

I. THE PERSON YOU MARRY

Beautiful Day

- Ephesians 5:18-6:9 (prayer).
- May 20, 1989 was the most beautiful day. Moment frozen in time—*my bride pausing at the back of the church, all of life was ahead of us*. But looking back I don't think I fully understood what was about to unfold. I am not talking about the desire for further schooling, or the vocational calling into the local church, or the three wonderful children that God gave us. *What I mean is, I had no idea just how hard the journey of marriage really was going to be ...*
- When I married Kareen I didn't realize *how much I would compare her to my mom*
- I didn't realize that when we were in the midst of having three kids and five years of diapers *that she wasn't thinking about romance (sex) twelve hours a days like I was*
- I didn't realize that she wouldn't want *talk about sports in minute detail, or talk about things related to the church all the time*
- On that wedding day I don't think I had any idea that the tensions and problems we would face in our marriage wouldn't be about money, or life direction, or about what movie we should go to, or even about what sports teams we were going to cheer for
- But slowly, bit-by-bit, I came to realize that ***the real problem in our marriage was not the person that I married, but the person that my wife married!***
- That's why we need to talk about dating websites, and my dental hygienist ...

Search For Compatibility

- About six months ago I am lying on my back at the dentist's office, the young lady cleaning my teeth is really quite a wonderful lady, asks me lots of questions, tells me about her self, so I go out on a limb and ask, *how did you meet your boyfriend? Embarrassingly, with a little hesitation, she tells me she met him online. So I ask her another question, how are people meeting each other these days?*
- eHarmony, Match.com, PlentyOfFish all offer the chance to find that one special person. In fact eHarmony boasts over 30 million members since it began ten years ago, on avg eHarmony members post over 24,000 pictures a day, and eHarmony marketing boasts that on average 542 eHarmony members get married every day in the United States (they also take in over \$250 million in revenue annually)ⁱ
- Here's the issue with the world we live in, they will tell you that somewhere out there, there is someone, who is your perfect match, someone who just fits you, a soul mate. We look for that physical attraction, that sexual chemistry,ⁱⁱ but here's the thing—

No Two People Are Compatible

- Marriage (family) is the closest relationship that a person will ever have. The constant proximity with the other person creates the most intensity of all our relationships. And you will find in every marriage on earth that ***no two people are compatible.*** ***You never marry the right person!***ⁱⁱⁱ
- The scriptures teach us that the search for compatibility is impossible because the underlying human condition is a deeply flawed heart that has been broken by selfishness and sin.
- The person you marry is not the problem.
- *The problem lies deep within our own hearts.*

II. THE GOSPEL & PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

- Paul's letter to the church is about growing up into maturity in Christ, he hasn't left this purpose for writing the letter
- He's going to put house and work right in the center of our growing up

Hermeneutical Issues

- There's no doubt this passage brings to the service all sorts of questions about interpretation (much has been written)—
- In the original there's no "submit" in v.22, question of how we take that then
- Wives submit to your husbands "in everything," v.24
- What does Paul mean that a husband is to love his wife with a love that "makes her holy" and "washes her clean" v.26
- And what of "headship"—does it mean *authority over, provision for, source*^{iv}
- Even the comparison to Christ as the head of the church, is the meaning simply authority over, or more of provision for here?
- And what about the first century household—the Romans believer in *pater familias*, where the father of the house had rights and authority over everyone
- Question if Paul is affirming slavery here?

- My intent today is not to wade through the interpretative issues, my desire is to challenge us to look carefully look at what it means to grow up in Christ
- But I will say, because it will become clear as I continue, that I believe scripture teaches a **loving mutuality between husband and wife.**^v I take as my interpretative keys the greater vision of the Gospel and the out-working of the Spirit in the life of the new community^{vi}

Household, 5:21-6:5

- Paul's teaching here really hinges on **v.18—be filled with the Holy Spirit!**
- Remember, the vision Paul has already given us is one of the church being filled with the life and love of God himself, now we are to grow up in that
- **Wives submit, v.22**—It was not a surprise that he called these first century wives to give themselves in submission, what is a surprise is the motive. Submission was done out of one's life in Christ.
- **Husbands love your wives, v.25**—The vows your make at the altar are to love, honor and cherish, they are a commitment to hold high, to give oneself to, to protect and provide. The reason I see *kephale* (head) as not having to do with "authority over" is that the whole flow of this letter is one of God's life-giving support and provision for his church. Its emphasis is about what Christ gives and provides so that the church can grow up pure and unblemished. The gift of salvation and sanctification doesn't come because Jesus is Lord over us (though he is), they come because he has laid down his life for us, and through him we grow into new life and maturity.
- This is what Paul is challenging us to be husbands. We are called to love with a love that cares, provides, nurtures.
- **Children obey, v. 1**—Children are to obey and honor. Emphasis here is likely more on those who are young, but the sense of honoring is certainly critical for all of us in our relationships to our adult parents.
- **Fathers don't provoke to anger (NIV, exasperate) but bring them up (nurture) in the training and instruction of the Lord, v.4**—This is about nurture and relationship. It happens as we create a context of grace, love, support, respect and encouragement, it happens when we attend to the spiritual, emotional and material needs of our children.
- **Dad's let's get real personal here**—nurture is not something that comes naturally to many of us. Our children need that from us. They need our time. They need to know that nothing changes our love for them.
- And fathers, if we aren't there we need to begin by repentance & faith.

Workplace, 6:5-9

- *Slaves obey, serve with respect and sincerity, v.5*—seek to please, to work with enthusiasm.
- *Masters, treat your servants the same way, v.9*—respect, value, truthful, fairness

III. STAGING PLACE FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Living This Out

- Let's come back to the heart and soul of this letter, the shaping of the church. The Apostle Paul has already told us about the provision of God for those who believe. He's already told us about the love of the Father, the work of Christ, the provision of the Spirit.
- Now he calls us to the staging ground the place where we rub shoulders with those who we spend the most time with.

1. House & work is where we find the greatest staging ground for God's work in our lives

- Eugene Peterson says this working out our faith and character begins and stays in household and work, and we never graduate to higher ground^{vii}
- We need to be careful that we don't separate the secular from the spiritual, most often God's greatest work is done in the everyday rub of living with others
- Caution—too many are drawn to a spiritual growth that responds to a “big call,” or a “spectacular experience” or the “next great book”
- Growth and maturity are a relational thing, I grow as I live in relationship with others, as I learn to love, as I work and serve others
- Marriage & fathering has taught me again and again, that I am flawed, broken and selfish
- My moodiness, impatience, anger
- But here's the thing ...

2. As one who learns to live in Jesus Christ

- Repeated phrases: “as to the Lord” or “in the Lord”—11x's

- Paul trains us to re-understand all our roles in relation to Christ, our measuring stick is Christ, the full measure of Christ, Ephesians 4:13
- And this growing up is a “mystery” v.32—love and holiness a mystery
- The provision of Jesus for our life!

Closing

- A call to repentance & faith. A call to “work it out”—Ephesians 1

ⁱ Taken from <http://datingsitesreviews.com/staticpages>

ⁱⁱ Note: I am not suggesting that compatibility isn't a valuable thing to consider. Nor do I believe that we shouldn't prayerfully discern who a person is when it comes to the potential of marriage.

ⁱⁱⁱ Timothy Keller, *The Measure of Marriage*.

^{iv} All are viable possibilities, though much scholarship leans to *kephale* as source, or provision for.

^v A “loving mutuality,” or more commonly referred to as egalitarian.

^{vi} I also see (i) mutual harmony and submission of the tri-une persons of the Godhead, (ii) the equality of man and woman in the Garden, (iii) the effects of the Fall in Genesis 3 being man's authority over woman, (iv) the flow of scripture in a patriarchal society, and the out-working of the Gospel, particularly in Galatians 3:28—“no longer Gentile or Jew, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ,” and (v) the eschatological view of the fullness of the kingdom, for the whole of the scriptures flows towards that greater vision.

^{vii} Eugene Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*, 230.