

## The Gospel According to Marriage Part V "The Opportunities to Grow in Marriage" Ephesians 5:22-33

*"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord, For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their wives in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it, just as Christ also does the church because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."*

*Let marriage be held in honor among all...*

***It's All About You Jesus...***

### **Enough Preaching...Let's Practice!**

#### **Achievable Goals:**

*We are not adequate within ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who made us adequate as His servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Cor.3:5-6*

*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil.4:13*

*He who did not spare His Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things. Rom.8:32*

*Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Heb.4:16*

#### **Ground Rules Part III**

- Remember, this Christian life is a walk...until Jesus comes for us, our change will not be in the twinkling of an eye. It will be progressive. Be patient. Be humble. Do not be afraid of failure. This is God's plan, not yours!

- The Puritans used to say that the hands of a Christian should be filled with splinters. This was in reference to our getting the logs out of our own eyes so that we would then see more clearly to help our spouses get the speck out of their eye. *Be more zealous of dealing with your own sin more than anyone else's.*
- You are a one-flesh couple. You have the high calling of displaying in living color what Christ is like, what the church is like, and what the power of the gospel will do in people's lives. Sanctification, while still personal, is now plural. Not only are you to grow more Christlike as individuals, but also more Christlike as a couple. Our desire is for Ephesians 1:10 would be true of our marriage...*"it is all summed up in Christ"*. I want my kids to look at our lives and say...it all adds up. The way my dad sacrificed for my mom, the way my mom respected my dad...it all adds up to Christ.
- Be motivated by grace. Grace is extending love and favor to the undeserving. Be motivated by mercy. Mercy is extending grace to someone who currently has to walk through the consequences of their sins. Be motivated by truth as it is defined in scripture. All of this adds up to being motivated by the love of Christ for the glory of Christ.
- The following suggestions are just that...suggestions for application. They are not rules; just ideas that might help you apply to your hearts some of the scripture that we have studied this weekend. You may want to follow-up this weekend with doing your own study of marriage as a devotional for a season. You may want to walk this out with another couple or your small group. You may want to explore specific areas with your pastors.
- At the end of this section, there is a list of recommended books that can complement your Bible study. In this way, you can build your own library of resources for your marriage and for helping others. A couple would be wise to read one God centered book on marriage each year.

## Questions to Promote Application

- How have I tangibly sacrificed toward my wife's growth in godliness in the last week?
- How have I tangibly shown respect for my husband toward his growing in obedience to God's Word?
- Ask your spouse about what is burdening them. Is your life and calling in marriage helping to bear those burdens or make them heavier?
- Do you demonstrate sacrifice/respect by the way you use your time? Does your schedule reflect time set aside for meaningful interaction with one another? Are you giving time not only to one another, but to those things that are important to their hearts as well?
- If asked, would your spouse say that he/she is honored as your priority in the way you order your time?
- When you are tired...do you exempt yourself from caring for your spouse? How are you expending your strength for each other?
- Are you expending mental energy for one another...listening is a wonderful way to expend mental energy. **(Guys, be on the alert to avoid "man fog"...a semi-comatose state that is so preoccupied with other thoughts that you are unaware of the needs of others.)** At the end of a day, do you give place to conversation together or just "vege"?
- Do you expend sacrificial/respectful love in the way you handle the income?
- Do you relegate one another's spiritual growth to their own efforts, or are you coming alongside to help promote growth? Men, take the initiative in this area. Our children should see that passion for God is a quality of masculinity.
- How is your wife/husband doing in their spiritual disciplines? What are they reading for their devotions?

- What is your spouse currently praying about? How can you help with their prayer burdens?
- What particular sins are hindering your growth in grace as a couple? Are you helping one another identify these sins without condemnation? What specific steps are you taking to put to death those sins?
- How is your spouse doing relationally? Not just with you. How about the children? With extended family? With co-workers? With friends? Is your spouse experiencing Biblical fellowship outside the home? Are there any conflicts within the aforementioned relationships and how would God's word address your solving them with one another's help?
- What decisions are you facing? Are you praying together about them? Are you listening to one another's views, thoughts, and ideas about them? If after all has been done in prayer, the study of scripture, listening to one another, and seeking godly counsel and you still disagree; husbands are you willing to accept responsibility to making the final decision? Wives are you willing to let him?
- How are you doing in your service to your local church? Are you both using your spiritual gifts? Should you be stretched more...or are you over-extended?
- What areas can you share with one another where you see God working in each other's lives?
- Honor one another's need for a Sabbath. Periodically arrange to give them time for themselves to be alone with God, to catch a nap, to enjoy some quiet. Ensure that you are doing so at a time when they feel like they are not getting further behind with other responsibilities. For example, husbands could do a load of laundry while their wives are resting, etc.

## **Need More? Ten Commandments for Better Communication!** *(Love That Lasts – Gary and Betsy Ricucci)*

- Learn to express your feelings and frustrations honestly, but without accusing or attacking the other person...see Proverbs 11:9
- Choose words, expressions, and a tone of voice that are kind and gentle. Don't use speech that could easily offend or push buttons. Do not be eager to be angry. Pr.15:1
- Do not exaggerate, distort, or stretch the truth. Avoid extreme words like "always" and "never". Eph.4:25
- Give actual and specific examples - if necessary, make notes before you communicate. Stay away from generalities.
- Commit yourself to seeking solutions rather than merely airing your grievances. Getting even is not the goal - you want resolution. Do not dig up dirt on one another...but you may have to dig through some dirt to reach the gold. (Ro.12:17-21)
- Listen to what the other person is saying, feeling, and needing. Try to understand what is at the heart of the matter and not just diagnose symptoms. James 1:19
- Refuse to indulge in bitterness, anger withdrawal, or argument. The emotions are normal, but indulging them is sin. Eph. 4:26
- Be quick to acknowledge your own failure and don't hesitate to forgive the other person. Make sure you don't still hold a grudge. Luke 17:3-4
- Keep talking and asking questions until you are sure you both understand clearly what the other is saying and feeling. Encourage each other as you press toward a solution. Romans 14:19
- Train your mouth and heart until you can let your words give grace to those who hear. To be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger. To watch a soft word turn away wrath. You want to learn to say the right thing, at the right time, and for the right reasons!

## TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR WIFE

*(Love That Lasts – Gary and Betsy Ricucci)*

1. How can I make you feel more loved?
2. Do you feel you are the most important person in my life? If not, what makes you feel otherwise?
3. How can I better communicate how important you are to me?
4. How can I better understand when you need comfort, encouragement, or assurance? When is this most needed and how is it best expressed?
5. Am I gentle and assuring during a crisis?
6. How would you evaluate my leadership and responsiveness during conflict?
7. What three words would you use to describe our marriage? Give examples of each.
8. What are my strongest areas of leadership? Explain.
9. What are my weakest areas of leadership? Explain.
10. On a scale of 1-10 rate these three aspects of my communication skills:
  - Initiative
  - Content
  - Listening
11. If you could change one thing in me, what would it be?
12. On a scale of 1-10 how would you evaluate my role with our children?
  - Overall involvement
  - Teaching and training
  - Friendship
  - Example of relationship with Jesus
  - Discipline
    - Consistent involvement
    - Clear guidelines
    - Full restoration
    - Support of wife
13. How would you evaluate my pursuit of romance? How can I improve?
14. How would you evaluate my involvement in and oversight of our finances?
15. How would you evaluate my oversight of our schedule?
16. How would you evaluate my involvement in and concern for your.....
  - Spiritual health and development
  - Physical health and development
  - Social health and development
  - Intellectual health and development
  - Recreational health and development
17. How would you evaluate my leadership in developing our sexual relationship and my concern for your sexual fulfillment?
18. Do I demonstrate a relationship with God that makes you feel secure?
19. What one area do you find most difficult to understand about me?
20. What do you see as my most admirable quality? How can I further develop this area of strength?

## TWENTY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HUSBAND

1. How can I make you feel more loved?
2. Do you feel you are the most important person in my life? If not, what makes you feel otherwise?
3. How can I better communicate how important you are to me?
4. How can I better understand when you need support, encouragement, or assurance? When is this most needed and how is it best expressed?
5. Am I responsive to your leadership during a crisis?
6. How would you evaluate my responsiveness and self-control during conflict?
7. What three words would you use to describe our marriage? Give examples of each.
8. What are my strongest areas as a wife?
9. What are my weakest areas as a wife?
10. On a scale of 1-10 rate these three aspects of my communication skills:
  - Timing (knowing when to initiate)
  - Content
  - Listening
11. If you could change one thing in me what would it be?
12. On a scale of 1-10 how would you evaluate my role with our children?
  - Overall involvement
  - Teaching and training
  - Friendship
  - Example of relationship with Jesus
  - Discipline
13. How would you evaluate my pursuit of romance? My responsiveness to your initiative? How can I improve?
14. How would you evaluate my use of finances?
15. How would you evaluate my ability to care for our home?
  - Planning
  - Prioritizing
  - Follow-through
16. How can I encourage and inspire you in your....
  - Spiritual health and development
  - Physical health and development
  - Social health and development
  - Intellectual health and development
  - Recreational health and development
17. How would you evaluate my responsiveness in our sexual relationship and my concern for your sexual fulfillment?
18. Does my relationship with God make you feel secure and free to lead?
19. What one area do you find most difficult to understand about me?
20. What do you see as my most admirable quality? How can I further develop this area of strength?