

January 13th, 2008
“Emotional Exclusivity as the Sign of Love”
Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

The basis of marriage is exclusivity both in meeting our spouses' emotional needs and getting our own emotional needs met. That's what the part in the marriage vows about "keeping yourself only unto him or her" means. Marriage means that you agree to turn to only this person, out of all of the people in the world, to have your emotional needs met, and that you agree to be the person that meets the emotional needs of the person that you marry exclusively. For the rest of your life, you are responsible for the emotional well being, happiness and equilibrium of your spouse. Yes, you. To redundantly reiterate, the basis of marriage is exclusivity.

Exclusivity is not common in life. Were you to find yourself hungry while standing on the corner of Holmes Road and Martin Luther King Boulevard in Lansing, you would be able to look to the north, and see Burger King, Arby's, McDonalds, Long John Silver's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Popeye's as well as a place when they sell fresh fish and will cook it for you. Look to the south, and you will see Tim Horton's, Wendy's and Kroger's. Were you to find yourself in need of warm clothing while standing on the corner of West Saginaw and Mall Drive, you would be faced with a multiplicity of clothing choices in the Lansing Mall and then across the street at Meijers and the other clothing stores in the strip mall just to the west of Meijers. If you don't like any of the restaurants or clothing stores that I have mentioned, you can go to another corner and find different ones. One of the byproducts of living in the United States of America, a free country with a market economy, is that when it comes to obtaining goods and services, we have a great amount of choice, bounded only by our personal budgets.

Marriage, however, is intended to be contrary to the appetites that we have developed as consumers. Marriage is designed to be an exclusive relationship. I have a tentative plan to travel to Chicago, Illinois a week from next Monday because my father is having cataract surgery on the following day. Lord willing, on that Monday morning, I will gas up my car and pack my clothes so that I can be at my father's house by Tuesday morning. But, what do you think will happen if a crisis comes up in Marie's family on that Monday morning? God forbid, suppose

someone with whom Marie is very close gets hit by a car and is in the hospital in critical condition that day. Suppose someone calls her on Monday morning at her office, and she then calls me to tell me that she has to travel somewhere to see about her relative.

My Dad is still having surgery the next day. Am I still going to Chicago? No. I'm not. I have taken a vow to be the one to whom Marie can turn exclusively to have her emotional needs met, and I have the obligation to fulfill my vow. I'm concerned about Dad, but I never took a vow to support him in the way that I took a vow to support Marie. **Ecclesiastes 5:4-7** tells me: **4 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—**

5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

6 Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?

7 For in the multitude of dreams and many words there is also vanity. But fear God.

Well, I might rationalize, I didn't actually take a vow to God, I took a vow to Marie. However, if I think back, at the end of my vow, I said, "according to God's Holy ordinance, and thereunto, I pledge you my faith." So, my vow was made in keeping with God's ordinance, and I pledged my faithfulness to keep the vow. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the minister echoed that which Jesus said, in the "B" portion of **Matthew 19:6**:

6 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

So the marital vow really is a vow to God, and **Ecclesiastes 5:4-7** does apply.

It is interesting that when God decided to create marriage, He said, in **Genesis 2:18**: **18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him "a" helper comparable to him."**

I guess God meant what He said. God next created the animals, and God could have easily created an army of helpers for man, but, as God said, He made a (singular) helper for him. So, from the beginning, exclusivity has been the hallmark of marriage; without exclusivity, marriages do not do well.

God has hard wired human beings such that, in the normative case, we find it best to have a singular, specific helper to meet our emotional needs. Just as God sent us one Savior, He gives us one person to meet these needs.

However, we generally have a problem with God's plan because of the fact that we live in a market economy and are used to having alternatives to get our needs for goods and services met. We are used to having alternatives to getting our needs met. We generally have parents to meet our emotional needs before we get married, and it is a great temptation to continue to rely on our parents to do the job after we get married. God, however, specifically tells us that we need to give up the old when we embrace the new. **Genesis 2:24** tells us:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

The need to leave parents, who are our first emotional support, is specified in the same passage of Scripture in which marriage is defined initially. The need to transfer our emotional support from our parents to our spouses is defined before parents are actually an issue; both

Adam and Eve were created fully grown by God, and neither of them had human parents when they married.

Since the proclamation to leave parents clearly does not apply to Adam and Eve, **Genesis 2:24** is meant as a universal principle. I would submit to you that if the person to whom you would like to be married is overly attached to their parents, they have not reached a sufficient state of maturity to take wedding vows. Ladies, consider how you would feel if your husband put his mother's thoughts and feelings before yours when making decisions about situations? Brother, consider how you would feel if your wife's mother was really the one making the decisions about how your home was run or how often you and your wife should be intimate?

As I said in the beginning of this conversation, the key to marriage emotional exclusivity. God seems to have an affinity for separating the men that He chooses to create His nations from their parents. **Genesis 7:1, 7** tells us:

1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.

7 So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.

Notice, Noah took his immediate family on the ark, not his extended family. Listen to **Genesis 12:1-4**, which says:

1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.

2 I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

4 So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Notice, Abraham left his extended family when he went to Canaan to make a great nation. Next, Abraham's grandson Jacob left his extended family when he went to Lot's house to obtain his four wives and thirteen children, in **Genesis 28:1-5**, which says:

1 Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

2 Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

3 "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples;

4 And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham."

5 So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Joseph, Jacob's son, saved his family from the famine in Canaan and established them in Egypt because he first left the family, although not voluntarily. **Genesis 37:26-28** records:

26 So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?"

27 Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened.

28 Then Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, but later became the second in command in Egypt, married the Pharaoh’s daughter, and was in charge when his brother’s came seeking food. Four hundred years later, Moses, his great grandson, led the Israelites to leave Egypt and return to Canaan, but all of the Israelites that actually left Egypt died on the trip back. When Joshua, Moses’ successor took over, he had an entirely new nation of people to lead.

It appears to be in the plan of God for generations to start over, learn their own lessons and make their own families. As we have already read, **Genesis 2:24** says:

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Leaving father and mother promotes exclusivity between husband and wife; the immediate interference of parents can be destructive to the development of an independent relationship between husband and wife in marriage, which is why God suggests leaving. However, God does not just suggest spouses leaving their parents; God also suggests spouses joining with one another, which makes my initial point, that being, that marriage is designed to be an exclusive emotional relationship between husband and wife.

Of course, it logically follows that if marriage is designed to be an exclusive emotional relationship between husband and wife, that each spouse has the responsibility to follow through on their commitment to meet the other spouse’s emotional needs. Marriage is a leap, and exclusivity means that you are giving up your fallback position; you are putting all of emotional your eggs in one basket.

Exclusivity means that the person that you are relying on to take care of your emotional situation is your spouse. Exclusivity means that marriage is really an all or nothing proposition.

The problem is arises for many of us, as I have mentioned, is that it is counterintuitive to us to have an exclusive supplier for any commodity, including meeting our emotional needs. I listened once to a comic on a joke tape, and, talking about marital commitments, he said, “Show me a husband who won’t, and I’ll show you a neighbor who will.” There is a great temptation for us to disregard the exclusive nature of our marital vows, especially when we perceive that our spouse is not doing an immediate enough job keeping up with our emotional needs.

The interesting thing about this level of intimacy is that generally speaking, it is difficult to be intimate, to this degree, with more than one person at a time. When we have an intimate conversation with our spouse, they generally consider it a betrayal to tell other people the content of the conversation. **Judges 16** records an interesting situation about a Biblical character named Samson, who was a judge of Israel that God had blessed with superhuman strength. Samson had taken on the Philistines in battle and defeated them several times, and the Philistines wanted to destroy him. Samson, unfortunately, disregarded the commandment of God to not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever, and took a foreign woman, Delilah, as his lover. The Philistines thought that Delilah could use her position as Samson’s intimate to interrogate him and find out the secret of his strength, and they recruited her to do so. **Judges 16:4-5** says:

4 Afterward it happened that [Samson] loved a woman in the Valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah.

5 And the lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and find out where his great strength lies, and by what means we may overpower him, that we may bind him to afflict him; and every one of us will give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.”

Delilah agreed to betray her lover, and proceeded to interrogate him about the source of his strength. **Judges 16:6-9** records:

6 So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength lies, and with what you may be bound to afflict you.”

7 And Samson said to her, “If they bind me with seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, then I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”

8 So the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven fresh bowstrings, not yet dried, and she bound him with them.

9 Now men were lying in wait, staying with her in the room. And she said to him, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” But he broke the bowstrings as a strand of yarn breaks when it touches fire. So the secret of his strength was not known.

Although Delilah was having marital relations with Samson, she could not persuade Samson to betray himself. Samson told her several lies about the source of his strength, and each time she did that which Samson said would take away his strength, Delilah found out that Samson had deceived her. However, as their relationship continued, in **Judges 16:15**:

15 Then [Delilah] said to [Samson], “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me these three times, and have not told me where your great strength lies.” An intimate relationship requires a certain level of emotional intimacy. Delilah played her emotional “hole card” by questioning his love for her repeatedly, and she wore him down. **Judges 16:16-21** records:

16 And it came to pass, she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death.

17 [Samson] told her all his heart, and said to her, “No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man.”

18 When Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all his heart.” So the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hand.

19 Then she lulled him to sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his head. Then she began to torment him, and his strength left him.

20 And she said, “The Philistines are upon you, Samson!” So he awoke from his sleep, and said, “I will go out as before, at other times, and shake myself free!” But he did not know that the LORD had departed from him.

21 Then the Philistines took him and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza. They bound him with bronze fetters, and he became a grinder in the prison.

Samson could not be defeated by the military might of the Philistine army, but Samson was vulnerable to the one person who “knew” him, in the Biblical sense. Marriage is an agreement to be intimate, an agreement to make the person with whom we are taking vows the

one person with whom we can share our most intimate secrets, an agreement to give complete knowledge of ourselves to that person and to obtain and treasure the complete knowledge of that person so that we can truly have emotional, spiritual, intellectual and, finally, physical intercourse with one another. Infidelity, emotional or physical, is devastating to a marriage.

Donna was discussing her husband's infidelity with her counselor.

Donna: My husband left for his soul mate. He told me that he was in love with another woman.

Counselor: Where did she come from?

Donna: She was a receptionist at his office. He's in management, and it was just one of those classical things. They had a lot in common, they started spending time together, and all of a sudden, they're soul mates. We hadn't been having a bad marriage; everything's been great; we just celebrated the holidays, and then I just got sucker punched Friday night. You know, it's just been a devastating weekend. But, yesterday, he sent me an e-mail and he called and said that wants to come home, and that he broke it off with her. I'm just so confused. I want my family back, but I feel so betrayed.

Counselor: Why do you think he did that?

Donna: Um, well I think he's immature, but he says that it's because he wasn't getting a lot of affection and attention, hugs and kisses and warm fuzzies at home. He never communicated to me that he wanted more affection, and he wasn't being more affectionate with me. I thought that we were just living and working...

Counselor: Donna?

Donna: Yes, ma'am?

Counselor: You let the marriage go.

Donna: You're probably right.

Counselor: Well, you're getting a second chance. So you have two options now. You can spend your time whining about what he did, which was absolutely wrong, and that's not totally unreasonable, or you can say, "Thank God I have a second chance to turn this back into a marriage, where, when he thinks of a woman that it going to make him feel loved, and cherished, and warm fuzzied, he thinks of Donna."

Donna: Right. But, you know...

Counselor: Don't say "but, you know". Let me be very honest about this. Some women have been brought up to think that they don't owe this husband anything.

Donna: But, I don't think that I'm like that. I do so much for him.

Counselor: Do you know anybody on the face of the earth that doesn't have a severe psychiatric problem that doesn't yearn to be told loving things, and hugged, and this and that the other stuff?

Donna: But I haven't been unaffectionate.

Counselor: Okay, Donna, since you're going to be in total denial, this is not going to work. You might as well tell him to stay out.

Donna: No, I realize that I have work to do.

Counselor: How can you say that you realize that you have work to do when you tell me that everything was swell?

Donna: There just wasn't a lot of arguing, so I guess that why I thought...

Counselor: Tell me how you are going to make it better when you deny that there is anything that you needed to do more, or better, or differently.

Donna: Okay, I do know that there are things that we need to do more, both of us.

Counselor: Not we, YOU! You are resistant. Listen. He's been with you for over a decade, you have a kid in common, you have a home together, you have history, you have extended family and so on, and yet the skirt got his attention.

Donna: Right. Yeah, I know. I just...

Counselor: Don't say "I just... Vacuums don't exist in nature. Something fills them. And if he's not that mature, as you said, he needs to be stroked. What he needs, you need to give him.

Donna: I really want to...

Counselor: Then stop lying to me, and being in denial, and giving me an argument and being resistant, So what I need is for you to tell me two things that you know you need to do to make him feel that his life is worth living with you.

Donna: Make out with him more?

Counselor: Okay, number 2.

Donna: Prioritize his sex needs, I guess.

Counselor: Guesses aren't good. The honey seemed to know what he needed, and she's known him a lot less time than you have.

Donna: Well, she's flowery and tells him "I love you" twenty-seven billion different ways, and I guess I don't.

Counselor: Well, start doing it.

Donna: Well, I guess you're right.

Counselor: Stop being resistant to what he needs, and start giving it to him. If I was talking to him, I'd be saying stop being resistant to what she needs, and start giving to her. The point is, that when you go to buy somebody a gift, you don't buy them what you would like, you buy them what you know they would like.

Donna: So how do you give attention and affection to somebody who just slept with somebody else and cheated on you for six weeks? I mean, how do you go from what happened to you're saying?

Counselor: Because you realize that the situation was somewhat your fault. The decision and the action to cheat was his, and it was wrong. He breached the vows. There's no question about it. Don't think for a moment that I'm whitewashing anything that he did. But we have, as I said, two choices. We can whine, or we can live.

Donna: But what about the role modeling for my daughter? She knows. If I just let him back in, won't it be a bad example for her? Men can just cheat on you and you let them come back whenever they want?

Counselor: You're very stubborn. I don't have high hopes that this is going to work. You don't want to hear it. But I'll try one more time because I want to save your daughter's home. The reason that your daughter would be negatively affected is that you take the "victim" position that he did something to you but you did not participate or have any responsibility at all. So, to fix this, you sit with your daughter and say, "You can look at things one way or you can stand back and see the whole picture. You can look at one leaf, or you can stand back and see the whole forest. What your dad did was wrong. But it's important that a husband and a wife give each other the emotional things that they need, and I wasn't exactly doing that." And he needs to say, "I got my emotional needs met the wrong way."

Donna: Right.

Counselor: So your daughter will learn something very important. Number 1, people can screw up, and you can come back from it. Number 2, there are right ways and wrong ways to deal with disappointment. Number 3, forgiveness is a good thing as long as we have some serious hope for progress in the future. Number 4, a woman's role is to love up her man.

Donna: Thank you very much.

Counselor: Your husband has a history with you, he has a child with you, he has a home with you, and he's got future dreams with you. You treat him sweetly, and there's no skirt that could distract him. *Donna:* You're right.

Counselor: But don't get on your high horse about this. You hold some of the responsibility.

Donna: I do. I do.

Counselor: And it's a good thing to admit to it, because then you have power. If indeed you had no responsibility in this, you'd have no power to change it. I'd rather take the responsibility and get the power.

For the last few weeks, we have discussed the various signs of love that we can give our spouses, speaking words of affirmation, spending quality time, giving gifts, performing routine acts of service and providing physical affection. We all have a commitment to keep the vows that we have made, but keeping vows involves more than not being unfaithful; keeping vows also include providing our spouses with the emotional support that they need. We have examined the fact that different people need different types of emotional stimulation to make them happy, and that we have the responsibility to fulfill our spouses' needs in the matter that will best suit them. As the counselor said, when you get something for someone, you don't buy them what you need, you buy them what you know they need.

Out on Calvary's Hill, Jesus Christ knew what we needed. We needed forgiveness for our sinfulness. Jesus could have got on His high horse and condemned us for being sinners, but He loves us, and decided that rather than condemn us, that He would restore us. The justice of God required that our sins be paid for, and since we could not pay the price for ourselves, Jesus gave His life on the Old Rugged Cross to pay the penalty that we owe for the sins that we have committed. And when He had suffered enough so that the very last sin was paid for, Jesus hung His head in the locks on His shoulder, and He died.

Are we sinners? Yes, definitely.

Do we deserve to be saved? By no means. But, **Romans 5:8** tells us:

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We do not generally have to sacrifice our lives to show our love for our spouses, but God does expect us to keep our vows to our spouses by meeting their emotional needs. That is the key to keeping our marriage vows. It's not enough to not sleep with someone other than our spouses, but we also have to be give them that which they require to meet their emotional needs. John tell us, in **John 3:16** and **1John 4:10-11**:

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the

propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

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