

Growing in Grace

Lesson # 12

“A Marriage Oiled By Grace ”

[Taken from The Grace Awakening by Charles Swindoll. (Dallas: Word, 1990). Ch. 12, pp. 237-257]

Actress Celeste Holm spoke for all of us when she said, *“We live by encouragement and we die without it; slowly, sadly, angrily.”* [as quote by Swindoll. p. 237]. The lack of encouragement and affirmation is rampant in our society. It is the reason that responsibilities in life become little more than a series of grinding, grim assignments because they are without the relief the encouragement can provide. Even more so, it is in the privacy of our homes that grace faces its major test, in our relationship with our mate. One person sarcastically put it this way, *“Every Marriage has three rings; engagement rings, wedding rings, and Suffering.”* Perhaps more than anywhere else there needs to be a “grace awakening” in our homes. There are three separate places where marriage is addressed at length in Scripture; 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5, and 1 Peter 3. The reference in Corinthians deals with marital realities that are tough to face, the Ephesian reference deals with marital responsibilities that must be accepted, and the reference in Peter deals with marital roles that must be fulfilled.

I. The Grace To Face Marital Realities

Marriage Requires Mutual Unselfishness

(1 Corinthian 7:3-5)

“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

(4) The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. (5) Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

It takes grace to live in intimate contact with another human being. Grace to accept, Grace to overlook; Grace to seek to understand; Grace to forgive. Grace to respect. Grace to yield one’s own rights. Marriage requires mutual unselfishness.

Marriage Means A Lifelong Commitment

(1 Corinthian 7:10-13)

“Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

(11) But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. (12) But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. (13) And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.”

God’s word still says that he has designed marriage as a relationship for a life-time. If there is anything that Paul is trying to communicate in this passage it is, *“When you marry, you marry for life.”* What does it take to stick it out? It takes grace.

Marriage Includes Times of Trouble

(1 Corinthians 7:26-28)

“I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress— that it is good for a man to remain as he is: (27) Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” (28) But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.”

There are no truer words than those found in

the last verse *“and such will have trouble.”* That is not to say that marriage is not worth it but just to be honest. Trouble seems to come from every quarter. Trouble from disease. Trouble from extended families. Trouble from children (this apparently never ends, I am still giving my dear mother trouble). Trouble about differences of opinion, temperature (at about the point that stop freezing my wife starts perspiring.) Trouble from temperaments (some people hit the floor in the morning singing and if you mess with me first thing in the morning I will just hit you). It takes grace to learn to let each other be, and to keep going.

II. The Grace To Accept Personal Responsibilities (Ephesians 5:22-33)

The Wife’s Primary Responsibility

(Ephesians 5:22-24)

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (23) For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. (24) Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”

Most women groan when they hear this passage read because of the idea of submission. This biblical principle has perhaps been more misused and abused by fundamental believers down through the years than any other.

The truth is more often like the story I hear of three guys who were taking in a pub. Two of them were talking about the amount of control they have over their wives, while the third remains quiet. After a while one of the first two turns to the third and says, "Well what about you, what sort of control do you have over your wife?" The third fellow says, "I'll tell you. Just the other night my wife came to me on her hands and knees>" The first two guys were amazed. "What happened then?" they asked. "She said, get out from under the bed and fight like a man." [Rob Morton. Sermon Central.]

What Paul is directing wives to do here does not occur in a vacuum, in the verses leading up to this charge (vv. 15-21) we find that he emphasizes several things.

- Being Wise (v.15)
- Being filled with the Spirit (v. 18)
- Having a heart filled with Joy (v. 19)
- Being Thankful (v20)
- Being Submissive to one another out of respect for Christ (21)

The word translated "*submit*" here is sometimes translated "*be subject to*" but it means not only "*put yourself under the authority of*" but also "*adapt yourself to your husband, adjust to him.*" It is thus the fulfillment of the words of the Creator when he said to the woman in the garden (Gen 2:20) that she was to be Adam's "*helpmeet.*" She is not his rival, least of all his slave, but his loyal, loving and willing helper.

The wife's primary responsibility is to know herself so well and respect herself so much, she gives herself to her husband without hesitation.

The Husband's Primary Responsibility

(Ephesians 5:25-29)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, (26) that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, (27) that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. (28) So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

(29) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."

The Wife is told to love her husband so much that she lives for him, but the husband is told to love his wife so much he would die for her.

The primary responsibility of the husband is To Love His Lord So Deeply and to Like Himself so Completely, He gives Himself to his wife without Conditions.

One little word that does an immense amount of harm in relationships is the "if" *"If you will do.....If you will say....If you will respond then"* We need to take the word if out of our marital relationship.

- Grace releases and affirms it doesn't smother.
- Grace values the dignity of individuals, it doesn't destroy.
- Grace supports and encourages, it isn't jealous or suspicious.

III. The Grace To Fulfill Distinct Roles

We live in an age where the domestic roles have become blurred. Many children grow up without a good role model of either what a godly man looks and acts like or what a godly woman looks and acts like.

The Wife's Role (1 Peter 3:1-2)

"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, (2) when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."

The wife's role is to model true femininitycharacter traits that are precious to God and impressive to her husband.

The Husband's Role (1 Peter 3:7)

"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

Verse seven begins with the words *"all of you likewise."* Just as the wife has a role of submission to the Lord and to her husband, so the husband is to be in submission to the Lord. When a man lives in submission to Christ, he will find that it is much easier for his wife to live in a correct relationship with him.

The phrase “to dwell with (or live with) ” means to “be at home with.” Not just come home after work, choke down supper, stare at a television, say nothing to his wife, and finally drop off to sleep.” To “live with” then is to get to know, to be at home with, to make your mutual relationship a priority.

The Husband’s role: To model genuine masculinity Unselfish and sensitive leadership that strengths the home and gives dignity to the wife.

The New American Standard Version (NASB) translates verse seven, *“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as a weaker vessel, since she is a woman: and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”*

In this verse, Charles Swindoll sees four enduring benefits of a marriage operated under grace. (p. 255)

- Mutual Equality (fellow)
- Mutual Dignity (heir)
- Mutual Humility (grace)
- Mutual Destiny (life)

Five Major Needs Of Women

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty & Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

Five Major Needs of Men

1. Sexual fulfillment.
2. Recreational Companionship.
3. An attractive spouse.
4. Domestic Support
5. Admiration

[Dr. Willard Harley. “His Needs/Her Needs.” (Grand Rapids: Revell, 2001). As quoted by Charles Swindoll p. 256.]