

Marriages Are Made -- Where?

Text: Ephesians 5:22, 25; 6:1
Broadcast June 17

In a recent issue of a national magazine there appeared a most striking advertisement. It reads, "If we want to keep America strong, safe, prosperous, let's—everyone of us—get back to the only method that ever made America strong and safe and prosperous.

DO IT YOURSELF

Not government. Not somebody else. *Yourself.*"

Substitute the word "marriage" for "America," and the words are just as applicable. If you want a happy, successful marriage in its truest sense—**DO IT YOURSELF!**

It is often said that marriages are made in heaven. But they are wrought out on earth. Heaven supplies the ingredients. But you must put them together yourself. Success in marriage is like success in anything else. It does not come to you on a silver platter. Rather it comes packed in a nice shiny box called "romance." Open the box and you find all the parts ready to be assembled. And there are directions to guide you in the process. But you must *do it yourself.*

Our text today is three simple words garnered from our scripture lesson. "Wives . . . husbands . . . children . . ." This suggests a series of relationships. If these relationships be assembled in their proper order, each

functioning in its realm, the result is success. Otherwise the end result will be failure.

It is perfectly natural that you want a successful marriage, a happy home. But you must **DO IT YOURSELF!**

As we consider our topic "Marriages Are Made—Where?" let us note, first, the relationship of the wife; second, the relationship of the husband; third, the relationship of parents and children.

CONSIDER THE RELATIONSHIP

Paul says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." (Eph. 5:22) In Colossians 3:18 Paul gives the same injunction, adding "as it is fit in the Lord." The word "fit" is an imperfect tense referring to the continuous action in past time. It is that which has been ordained by God from the beginning. (Gen. 2:21ff.)

The word "submit" is a military term meaning to line up as soldiers under submission. This does not mean that the wife has no rights. Instead, it refers to orderliness in the household. In the divine arrangement the husband is before the wife. (cf. Gen. 2:21ff.) Someone must be the head in a well ordered household. In Ephesians 5:23 Paul likens the headship of the husband over the wife to that of Christ over the church.

However, the position of the wife is not one of servitude. It is a relationship entered into with the consent of marriage, is governed by a wife's love, and is based upon her natural tendency to lean upon her husband. She is the "help meet" of her husband (Gen. 2:18), and not his servant. One has called such a relationship the "harmony of the hearth."

Obviously to some this may sound rather old-fashioned. But, I remind you, it is not simply my idea. It is the teaching of God's Word. It is not in any sense a throw-back to the days when man was king and his wife but a piece of property with no rights except those which her husband chose to give her. Instead, it is setting forth the divine order for a well ordered relationship in marriage.

The modern so-called "liberation" of woman is the direct result of the regard which Jesus had for womanhood. But Paul says that the wife's submission to her husband must be "as unto the Lord." Freedom in Christ does not remove this divine obligation. It makes it all the more binding. It should not be demanded by the husband, but freely given by the wife.

The "liberation" of womanhood is not an unmixed blessing. In too many instances the woman insists upon being the "head" of the house. Liberation does not mean independence. Even the fact that you earn your own livelihood does not mean that you can do as you please. Such an attitude is not the material out of which to build a happy marriage. It is not in the will of God. For Paul adds, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their husbands in everything." (Eph. 5:24)

But before the husband begins to throw his weight around the house, let us proceed to the next Biblical injunction.

THE HUSBAND AND WIFE

Paul continues. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Eph. 5:25) The marriage relationship is a conjugal one. Thus, there are obligations on the husband as well.

The husband is to exercise his position as head of the household in love. In this passage, the word for the husband's love for his wife is the same word used for Christ's love for the church. It is the love which carried Jesus to the cross, as He gave Himself for His church. This same Christian love should lead the husband to sacrifice for the welfare of his wife.

Note further that this word for love is not mere affection, which any man should hold for his wife. It is the God-kind-of-love or Christian love. A husband's position should be exercised only in this love. To exercise it in its true sense the husband must be a Christian. No man has the right to stand between his wife and her relationship to Christ. The deepest happiness of many marriages has been destroyed because the husband sought to do so. My fellow man, you are to be your wife's husband, not her god.

Paul further emphasizes this love when he says that as Christ is the Saviour of the church, so the husband is to be the saviour of his wife. (Eph. 5:23) Furthermore, the apostle adds, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. 5:28-30)

This speaks of the intimate union in marriage. Paul concludes this thought by quoting from Genesis 2:24 where God set forth His original de-

sign for marriage. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." (Eph. 5:31)

The words "joined to" render a word meaning to be glued to, to join one's self to closely, cleave to, stick to. It is a strong word expressing the intimate union between a man and his wife. They are members of the same body, flesh, and bones. The wife is pictured as being part of the body of her husband.

Now from these scriptural teachings let us draw four practical applications.

In the first place, the husband should not abuse his position as the head of his wife. The husband is not to be a tyrant but a saviour. This speaks of self-sacrifice on behalf of his wife. What he does is not for himself but for her.

Her very submission places upon him the greater responsibility. His greater physical strength will not be used to abuse his wife. Instead it will become her strength and protection.

In the second place, the husband's headship entails a spiritual responsibility. The husband's headship is likened to that of Christ over the church. Christ is the great High Priest of the church. The husband is to be the priest of his home. In the patriarchal days of the Old Testament the husband served in this function. Even in later times he was responsible for family worship and other religious exercise. This has not changed.

Too often the husband says, "Well, I make a living, and leave the religion to my wife." Such an attitude is not in the will of God. To be sure, if you refuse your responsibility the wife should see that it is not neglected. But when you make this necessary, you have rebelled against a God-given responsibility.

Leaving for Sunday School a little boy said to his father engrossed in the Sunday paper, "Gee, Dad, I'll be glad when I get to be a big man like you and don't have to go to Sunday School." All of a mother's care cannot overcome such an unfatherly example.

WHOSE MONEY?

In the third place, the intimate union between husband and wife speaks of mutual responsibilities and privileges. Together you must make a home. Together you must provide for the needs of the home. And what belongs to one belongs to both. This is true with regard to spiritual experiences such as sorrow, joy, victory, and defeat. It is likewise true in material matters.

A husband said to his wife, "Well, I earn the money. It belongs to me, and I'll give you what I want you to have." Does it belong to you? Oh sure, you spend your time, energy, and skill to earn it. But what about your wife? Does she not make a home for you, care for your children while you are away, cook your meals, and do a thousand other things for you? The laborer is worthy of his hire, says the Bible. But even that does not apply here. Your wife is not your laborer. She is your "help meet." What is yours is hers, and what is hers is yours. She is your bone, flesh, and body.

I have always imagined that the hardest thing for a young bride to do for the first time is to ask her husband for money. Some wives say they never do get accustomed to it. Would it not be far better to offer it to her? Or better still to have a joint drawing account at the bank? Most women are more careful about their checks than men. Counsel about it, have a budget, never abuse it, but have all things in common. This will create a wholesome atmosphere in marriage

which will pay dividends all along the line.

TWO-WAY STREET

In the fourth place, this intimate union suggests the vital importance of personal relationships. A husband should treat his wife as he wants to be treated. I repeat Paul's words. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it . . ." The word "cherisheth" means to warm, to foster with tender care. A marriage must be fed. It must be warmed with tender care.

How long has it been since you said something nice to your wife? Or whispered "sweet nothings" in her ear? Who wooed her and won her. Why not woo her and keep her — happy?

What interest do you show in her affairs? Have you listened attentively and sympathetically to her home problems lately? You might even offer to help her with the dishes. Oh, she may faint. But she will soon revive. Wives are hardy souls, you know. A marriage feeds on little things, and a wife responds to them most of all. Without them she is starved. Never let an anniversary or special occasion pass without proper notice and a gift. The value does not count. But the thought is without price.

And, I might add, that this is a two-way street. Yes, lady, he may say that it does not matter. He may even pass it off with a grumpy remark about expense. But let the little boy play the big, bad man. He loves it anyway.

THE PARENT AND CHILD

Paul says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right . . . And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:1, 4)

The crown of marriage is children. Some marriages are for some mysterious reason deprived of children of their own. But they may take others and make them their own. And the crown is the same. It is one thing to sire a child. It is far greater to be a parent.

Children owe obedience to their parents. But it should be deserved, not demanded. Obviously in the word "parents" Paul places a responsibility upon both father and mother. But he has a special word for "fathers," which implies the greater responsibility. This is a further involvement of the headship of the husband. No father can fulfill this position if he leaves the rearing of the children solely in the hands of the mother. And Paul has two words for the father — one negative, the other positive.

"Provoke not your children to wrath." Literally, "stop provoking to wrath your children." This implies that they were doing so and should stop it. This means to rouse to wrath, to exasperate, to anger.

Fathers should never lower Christian standards, but in Christian love should lead the child to understand, appreciate, and practice them. The object in rearing a child is not to break his spirit but to develop and harness it to useful living.

This he is to do as he brings him up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." To "bring up" is to nourish to maturity. The word "nurture" involves the whole process of training and education. This involves both admonition and example. It is far better to say, "Here is the way to do it;" rather than to say, "You do what I say, not what I do."

God's word to every parent is "Take this child and rear him for Me." To do less is to fail in parenthood. It is to fall short of the true goal of marriage.