these two in marriage, and Jesus says that no one can split them up. ‘Let not man separate’, and all.”

My initial response is something like, “Who says God joined those two particular sods together? God gets blamed for a lot of things that He had no hand in!” Okay, I realize that that’s a bit harsh, but I really have a good reason for saying this.

Back in ‘70-’71, I was a disbursing clerk (paymaster) on board the USS Newport News. One morning, one of the laundrymen in the Supply Dept., came into the office and wanted to set up an allotment to be drawn out of his pay and sent to his new wife each month. What had happened was that this guy, not being the brightest bulb in the drawer, had met a prostitute who gave him a blowjob, and from what he remembered from when he was growing up was that having sex meant that you were now “one flesh”, and so he asked her to marry him. Not averse to free money, she accepted. Okay, folks, you want to tell me that God “joined those two in holy matrimony?” That that’s how the Spirit of God works? I’m not buyin’ it.

I’m pretty sure that everyone reading this can scan the recesses of their memories and find an instance or two in which you know that there was no way in Hades that God should be blamed for the marriage. And yet, we intone, “What God has joined...”, knowing full well He had nothing to do that joining . You know that they got married in SPITE of God, and that He didn’t join those two together.

Our version of “God’s joining” that we teach is a variation of another bad teaching, *Soulmates*, which I wrote about in Chapter 2. We use “God joined” as a holy prop, a brace to reinforce our teaching of the holiness of matrimony. But with so many wonderfully horrible illustrations of God OBVIOUSLY not bringing two people together and joining them, we have to face the fact that He can’t necessarily be blamed for “joining these two together.”

Or Does He?

I'd like to present for your consideration a different concept of "What God Has Joined." To do this, I have to preface this with a theological sidebar, dealing with predestination and the foreknowledge of God. Many people believe that God knows and predestines every person who is to be saved, and that no one other than those "elected" can be in the redeemed of Christ's church.

To me, this idea flies in the face of the scripture that says that God is not willing that anyone should perish. If some are lost due to God's election, then we have to say that God is definitely willing that some perish. Theologian Clark Pinnock, in an essay of his personal spiritual journey, dealt with God's election as an unnamed group that He will bestow His blessing of salvation upon based upon their choice to enter into the Body of Christ. God determines the group, defining the parameters and requirements; the decision of who will be in this group/body is left to those who desire and choose this new life and enter into it. In the sense that God determined that He would bless this body of believers, He foreknew it. It was amorphous, with no faces when He predestined, but He knew what His purpose was and that He would accomplish it.

In the same way, God created marriage in Genesis, when He created man and woman and said that it is not good for man to live alone. He created a bond of spiritual, mental and physical intimacy that is recognized by all cultures and all religions. When a man and woman decide to enter into this "arrangement", not a shack-up but a committed *till-death-us-do-part*, they are married, and they joined in God's institution of marriage.

Just as salvation is marked by the response to the "whosoever will, may come" invitation to the Body of Christ, so God's joining in marriage is accomplished by free-will commitment to the marriage relationship. Two Buddhists who marry are joined by God in marriage; two Shinto-ists who marry are joined by God in marriage; two Muslims who marry are joined by God in marriage. None of these are Christian marriages, none are blessed by Christian minister or priest, yet all, by virtue of entering into commitment to live as one, are "joined by God" in holy matrimony. "They enter into God's holy estate" by commitment to each other, as the wedding formula goes, so God joins them.

God created marriage as His ideal for man and woman. Sleeping around, not so much. Commitment and intention to create home and family together is the entrance into marriage, and this is the joining – when we enter God's creation, marriage. God's joining is accomplished by man and woman, not by an act of God.

Scriptural Precedent?

“Okay, CSL, that’s all well and good to think about as a possible explanation, but is there any hint in scripture that what we do here affects what God does, decides even, decrees in Heaven?” Quite possibly, yes.

As I was discussing this post with Wife, sharing about applying Pinnock’s view of predestination and foreknowledge to marriage, Wife reminded me of the two verses in Matthew in which Jesus says to His disciples, “... *whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*” (Matt. 16:19/18:18)

In essence, just as God conceived of a plan for salvation, with defining qualifications for “*whosoever will*”, He did with marriage. How to be saved and enter into the Kingdom of God? Receive Christ as Savior. How to be joined together by God in holy matrimony? Enter freely and completely enter into commitment to love and serve “till death us do part” with your spouse. Our “I do’s” on earth are the joining that God accepts in Heaven.

Review of Luck’s Divorce and Remarriage can be found at <http://www.beliefnet.com/columnists/jesuscreed/2010/01/marriage-and-divorce-1.html>

Chapter 4: Bad Teaching: Unconditional Love

It is an unfortunate but widely recognized fact that the church has completely botched its teachings on marriage and relationships. In fact, it is so recognized it has become a truism. As I said in chapter 1, the church wants to protect marriage and so, like the Pharisees of old who wanted to defend God's *Torah*, have tried to buttress defense of marriage with its own traditions and teachings.

In this chapter, I want to discuss an extremely popular and wide-spread teaching about God: His Unconditional Love. I truly believe that when the Church starts taking its teachings, doctrines and beliefs from pop songs rather than the Bible, it has lost its way. "Pop song, Bro. CSL? What are you talking about?" The problem with today's teaching about the Love of God is that it seems to be more in line with the sappy lyrics of Billy Joel than the Bible. Here are the first and last couplets of *Just The Way You Are*, by Billy Joel:

Don't go changing to try and please me
You never let me down before
I could not love you any better
I love you just the way you are

"Just The Way You Are"

I realize that the Church is trying to get the message out that *God is Love*, and that God loves them. After all, "God SO loved the world,..." right? But somehow, whether it be through sloppiness or sappiness, the fact is that our teaching about God's love has lost the reason for Christ's sacrifice, to save the world.

I know that it is urgent that people hear the gospel, but is it the gospel if we leave out the why of the matter? Robert Schuller to the contrary, the problem with the world is NOT lack of self-esteem, the problem is rebellion against God; in a word, SIN. I believe that well-meaning Christians, in an attempt to present the gospel in as positive light as possible, are basically communicating self-esteem building, assuring folks that God does love them as they are.

"God loves you." Yes. Thankfully, yes! This is a message that even your neighborhood Curmudgeon needs to hear, and often. But, unlike Billy Joel's sappy version, God loves you **DESPITE** the way you are.

God's Conditional Love

Let's face it. If you are a Christian reading this article, you should have no problems with my statement that mankind is lost and separated from God. If you do disagree with this,

then please put this article down and delete from your device , as I can have nothing to say to you. You have to deny the divinity of Jesus and the place of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross to disagree with that statement, and according to my understanding of the teachings of the Church, the redemption of the Cross is the central message of the Gospel.

Yes, God loves everyone; everybody, everywhere. BUT He loves us despite ourselves, not because of ourselves. He loves the rapist, not because he's a rapist, but despite the fact that he violates women. He loves adulterers; not because they cheat on their spouses, but despite the fact that they violate their marriage vows. God loves alcoholics, not because they are alcoholics, but despite the fact that they get falling-down drunk. Yes, God loves. It's inexplicable, but He does. But He hates sin.

Sin is so offensive to God that, despite His love for us, He will judge people for that sin and send them into eternal darkness and separation from Him because of sin. God is not some doting grandfather who winks at His grandchildren's cute little peccadilloes, chuckling at the little rascals. Jesus taught us that He will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you!" I know that it's considered gauche to talk about this, but, hey, what are you gonna do? After all, Christianity is named after Christ, right?

Is God A Bad Christian?

Yes, as I stated above, God loves everyone and desires that all may come to salvation. But the fact is that Jesus, Paul, and the Old and New Testament writers taught that there would be a day of judgment, and that God would judge sin. Our desire to be loved makes us obscure that teaching, to the detriment of our gospel, and to the detriment of our lives.

If you think about it, we are basically teaching that we have to be better Christians than God is. Preachers, writers and counselors tell us that we have to extend unconditional love to others, because God's love is unconditional. When I've disagreed with this, people try to steer me to 1 Cor. 13, the "Love Chapter" of the Bible, and tell me all the things that *Love* does and how unconditional love is. But the problem is that God Himself doesn't measure up as a Christian if you pervert 1 Cor. to support the idea of Unconditional Love.

Let's look at some examples:

Shot – "*Love is not envious*" – v.4

Chaser – *You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a JEALOUS God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, (Ex. 20:5)*

Someone attempted to challenge me, saying that "envy" and "jealousy" are not the same thing. The only problem with that is that four translations have this

phrase in v.4 as “*Love is not jealous.*” (*New Living, Weymouth, God’s Word, and the New American Standard.*)

Shot – “*Love keeps no record of wrongs.*” v. 5

Chaser – *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as RECORDED in the books.* (Rev. 20:12)

Sounds to me like God keeps records.

Shot – “*Love always protects*” – v. 7

Chaser – *Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst. I will not show my love to her children, because they are the children of adultery.* (Hosea. 2:3-4)

Of course there are many other examples in the prophets, both major and minor, that demonstrate that God doesn’t ALWAYS protect, but lets the consequences of actions flow.

Shot – “*Love does not insist on its own way*” v. 5

Chaser – Aw, come on! Really?

Do I even need a chaser here? Hello. Decalogue, anybody?

Shot – “*Love is not provoked*” .v5 (NASB)

Chaser – *[They are] a people who continually PROVOKE me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick* (Isa. 65:3)

Read Psalm 78 in different translations, and see how many speak of Israel “provoking” God in the wilderness.

Shot – “*Love is not rude.*” v. 5

Chaser – What would Miss Manners say to such language as, “You snakes! You brood of vipers!” (Matt. 23:33) Not very Emily Post, is it?

If God can’t be Christian enough for these people who push “Unconditional Love”, then something’s wrong with what they’re selling.

Bottom Line

The reason that God does not extend *unconditional* love is because it is a contradiction of His nature. God is love, and God is holy. In fact, God shows love AND righteousness by not accepting the sin of the sinner. Unconditional Love would basically confirm us in our ways and make us unfit for society, (as we see in the world around us), and unfit for Heaven and fellowship with God.

More to come in a later chapter.

Chapter 5: Bad Teaching: “As Christ Loved The Church”, part 1

I think that we can all agree that marriage, as an institution, is in a pretty sorry state these days. With the number of shack-ups on the rise (*ooh, did he say “shack-up”?*), with the anti-God push to change the make-up and definition of marriage, and with an unintentional assist from the Church, marriage is pretty much circling the bowl, in our modern society.

“*Assist from the Church*“, you say? Yes, I do say. I’ve made the point before that the Church, wanting to protect and establish the foundation of marriage, has committed the same error as the religious teachers of Jesus’ day. These religious teachers, with their additions and traditions, added to the Law of God in order to keep the people from transgressing God’s actual *Torah*, and it was hoped that these additions would keep the people “holy.” We’ve done the same thing by adding to our teachings about marriage. We want to keep marriage holy, we want people to live up to their roles in marriage, and so we add to God’s Word, with our explications and expandings. In doing so, we create burdens that God did not intend.

“*As Christ loved the Church*”

“Surely, CSL, you’re not going to say that the Bible is wrong, are you?” Uh, read the title of the series, please... “Bad Teaching.”

I mulled over this article for some time, but a comment by a new reader to one of my previous blog posts made me modify my direction. One of the most common and popular *shibboleths* in the Church today is the abuse of Eph. 5:25, “*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*”.

Today, this verse is basically used as a cudgel to pound husbands into submissive acceptance of a backseat role in their marriages. I realize that that comes across as a harsh statement, but I believe it to be true. There are any number of authors, pastors, and counselors who tell husbands, “If you are experiencing difficulty in your marriages, guys, you need to step up, because it’s your fault. After all, wives want their husbands to be strong leaders, and the best way you can lead in your marriage and family is to be a sacrificial servant, just like Jesus was.”

Let’s look at the *gave himself up for her* aspect of this statement. Yes, Christ did sacrifice His life on the Cross in order to save mankind, and He created the Church of the Redeemed. I praise God for my salvation. But let me ask this: how many husbands are actually called upon to give that “last full measure of devotion”, and truly die for their wives. Yes, there are husbands who have had to make that choice, and have done so. But is this what we mean when we say “love your wives, as Christ loved the Church”?

True Sacrifice

Rather than saying that dying for your wife is your goal, the way to *love your wife as Christ loved the Church* is to live for her. To demonstrate what Eph. 5:25 really means, I am going to refer back to 1 Cor. 13: 11 – “*When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.*”

As a single man, I could do whatever I wanted to do, as long as it was legal. No one had any moral claim on my time or possessions. But when I became a man and entered into marriage, I promised my life, my goods and my efforts to my wife. I put away my childish, self-centered life when I married Wife; now, however imperfectly I started, I entered into manhood, gladly assuming responsibility for the care and cherishing of Wife.

More than once I have inveighed against doltish clods who believe that marriage means “a live-in chef with benefits.” And also more than once I have lauded husbands who have exemplified laying their lives down for their wives by their lives. I know of men who have changed jobs to make things easier for their wives. I know of more than one who changed careers from high-risk occupations and/or sports that they enjoyed in order to try to ensure longevity, and thus to reassure their wives. Reordering or rearranging your life in order to please or protect her is “living for your wife.”

It Takes Two To Tangle

Above, I mentioned how it seems that a goodly portion of pastors, counselors and writers are more than happy to push responsibility for marital problems onto the husband. Now, if you are one of those doltish clods I refer to above, good! Grow up!

However, if you are an average man and husband, and you are serious about your marriage and your relationship, you need to be willing and able to stand up for yourself, as well as your wife. Yes, listen to your wife and take ownership of your blunders. However, don't accept faulty theology that blames you for failures, just because you're the husband. This is not conducive to building a strong marriage. Rather, the only thing that will be created, as you try to work off your sins, is dutiful monogamy.

If you are being told that you need to “love your wife like Christ loved the Church”, make your advisor be specific. Ask him/her “What does that mean? Just how does a husband, living FOR his wife and not dying on a cross for her, actually do that?” I'm willing to bet that what you will hear will be some version of *Servant Leadership*, which I addressed in a series on my blog entitled *Christian Go-To Marital Tools* [links at the end of this chapter]. Suffice to say, my take on *Servant Leadership* wasn't too complimentary.

Then remind your pastor/counselor that there are two sinners in the marriage, not just one. Be willing to stand up for yourself, in counseling, and insist that all issues be dealt

with, that not everything gets pushed onto your side of the plate. After all, there is actually more to Eph. 5:25 than v. 25. The whole sentence, the whole thought, is continued in v.26-27. Here is the complete sentence:

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.

Then ask the counselor if the verse's description of the wife's duties comes into play. After all, since you are to love your wife like Christ loved the Church, doesn't it behoove your wife to respond like the Church, to present herself to you without spot or blemish? If the goal of the counselor is to get you to be like Christ, shouldn't his/her goal also be to get your wife to be like the Church?

We don't hear Eph. 5:27 preached, do we? "Wives, your husbands are like Christ who loves His Church, and you, as his church, need to clean up your act and get yourself in right relationship with your Lord, your husband." Yeah, that'll preach! *snort*

(And the church will re-activate the Pulpit Search Committee the following Monday.)

Husbands: Love, Learn, Live

It's comforting to know that our "bad teaching" isn't Bible; however, we sure do screw it up when left to our own devices, don't we! When the Bible tells us that husbands are to love their wives like Christ loved the Church, it is not giving us onerous tasks. It is a joy to truly love your wife. But learn what it means to love your wife, and more importantly with today's bad teaching being foisted off onto Christian husbands, learn what loving your wife does NOT mean. (Turn the page, it's the next chapter.)

Now, I can't define the structure of your marriage. If you were to ask me "CSL, how do I love my wife like Christ loved the Church?", I couldn't give you specific tasks and actions. That's going to be for you and your wife to discover. What I am prepared to do is define is your method. The only teaching that matters is that you both do for the other more than you would want done for you. Show consideration for each other and extend grace to each other.

Links to my posts on *Servant Leadership*:

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/christian-go-to-marital-tools-part-2-1/>

<https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/02/06/christian-go-to-marital-tools-part-2-2/>

Chapter 6: Bad Teaching: “Like Christ Loved The Church”, pt. 2

In my previous Bad Teaching chapter, I wrote about the Church’s abuse of Eph. 5:25 in using the phrase, “*Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church*”, as a cudgel to pound on husbands, taking issue with laying heavy burdens on the shoulders of husbands but not lifting one finger to help them.

Husbands are told that if they love their wives as Christ loved the church, then all will be well, that their marriages will suddenly become Heaven on earth. When pressed to define what that means, the most common teaching is some variation of *Servant Leadership*. After all, Jesus, for the sake of the Church, became a servant and submitted to death on the Cross, and husbands should be willing to become servants to their wives and live sacrificially for them. (If you have visited my blog and read any of my posts on *Servant Leadership*, you probably know what I think of that.)

I want to turn upside down that question about what it means to Love Your Wife As Christ Loved The Church (for brevity’s sake, throughout the rest of this post, I will use the abbreviation LYWACLTC.) Let’s, instead, think about what LYWACLTC does NOT mean.

An Epiphany

Disclosure: some of the material that follows are thoughts that I shared a few years back, on The Marriage Bed website.

This article/chapter was triggered some years ago by a book I downloaded for my Kindle app. As a librarian, I am always on the lookout for free reading material, and one day, a Christian marriage advice book was available from Amazon for free. I downloaded William Cutrer’s *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*, and as I was scanning through it to see what it was like, I came across a section in which the author started to deal with the topic of “*Submission*”. Here is how Cutrer began this section of his book:

Because the word submit carries so much baggage, perhaps it would help to begin by clarifying what submission does not mean.

Submission Is Not ...

- giving up all efforts to influence your husband, giving into his every demand.
- letting him think he’s better at something than you are when he isn’t.
- waiting on your husband. (The woman in Proverbs 31 has servants; she is not herself a slave.)
- obeying. Submit differs from obey, which is given as instruction to children and slaves-and is certainly our duty to God.
- letting the husband make the final decision.
- tolerating abuse. (Submission never means tolerating abuse. The best way to be a “helper” to an abuser is to expose him.)

- going along with your husband even if he wants you to sin (as Sapphira did in Acts 5), or if he endangers your life (as in the case of Abigail, described in 1 Samuel 25).

As I scanned this list of caveats, I realized that every time I have come across someone who feels that they need to address the topic of Paul's teaching on *Submission* in the Bible, they begin with an apology and act like they want to apologize to women and wives that they have to even mention the topic. They will begin with caveats as to what "submission" doesn't mean, and only then will they proceed to hem and haw their way through their presentation (with continual apologies for bruising wifely sensibilities), and finally end with a "See? That wasn't so bad, was it?" conclusion that conveys the idea that the Bible doesn't take the subject of *Submission* so seriously. More often than not, what the speaker or writer is trying to communicate is, "You can trust me, I'm not one of those knuckle-dragging troglodytes that actually believes in 'Submission'."

Before anyone decides to break out the torches and pitchforks, let me assure those of you with the above-mentioned bruisable sensibilities, that this is not an article on submission. What really got me, though, as I was reading through Cutrer's Caveats, was this:

While every sermon/article about submission comes with a checklist of caveats and concerns about "what submission is NOT!", there never seems to be one for LYWACLTC.

For the life of me, I can't recall ever seeing a list of exemptions, caveats, and "I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings" when the topic being discussed is "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church." Instead, the attitude changes to, "Guys, we really don't care about hurting your feelings, so we're gonna lay it on, brothers, just thick as we please."

So, What Does LYWACLTC NOT mean?

As I said, above, this was something I started thinking about, and after some while of chewing on it, I decided to ask the denizens of The Marriage Bed. (a Christian sex-positive marriage forum) their thoughts about a list of caveats for the LYWACLTC teaching. After a vigorous discussion and receiving a varied list of comments and ideas, I distilled their suggestions down to a decent list of why's, wherefore's and clarifications. Here is the list of ideas telling husbands, who are abused by pastors, writers and teachers with the LYWACLTC Teaching, just what LYWACLTC does NOT mean.

LYWACLTC does NOT mean:

- 1 – you are to be a slave to your wife.
- 2 – avoiding doing right because it makes your wife feel bad.
- 3 – allowing her stay in sin just because she is comfortable.
- 4 – romancing your wife.

- 5 – avoiding correction and confrontation to keep the peace.
- 6 – losing yourself in your wife.
- 7 – treating your spouse like a child in order to protect her.
- 8 – shielding your wife from the consequences of her sin.
- 9 – never saying “no”. (Of course, this is not referring to sexual refusal)
- 10 – attempting to take the place of Christ, either in your eyes or hers.

Set Free To Do Right

One of the definitions of salvation is that we are not set free to do what we want to do, but to do what we ought to do. This list, describing what LYWACLTC does not mean, is your emancipation from bad “christian” teaching, freeing you to live as a godly Christian husband. This is not a Get Out Of Responsibility Card, but a checklist by which you can test any pastor, writer or teacher who tries to lay the burden of your marital problems on your shoulders. If it does turn out that you aren’t doing what your ought, then *git ‘er done*, as Larry the Cable Guy says.

But if it turns out that what is being pushed onto to you violates these statements, then refuse the teaching as false. Yes, I realize that there are several things on this list that may be controversial, but as I like to say, “So what?” The next chapter will address several of these caveats, explaining why I believe them to be true.

Chapter 7: Bad Teaching: “Like Christ Loved The Church”, pt. 3

In the last chapter, I started addressing what “Loving Your Wife As Christ Loved The Church” (herein abbreviated to LYWACLTC) does NOT mean. After all, I had noted that this phrase from Scripture seems to have become the *shibboleth* of just about every pastor, counselor and marriage writer I’ve come across.

As I pointed out, I noticed that while these well-meaning advisors, with well-intended advice, can cite Eph. 5:25 like a mantra, they almost NEVER tell us what it means, and more importantly, what it DOESN’T mean. With that in mind, I started asking just what bad marriage advice should NOT be a part of LYWACLTC, and I came up with a list of things that Paul did not intend when he wrote to the Ephesians.

I realize that my ideas are capable of stirring controversy and disagreement, and I intend to discuss the list in depth; however, in this chapter, I am only going to address the first point on my list: LYWACLTC does NOT mean you are to be a slave to your wife.

1-LYWACLTC Does Not Mean You Become Your Wife’s Slave

“Oh, come on, CSL, don’t be ridiculous! No one is teaching that a husband is to be a slave for his wife.”

Yeah, in essence, we do. Oh, we don’t call it “slave”; after all, that is an extremely loaded word in today’s culture, *very* offensive. So, we instead change it from ‘slave’ to ‘servant’, and as I pointed out in posts on my blog, we’re very big on recommending *Servant Leadership* for husbands.

I admit to having an imperfect knowledge of the *Servant Leader* teaching, as it has been imported into the Church. I was aware of the fact that proponents of the *SL* model attempt to dress it in church clothes by adapting scripture to support their ideas, but I hadn’t done a search/study of the topic. Until it came time to write this chapter.

I found some interesting ideas, even some good counseling to husbands on how they can better help their wives, how to be better husbands. And, as expected, I did find scripture-bending for doctrinal support. For example, I found this statement in an article on the role of husbands in marriage, on the Family Life website:

#3: Serve your wife. According to the New Testament, being head of your wife does not mean being her master, **but her servant**. Again, Christ is our model for this type of leadership. Jesus did not just talk about serving; He demonstrated it when he washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1-17) [my highlight]

(In browsing the website, it appears that Family Life is the parent organization for the popular Christian marriage seminar, *Weekend To Remember*.) According to them, the husband's relationship to his wife is to be "her servant". BTW, notice how the writer of the article uses Jesus' act of washing the feet of the disciples to reinforce their statement? More about that, below.

Southern Baptists Teach This?

Of course, as popular as the SL teaching is, I was not surprised to find ministers and teachers of whom I think highly presenting the SL model. For example, the late, great Adrian Rogers was a wonderful preacher and teacher, three times moderator of the Southern Baptist Convention. Although he died over a decade ago, he can still be heard on his *Love Worth Finding* broadcasts. Here is Rogers addressing a question about husbands:

When a dispute erupted among the disciples about who was the greatest, Jesus said, "But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:26-27). Jesus, then demonstrated His leadership by washing His disciples feet (see John 13:11-17).

A leader serves. Your wife is not there to serve you. You are there to serve her. Ephesians 5:21-23 says, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body."

In this section, Rogers goes for the two-fer, using both the foot-washing AND Christ's teaching from Luke about leaders being servants. And then he went where all *SL* proponents go, Eph. 5:21, "Submitting yourselves to one another." That verse is used to say that it is the husband's task to submit to his wife. After all, "*Your wife is not there to serve you. You are there to serve her.*"

Did you get the contradiction in Rogers' second paragraph, where he said, "The wife is not there to serve the husband, but the husband is there to serve the wife?" And then he uses Paul's line, "Submit to one another" as support for this.

WAIT JUST ONE DING-DANG MINUTE!! If the husband is there to serve, then why isn't the wife there to serve, since BOTH are submitted? Doesn't mutual submission mean that BOTH should serve? (Okay, I get that Rogers is speaking about leadership, but still,)

(As an aside, aren't Southern Baptists usually accused of suppressing women? Telling husbands to submit to their wives doesn't sound like it, does it?)

Other Examples

In searching for SL information, I found the website of a pro-life organization that operates pregnancy centers in eight different states. Among the material on their website, there are bible studies, including a three-part lesson on *Servant Leadership* for husbands. Here is a point from the first lesson in the series:

- 1. Reread v.[Eph. 5:]21. To whom is this verse addressed? How does this truth fit in with what we already have learned about servantleadership? [sic]
- Paul addresses verse 21 to all Christians. All Christians are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This is important to keep in mind. Even as he carries out his role as the leader in the family, **the husband and father must submit to his wife and children.** [my highlight]

Two points: first, like Adrian Rogers, above, this ministry uses Eph. 5:21, "submit to each other", to support their teaching of SL. Two, the husband "must submit to his wife AND CHILDREN". Fathers have to submit to their children, now? Are they fresh out of their minds? It seems Paul missed a golden opportunity, in the very next chapter, to say that when he DIDN'T tell fathers to be submitted to their children, but for children to be submitted to their parents. This seems to me to be just flat-out un-Biblical.

I found another example on Crosswalk, one of my favorite Christian sites; they have wonderful set of online bible study tools, and many helpful articles and devotions, from many different writers. One writer, a Stephen Burns, wrote a devotional for Crosswalk on becoming a Servant Leader. In his article, he wrote:

That answer to prayer I received one night might sound cryptic but I knew exactly what it meant. She [his wife] must literally, not figuratively, be the queen of our family. My queen.

The effect on our marriage was amazing. In obedience, I actually started picturing my wife as royalty. I pictured a crown on her head. A robe. When we talked I consciously tried to defer to her. Picturing our apartment as a palace was a bit of a stretch, but you get the idea [...]

Queen, huh? Well, at least the husband is promoted; no longer a servant/slave but a courtier. Servile, but still....

Scripture-Bending For Support

Okay, okay. I get it. Ministers and teachers come up with all kinds of tortured metaphors and similes to help them make their points as they teach. Wife and I used to serve as

associate pastors, so I know about trying to illustrate or reinforce a sermon point. But that doesn't excuse the manipulation and misapplication of scripture.

Matt. 20, Luke 22 and John 13 are pulled in to demonstrate that Jesus taught that leaders were to be servants, and that Jesus Himself took the place of a servant when He washed the feet of the disciples, at the Last Supper. These scriptures are then used to tell husbands, "See, this is your proper role as a husband; you are to be submitted to your wife and children and serve them."

In doing my research on *Servant Leadership*, not every article/blog I came across was a devotee of the *SL* teaching (most, but not all.) One particular article was written by a man whose skill with composition impressed me despite his, uh, erm, impolitic(?) manner of expressing his belief. Despite his manner, he did point out something that every blinkin', stinkin' *SL* teacher conveniently omits: Jesus, despite taking on the role of a servant, was still Lord!

This creative doctrine is loosely supposed to be based on the command for husbands to love their wives as Christ loved His Church. But sacrificial love is not synonymous with servanthood, much less servitude. The soldier who leaps on a grenade to save his buddies is not their servant, nor did Jesus Christ's humility in washing His disciples' feet alter the fact that He was still the Master and they the followers.

One Question Before Breaking Out The Tar and Feathers

Is Jesus Christ Lord? Is He your King or is He your slave? *SL* teachers tell us that Jesus took on the role of a servant, that he submitted Himself to the Church. Do you believe Jesus to be submitted to you? If Paul wrote that the husband is head of the wife just as Christ is head of the Church, do you believe that Paul was wrong, and that while Christ is head of the Church, the husband is to be submitted to his wife and children?

Or is it possible that this submission, as husband and father, takes on a different character than the popular *SL* teachers would have us believe? The writer of the grenade analogy above continues with a reference to a C. S. Lewis book, and demonstrates what true Christian headship and leadership consists of:

It is true that there is a sacrificial element in all leadership. The true leader must always put the interests of the family/business/team ahead of his own desires. He must accept responsibility for failure and deal with the consequences, even when it is not his fault. It is C.S. Lewis who may have described the concept best when the king of Archenland explains the burden of kingship to his newly-discovered heir in "*A Horse And His Boy*":

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" said Corin. "I shan't have to be King. I shan't have to be King. I'll always be a prince. It's princes have all the fun."

“And that’s truer than thy brother knows, Cor,” said King Lune. “For this is what it means to be a king: to be first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat, and when there’s hunger in the land (as must be now and then in bad years) to wear finer clothes and laugh louder over a scantier meal than any man in your land.”

Christ, as the Lamb of God, gave His life, sacrificially, for the Church. Christian husbands, in following Christ, are to live, sacrificially, for their wives and children. That’s true “servant leadership.”

Family Life: <https://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/husbands/what-should-be-the-husbands-role-in-marriage/>

Crosswalk article: <http://www.crosswalk.com/family/marriage/becoming-a-servant-leader-737960.html>

Vox Day link: <https://www.wnd.com/2006/03/35111/#KfiWhbqFyEbxZPCH.99>

Chapter 8: Bad Teaching: “Like Christ Loved The Church”, pt. 4

I am addressing the truly stinkin’ way in which Christian writers and teachers distort the verse *Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church* (herein referred to as LYWACLTC) into unbiblical shapes, all of which, for some reason, seem to resemble cudgels with which to beat up on husbands. Christian teachers are funny that way, aren’t they?

Anyway, in chapter 5, I shared about the time that I asked some readers of an online Christian marriage forum to give me ideas on just what LYWACLTC did NOT mean, and we forged a list of ten ideas. In my last post, I discussed the first item on the list, *LYWACLTC does NOT mean you become a servant/slave to your wife*. In this post, I want to discuss two of the ideas which are very closely related.

LYWACLTC does NOT mean:

- 3 – allowing her stay in sin just because she is comfortable.*
- 5 – avoiding correction and confrontation to keep the peace.*

Every Man’s Dream. NOT.

Beats there a man’s heart so energized at the end of the day, that he looks forward to the evening brawl with his wife that he knows will ensue upon his arrival at home? Is there a man so excited to get home so that he can battle his life-rival over something that he said or did to ignite yet another battle-royal?

No, of course not! What do you think I am, nuts? No guy ever gets married because he wants his home to be like the boxing ring at Madison Square Garden. EVER! Instead, guys want their homes to be places of peace, refuges from the world.

Men feel that they have to do enough fighting during the day. Whether it be an intractable boss, or refractory clients, short-tempered customers or impatient service workers, we fight through a day, hopefully being able to keep our jobs and sanity at the same time. The last thing we want is to be the main event at the evening knock-down, drag-out at the house.

Great Comedy, But Miserable Advice

FYI, I have an overdeveloped sense of humor and I love me some comedy. Stand-up, movies, sitcoms, storytelling.... You name it, I love it. I really enjoy one Christian comedian, Jeff Allen, who has this one schtick for which he is famous, *Happy Wife/ Happy Life*. [This is available for viewing on YouTube.] While hilarious to listen to, at the same time, it makes for some terrible marriage advice.

Yeah, Jeff Allen is funny, but his tagline, *Happy Wife, Happy Life*, which has passed into our church culture, is actually pretty much crap, isn't it? Allen's schtick does touch a nerve, though, doesn't it? He describes watching an old man vibrating with anger as he walks behind his wife, and it cuts a little close to the bone. Yes, men want peace in our homes. We want our homes to be sanctuaries from the world's strife. But acquiescing to unreasonable demands and letting bad behavior slide will only result in a tortured peace, at best. After all, a cold war, while not a shooting war, is still war.

Guys, we do want our homes to be a refuge from the world, a place of peace and harmony. For that to happen, the residents of that home have to be in harmony, but harmony is not not the same as *Pax Romana*. History buffs will recognize that term as the state of peace imposed by Rome on all the countries that it conquered. Yes, under Rome, peace reigned from Britain to Persia, but it was a peace imposed by conquest. It's one thing for the weak to be conquered by the strong, but a completely different thing for the strong to just give in to threats and bullying for the sake of peace.

A couple of years ago, Chris Taylor, of *The Forgiven Wife*, and I engaged in an online discussion on my blog. In our fourth post, Chris said,

I understand that men want peace in their homes—but temporary peace sometimes leads to long-term pain and strife.
So when I say to care for a wife's feelings, I am not saying that he should turn the other cheek and become a doormat for his wife.
CSL, maybe you can put that into guy speak for me.

Part of my response to this was:

..., you are going to have to understand that marriage is more than just food, bills and sex. Men have to transition into Husbands, and one thing Husbands have to have is a good BS Meter. Chris said it: just because your wife has "feelings" doesn't mean that you become supine. You have feelings too, and she needs to take them into account, as well. It's not all about her. And you need to be able to stand up for yourself.

(What Chris wrote in that fourth colloquy, by the way, is what helped to spur this post/article.)

Anyone Else Nauseated By That Song, "Feelings"?

Your wife has feelings; we all get that. But, surprise, you have feelings, too! And they are just as valid. Your wife's "feelings" should not be trump card in each and every situation in your marriage. As well, your feelings are not trump card, either. More important than feelings, however, are matters of right and wrong. Yes, guys, we can be wrong sometimes; even I have not yet attained deity. After all, even *I*, the omniscient know-it-all who is your cuddly librarian, am never right 100% of the time.

But here's the thing; the fact that we are men doesn't mean that, by default, we are goof-offs and dirtbags and need to resign ourselves to second-class status in our marriages. Yes, we can make mistakes and be wrong (spectacularly wrong, at times), but that does not automatically indicate character flaw. Conversely, just because women are women, they are not endowed with divinity, either. Wives can, believe it or not, make mistakes, and even be spectacularly wrong. And just because a wife may be fluent in Hissy-fit doesn't make her right.

I know of one man who began to study his situation, and came to realize that his wife was an Esau, that *her hand was against every man*. And she would expect him to fight the battles that she needlessly started. He told of watching his wife create drama in a restaurant by getting nasty with the wait staff. He realized that she fed off this kind of drama, and decided to refuse to be drawn into her conflict. He came to realize that he didn't have problems with family and friends, that it was his wife, and he refused to continue to become involved in her petty squabbles. She wasn't happy that he no longer helped her fight the battles of her own making, but his relationships with family and friends were restored.

Upgrade From Coach To First-Class

So, guys, it's time to stand up and dust yourselves off. Take the sign off your back. You know, the sign that says, "Welcome", where everyone has been wiping their feet? Yeah, take it off. You don't need to fly coach in your marriage while your wife flies first-class.

One of the things that pastors and counselors will warn singles about is marrying an unbeliever, telling the Christian who is considering marriage that the Bible says that you shouldn't be "unequally yoked" in marriage. I'm thinking that the same thing applies in pretty much every marriage, even those in which both husband and wife are Christians. When a farmer hitches up a team of horses, he doesn't put one horse in harness and invite the other horse up onto the wagon and give her the reins; neither does God, so start examining yourselves and see if you and your wife are "equally yoked" in your marriage, or not.

If you are one of these husbands who have stopped being a husband and took on the role of doormat, I would refer you back to Chris's words, above:

I understand that men want peace in their homes—but temporary peace sometimes leads to long-term pain and strife.
So when I say to care for a wife's feelings, I am not saying that he should turn the other cheek and become a doormat for his wife.

What I'm saying is that you need to stand up and look at your marriage, and find out where you stopped being a husband and embarked on a career as a doormat. It's one thing to be a Christian husband and take Peter's words to heart: *live with your wives in*

an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life,

It's another thing entirely to submit to an Anschluss in your marriage simply because you value peace at any price.

Link to Colloquy 4 comments: <https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/07/30/a-wifes-heart-colloquy-4/>

Link to Forgiven Wife blog: <https://forgivenwife.com/blog/>

Chapter 9: Bad Teaching: “Unconditional Love” Marries LYWACLTC

I began this .pdf dealing with bad teaching in the church with a re-examination of the ubiquitous *God’s Unconditional Love* statement. Since that first chapter, I’ve been attempting to deconstruct the malpractice version of “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church”, demonstrating that much of it is a load of, ... erm ..., hooley. I’m pretty sure that there have been a few readers waiting for the other shoe to drop.

After all, when you juxtapose my blog posts and articles on LYWACLTC with my article on God’s Unconditional Love, you just have to believe that I would eventually arrive at the point where these two bad teachings intersect, right? Well, that day is here, as I want to look at the mess that is ...

“Husbands, Love Your Wives With UNCONDITIONAL Love”

One day, as I was doing my daily reading around the ‘net, I came across another would-be counselor saying that, as Christians, we are to give “unconditional love” to our spouses because, after all, God loves us unconditional love. This is the logical convergence of two bad teachings, isn’t it? After all, one bad teaching says that God loves “unconditionally” and the second that husbands should “love their wives like Christ loved the church”. It is only logical that these two teachings should be conjoined to say that husbands need to love their wives “unconditionally, like Christ loved the Church.”

The result is that bad theology is wedded to bad marriage advice, resulting in the birth of an bastardized teaching that sounds wonderfully pious but is merely oppressive. When delivered, as it usually is, with an air of piety, this *shibboleth* really has no unction to it, as it abuses the scripture from which it claims to be formed.

Now, to be fair to this would-be counselor I was reading, he did say that wives were to love their husbands, as well, (although apparently not with an unconditional love). He inserted a couple of caveats in order to lessen the impact of his teaching, including patterns of behavior that would nullify “unconditional”. After all, adultery and abuse aren’t really ‘conditions’, just ‘wherefores’ and ‘whereases’, right?

In Which I Make A Momentary Concession

Just for the sake of this one article, let’s assume that I agree with this bad teaching, that God DOES have *unconditional* love and that Eph. 5 *does* command husbands to show *unconditional* love toward their wives. (You know that this isn’t going to turn out well, don’t you, that there might be some interesting complications that won’t be so favorably accepted?)

As we know, in Eph. 5:21, at the end of an exhortation to walk in the Christian graces, Paul gives an overall command about Christians submitting to each other. He follows this up with three specific examples, giving illustrations to his general statement: submission in marriage, submission in families, and submission in employment(?). The operative one, the one that creates more heat than the others is, of course, the idea of submission in marriage.

Paul begins this section with his dictum to wives to submit to their husbands (v. 22), and then moves on to the husbands, telling them to *love their wives as Christ loved the church* (v. 25). After a lengthy passage detailing this dictate to husbands, Paul finishes with a summation to this marital submission passage:

*However, let each one of you love his wife as himself,
and let the wife see that she respects her husband.* (v. 33)

Several years ago, I came across a blog I'd never heard of before, titled *Love & Respect Reflects*. It's written by a man and wife team, Emerson and Sarah Eggerichs, who have apparently written a well-received book on marriage relationships, *Love & Respect*. In his book and on his blog, Mr. Eggerichs says that, yes, men are to have "unconditional love" for their wives. However, Eggerichs does something that would give most Christian counselors apoplexy; he goes further by adding a concomitant teaching, for wives.

"Wives, Respect Your Husbands With Unconditional Respect"

[Curmudgeon waits, listening. And there it is! The answer comes echoing back from far and near:]

*"Unconditional respect for my husband? Oh, hell no!" ***

To be fair, Eggerichs doesn't say that that is the actual response that he receives, but apparently he often encounters the attitude. "*Respect him? Respect has to be earned!*" But here's the kicker: Eph. 5:33 says that husbands are to love their wives, and we tell them that this means that they have to love their wives with an "unconditional love". But the very same verse, that very same sentence, tells wives to respect their husbands, right? So why don't we tell the wives that they have to respect their husbands with unconditional respect? Why do we let so many wives say "*My husband has to EARN my respect?*"

Please tell my why one command is unconditional and the other isn't? After all, they're in the very same sentence! How would you feel about the following conversation?:

Husband: "I don't feel loving toward you. You've done things to me that have forfeited your right to expect love from me. If you want me to love you, you'll have to earn my love."

Wife: “I have to earn your love? What kind of BS is this? You are supposed to love me for who I am.”

Husband: “But I don’t feel loving. You haven’t acted loving, so you haven’t earned my love.”

I don’t think that that would be acceptable to you; in fact, I’m pretty sure that most of you would be pretty upset. After all, that would be un-Christian, saying someone has to earn love. But how many would be just as livid if it were the wife saying, “*But I don’t feel respectful. He’s done things that have forfeited his rights to be respected.*” Not so infuriating, is it?

If we give a wife the right to say that she doesn’t have to respect her husband until he earns it, what gives her the right to demand that her husband love her “just because”? If a husband forfeits his wife’s respect, and she has a valid excuse not to be respectful toward her husband, why doesn’t the husband have a valid excuse to not be loving toward his wife?

Back To Reality

Okay, the exercise is over. I’m reclaiming my sanity; I do not believe in *unconditional love*, nor do I believe in *unconditional respect*, and I will denounce anyone’s attempt to say that I ever did.

I do hope, though, that through this temporary excursion into insanity, I have demonstrated that the idea of husband’s being required to give *unconditional love* is untenable. After all, if you are going to advocate for unconditional love, then you have to advocate for unconditional respect. To do otherwise simply makes you a hypocrite.

‘Nuff said.

Well, maybe not. You know I’m not done with this, right? The next chapter is a summation of my feelings about proper Christian love and respect.

** Apparently when I wrote this a few years ago, I was something of a prophet. Sure enough, a prominent Christian marriage blogger arose this year (2019) to denounce the Eggerichses and the book *Love & Respect*. She even used the arguments I predicted, that husbands have to earn the respect of their wives. Made me feel mighty prescient.

Chapter 10: Love and Respect: A Two-Way Street

In the last chapter, I dealt with the fallacious idea that tells husbands that they **MUST** love their wives with *unconditional love*, just because..., erm, well,... Just because! And I enjoyed playing Devil's Advocate, twitting those same teachers for their hypocrisy in not teaching that wives **MUST** respect their husbands with *unconditional respect*, for the same reason. (My eldest daughter says that I get too much satisfaction in being an internet troll, but what does she know?)

But at the end of the chapter, I did say that I would give my views on the proper Christian view of love and respect, and so, here I go.

The Basics

Rather than go through a drawn-out parsing of Eph. 5, followed by an breast-heaving appeal to "The Love Chapter" of 1 Corinthians, I'm going to go straight to Paul's summation of the matter:

Husbands, love your wives, and wives, respect your husbands. (Eph. 5:31)

That is Paul's teaching in one succinct line. It's Bible, it's all-inclusive, and it's short enough to wear as a tattoo, should you be so inclined. To get the basics out of the way, let me go to this first: Does the Bible say that husbands are to love their wives? Yes:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25)

My chapters on LYWACLTC were not about whether this verse said that husbands should love their wives or not, but the bad teaching that came from the way in which this verse was twisted. Yes, husbands, we are commanded by God to love our wives.

Does the Bible tell wives that they are to respect their husbands? Yes:

... let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:31b)

I pointed this out in the last chapter, and to any Christian wife who wants to take offense with that statement, let me just say that your fight is not with me, but with the Bible. (And I will let you know that if you don't think the Bible is binding on your life, then you aren't a Christian, you're a heathen. Jes sayin'.)

But here's the twist: husbands are told to respect their wives, and wives are told to love their husbands. As the title of this chapter says, "It's a two-way street." Husbands are to love their wives and respect them; wives are to respect their husbands, and love them, as well.

Husbands, Respect Your Wives

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7)

“It doesn’t say ‘respect’! It only says showing ‘honor!’” – Son, you don’t even want to go down that road, okay? That word translated “honor” is the same word that is used in several other places:

*To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be **honor** and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:7)*

*Who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be **honor** and eternal dominion. Amen. (1 Tim. 6:16)*

*But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and **honor** because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Heb. 2:9)*

So, Christian husband, don’t even think that you don’t have to show respect for your wife, when Peter applies the same HONOR that is shown to God and Jesus Christ to your wife. Face it, there is no way that you can show honor to God while at the same time disrespecting Him. You can’t do it. And the same thing goes for your wife.

Oh, by the way, don’t think that you can weasel out of this by trying to say that Peter was just saying that women need protection because they are physically weaker than men, that he wasn’t really saying anything about real respect.

BUZZER Aint gonna fly. Read that verse again. “Live in an understanding way”; fellow-”heirs”; “prayers not be hindered”. Yes, Peter is writing about ‘protecting’ women, but protecting them from disrespect and being seen as second-class citizens in the kingdom. Paul said “give honor to whom honor is due”, and wasn’t talking about protection. Peter says that your wife is someone to whom honor is due, and it is due from you.

Wives, Love Your Husbands

*Older women.... are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to **love** their husbands and children, (Titus 2:4)*

The greek word for “love” in this verse is *philandros* and apparently, when used of a woman, had but one meaning: a woman who loves her husband. Isn’t it interesting that the greeks had a special word for a wife who loves her husband? (Maybe that was to differentiate them from wives who didn’t love their husbands?) Who knows, but be that

as it may, Paul wanted the older women to teach the younger women how to be wives who loved their husbands.

“Wait a minute, CSL, that’s not the same word that’s used for ‘love’ in Eph. 5:25. That’s *agape* love, not *phileo* love, so it’s not the same.”

BUZZER Okay, let me employ some of the same casuistry that gets used when people want to minimize Paul’s directive for “submission.” You will recall that we are told when Paul told wives to ‘*submit*’ to their husbands, it is a ‘*mutual submission*’ because Paul said that all Christians should “submit to each other,” in Eph. 5:21.

In that case, wives, you are commanded to love your husbands, based on the words of Jesus Christ.

*A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to **love one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another**. (Jn. 13:34-35)*

There you have it. Three times in two verses, Jesus said, “Love one another.” And He says it’s HIS commandment. And this time, it’s *agape* love, not *phileo* love. And what seals the deal on this is that Jesus said we are to love just as He loved.

My, my, my. “Love one another, just as I have loved you.” Kinda has a familiar ring to it, doesn’t it? It sounds a little reminiscent of “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church,” doesn’t it? And not only that, Jesus said that this *agape* love would be the measure of whether or not you are even one of His disciples.

There you have it, folks. Mutual submission AND mutual love.

It’s simple, but it’s hard.

Some time back, Wife and I watched one of those “inspirational” movies on Netflix, entitled *What If?*. (By “inspirational”, I mean those Christian movies that have good intentions but really bad budgets.) It starred Kevin Sorbo (Hercules) and John Ratzenberger (Cheers), two veteran Hollywood actors who have decided to be openly Christian in the business. The movie was yet another reworking of the *It’s A Wonderful Life* tale, and was pretty decently done. The one true take-away I got from the film was the line that Mike the Angel (Ratzenberger) said about doing the right thing:

It’s Simple. But it’s Hard.

Many years ago, there was a widely known essay entitled *Everything I Needed To Know I Learned In Kindergarten*. It was popular, and had a lot of truth in it. Learning about love and respect does not take a college degree, followed by years of residency.

Let me rephrase that: it DOES take years of residency, but that residency is called *Life*. We learned in kindergarten, Sunday School, and even in our homes—be nice and treat people with respect. And, for the most part, we follow that dictum, don't we? Normal people don't go out of their way to make others miserable. I don't think that there is even a significant minority, much less a majority, of people who consider the day a loss if they haven't made someone rue ever being born.

But somehow, we come to the place where we don't accord our spouses the same courtesies that we believe to be necessary conduct toward everyone else. Paul Byerly, of *Generous Husband*, wrote an excellent blog post about the *Spouse Exemption Rule* that Jesus put in the Bible.

“What's the Spouse Exemption Rule? What's that?” you ask. That's the one where Jesus said, when giving the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; except your spouse. They don't deserve it.” Surely you know that one, right? After all, we have so many marriages where it is in operation, it *has* to be Bible!

Sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings, but we don't get such a pass. Which gives rise to the question, “Why is it so much easier to be nice, kind and respectful to others than it is to our own spouses?” I know the old saying, “Familiarity breeds contempt,” but I'm pretty sure that most would say, “Oh, that's too harsh, CSL; I'm not being contemptuous!”

Well, if familiarity doesn't breed contempt, it certainly seems to breed indifference. The story is told of a preacher who was doing visitation at the home of a family that had two boys, ages 5 and 2. In the course of his visit, he asked the five-year-old if he loved his brother. The boy answered the minister with a shrug of his shoulders and said, “Nah, but I'm used to him.” All too often, we just seem to be used to our spouses.

On my blog, in a post about *Grudges*, I wrote about the need to let God's grace teach us how to react in situations that present themselves:

In any situation in which I have the opportunity to retaliate, whether it be emotionally, verbally, physically, etc., I have the choice to go with my 'natural' response, or to act (with the help of God's grace) 'supernaturally.' By the Holy Spirit, God's grace is offered to us in every situation, to enable us to overcome our 'natural' self. We are told *to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life* (Eph. 4:22). It's our choice; God doesn't promise to take our old self from us. It's our choice how to react, whether naturally or supernaturally, with God's grace.

It is God's grace that will help us to live with our spouses in our marriage, and help us to grow in love and respect. It doesn't take a Master's degree in Theology to understand that God's will is for us to extend love and respect to our spouses.

It's hard. But it's simple. Your choice.

Link to *Spouse Exception Rule*: <https://www.the-generous-husband.com/2015/09/06/the-bibles-spouse-exception/>

Link to *Grudges* post: <https://curmudgeonlylibrarian.wordpress.com/2015/06/05/are-anti-pearls-hurting-your-relationship/>