

**January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008**  
**“Emotional Exclusivity as the Sign of Love”**  
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**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.

My wife asked me this morning if I was teaching the same lesson that I taught last week. I told her, as I'm telling you, that I'm using the same subject and trying to make the same point, but using a different argument. I pray that when we complete this lesson, that you will agree that I have given you a different way to think about the point of this lesson than I gave last week.

In our last lesson, I endeavored to make the point that the basis of marriage is exclusivity both in meeting our spouses' emotional needs and getting our own emotional needs met. With the large number of people with whom we come into contact, and the many interrelated activities that we perform with them, I realize that the concept of having just one person upon whom you can rely to meet your emotional needs is counterintuitive to most of us, but when I consider the oneness for which God calls in the creation of the man and the woman, I clearly see this concept in the Scripture. **Genesis 2:21-24** records:

**21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.**

**22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.**

**23 And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”**

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

God made woman from a part of the man's body, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and then God states that this man and this woman will be the paradigm for all marriage, being joined and to have a relationship oneness even to the exclusion of their parents. Understand the concept of oneness in a relationship. I am one with myself. Before I can communicate a thought to you, I must first know the thought myself. In order for my wife and I to be one, we must develop a relationship in which we communicate the totality of our thought processes to one another. If I hold something back, we are no longer one, because I have some thoughts that she

does not have. Thus, to become one, our goal should be to develop a relationship in which we completely communicate our thoughts to one another. Then we will find ourselves not needing other emotional outlets for our thought processes, because we have one another.

God maintained the concept of marital oneness when decided that His creation was too corrupt to remain on the earth. God decided to start over with married couples. **Genesis 6:13, 18-19** records:

**13 And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.**

**18 But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.**

**19 And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female.**

There were no single individuals on the Ark, nor were there any polygamists. Every individual on the Ark was paired with his or her spouse. **Genesis 6:19** indicates that even the animals were paired.

Jesus reiterated the concept of permanent pairing and emotional exclusivity in His conversation prohibiting the dissolution of marriage. **Mark 10:2-9** records:

**2 The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him.**

**3 And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?”**

**4 They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.”**

**5 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.**

**6 But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’**

**7 ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,**

**8 and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.**

**9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”**

Interestingly, Jesus attributed the Biblical regulation concerning divorce the hardness of the heart of man rather than to the will of God, and refers the Pharisees back to the original intention of God, from Genesis chapter 2, that being, that a husband and a wife are no longer two separate individuals, but are joined into being one by the creative action of God.

Let us look at a Biblical episode that may explain why oneness, an exclusive union, is difficult for people to achieve. **Genesis 4:1-5** says:

**1 Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”**

**2 Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.**

**3 And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.**

**4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,**

**5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**

Cain and Abel are siblings, they are brothers, they are both children of the same parents. They both offered sacrifices with the intention of pleasing God. Abel's sacrifice met God's approval, but his brother Cain's sacrifice did not. God told Cain that his offering was not accepted because something about his sacrifice was not done well. **Genesis 4:6-7** says:  
**6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?  
7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."**

God gave Cain a warning that probably did not soothe his injured feelings, and so Cain went to discuss the situation with Abel. The information that they shared with one another is not detailed in the Scripture, but the outcome of their discussion was negative. **Genesis 4:8** records:  
**8 Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.**

This passage of scripture records the first murder in the Bible, and the first case of what those who are far smarter than I have termed as "sibling rivalry". Rather than amending his own sacrifice to receive God's approval, Cain chose to lash out at Abel his brother, whose sacrifice was approved.

Almost all people, with the possible exception of psychopaths, consider the approval of the significant individuals in their lives, including God, parents and spouses, as something extremely important to receive. When we are faced with disapproval from a significant individual, often we will try to justify our position in order to change their minds and receive their approval. This conversation generally takes place in the form of an argument. If our argument is unsuccessful, we can either amend our behavior to fit the recommendation of the significant person, we can use argument to shift the blame to some other circumstance, or we can use argument to shift the blame for our lack of approval to some other person. Shifting the blame to someone else is the basis of sibling rivalry.

"Why should Abel's sacrifice be accepted?" said Cain to himself. "His sacrifice was no better than mine. I don't know why God likes him better than me. What did I ever do to deserve disapproval? Abel must be in cahoots with God in some way, and they have cut me out of the picture. Well, there is nothing that I can do about God, but there is sure something that I can do about that Abel that stole God's approval from me!"

Rather than recognize our own shortcoming, we use argument to convince ourselves that our problem is not because of our shortcoming but because of the fault of our sibling.

I'm reminded of the story of the man whose car became difficult to control while driving on a back road. He stopped, got out of his car, and saw that his left rear tire was flat. He found the spare tire in his trunk, but he also found that he didn't have a jack. He saw a farmhouse about a half mile up the road "Maybe", he said to himself, "the farmer has a jack that I can use. I'll just go borrow it."

The man began to walk to the farmhouse. "Suppose the farmer doesn't have a jack", he thought to himself, "then what am I going to do?"

The man continued to walk. "He probably has a jack. It's a farm, and I'm sure that he has trucks and tractors. I'm sure that he'll let me use a jack."

The man continued to walk. "But suppose he's stingy and won't loan me his jack. I guess I'll have to offer to pay for it. I guess I'll have to offer him a dollar to borrow his jack"

The man continued to walk. “Suppose the farmer is unreasonable, and says that he wants ten dollars for the jack. Ten dollars just to use a jack? That’s outrageous. The man should be able to help a traveler without trying to soak him for every dime that he’s got!”

By this time, the man had talked himself into being angry. He finally reached the house, and knocked on the door. The farmer came to the door. “Hello”, he said, “can I help you?”

“I’m not paying ten dollars for any jack!” hollered the man. “You can keep your jack, and you know what you can do with it!”

In the case of Cain and Abel, the Bible does not record any altercation between Cain and Abel that would have precipitated such a drastic response as murder. Perhaps there wasn’t one. Perhaps, when Abel received the approval which Cain wanted, Cain talked himself into being angry at Abel for being rejected, blaming Abel for his own failure to please God. We should be careful about our thoughts, because they can become self-fulfilling prophecies, just as they did with the man and the jack. **Philippians 4:6-8** tells us:

**6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;**

**7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**

**8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.**

The fact of the matter is that following this commandment requires a certain level of maturity. It takes maturity to deal with disappointment, to look at our own shortcomings and to not blame either circumstances or other people for our failures. Immature people usually find someone else to blame for whatever happens to them; taking responsibility for failure is not generally an attribute of immature people. Sibling rivalry is so named because it is common among immature children vying for the attention and approval of parents, in most homes in which there is more than one child.

A counselor had a client that was having a problem in his marriage. The client said, “I need help with my marriage, because my wife and I argue almost everything.”

“Why do you argue?” asked the counselor

“Well”, said the client, “my wife is just so irritating...”

The counselor cut him off. “Listen to my question. I’m asking why you argue.”

“Well”, said the client, “she ...”

The counselor cut him off again. “You’re not listening to my question. I’m asking why you argue. You have full control over your actions. Regardless whether or not she argues, you have free will, and you don’t have to respond to her provocation with an argument. There are many things that you can do to avoid arguing with your wife. So my question is, why do you argue? To answer this question, you have to say, “The reason that I argue with my wife is that I...” and finish the sentence. Don’t mention her, because she doesn’t make you argue, you argue because you choose to. So, why do you argue?”

The client thought. Finally, he said, “I argue because I want to get my way.”

So the counselor responded, “That is the classic definition of sibling rivalry. It may be you’re treating your wife more like a sister than a wife. Let me ask you, when you argue, are you sure that your way is the only correct way? Will her way of doing things ever work?”

“Well”, said the client, “I guess I’m used to doing things my way.”

“Which is not the question”, said the counselor. “Did you hear my question? When you argue, are you sure that your way is the only correct way? Will her way of doing things ever work, or is she always wrong?”

“Well”, said the client, “I guess she can’t always be wrong.”

“How successful are you in arguing her out of her position?” asked the counselor.

“Usually, not very”, said the man, “I guess that is why we have so many arguments.”

“Does arguing make your relationship with your wife better or worse?” asked the counselor. “Do you generally have sex after an argument?”

“No, not usually”, said the man. “We usually go to bed angry with one another.”

“Okay”, said the counselor, “let’s see what we have learned. You argue to get your way, but you’re not sure that your way is always right, you are not always successful in changing your wife’s position, and arguing doesn’t make your relationship with your wife better. Knowing these things, is it intelligent to argue with your wife?”

“I see you point”, said the man. “I guess not.”

“Let your wife do things her way”, said the counselor. “If her idea is a good one, you’ll be glad that you supported her and went with a winner. If her idea is a bad one, it will soon be obvious, and it won’t need your help to kill it. If you chose an intelligent woman to marry, she’s probably more apt to agree with you if you don’t argue with her, but let her work it out in her own head. Treat her like she’s your wife, not your little sister.”

**Proverbs 15:1** tells us:

**1 A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.**

If you married your spouse with the intention of staying with him or her until death do you part, you have a long time to convince them of the correctness of your position. You don’t have to use argument to try to do it quickly. It probably won’t work. **Proverbs 25:15** tells us:

**15 By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, And a gentle tongue breaks a bone.**

James tells us, in **James 3:13-18**:

**13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.**

**14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.**

**15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.**

**16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.**

**17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.**

**18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

A good first step in transforming a marital relationship from that of sibling rivalry to that of a soul mate is to understand this concept. Make a resolution to excel at being the peacemaker in your home. **Matthew 5:9** says:

**9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called the children of God.**



Your regard for one another and your ability to share your emotional lives with one another will grow as you grow together in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Paul tells us, in **Ephesians 4:1-3:**

**1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,  
2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,  
3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

I have learned that the most important human relationship that we can have in this life is the relationship that we have with our spouses. We have previously read, in both Genesis and Matthew, that we are specifically called to become one with one another, bonded together by God, and that we are to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

If there is any relationship in life in which we should practice Christian principles and bring our best selves it is our marital relationship. We even need to first be good spouses in order to lead in the Church. **1Timothy 3:1, 2, 4, 5, 12** records:

**1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.  
2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;  
4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence  
5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?);  
8 Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money,  
12 Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.**

To hold either of the Scriptural offices in the Church, the Bible requires that you be a man that has kept your marriage vow to be married to your wife until death do you part, the literal Greek being “μίας γυναικὸς ἄνδρα”, meaning, a one woman man. The Biblical prerequisite for Church leadership is the ability to develop and maintain a marital relationship. We can understand why this is true as we recognize that the function of the Church is to inspire people to develop the unity of the faith of Christ, oneness with Him and with one another. As **1Timothy 3:5** tells us, if we fail in the task of leading an organization the size of a family, we have no chance to successfully lead an organization the size of a Church. So, the marital relationship is our primary Biblical relationship, and it is an emulation of the relationship between Christ and the Church. **Revelation 19:6-9** records:

**6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!  
7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb [Jesus Christ] has come, and His wife [the Church] has made herself ready.”  
8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.  
9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of**

**the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”**

I would like for you to consider the real purpose of our marital relationships.

Our marriages and our families are the laboratories in which we do the work of experimentation with Christian principles, as we endeavor to keep the commandment to become one with our spouse. There is no relationship that we can substitute for marriage that will allow us to experience the growth required to truly understand that which God is doing in our lives as He endeavors to turn us into members of His bride, the Church.

So, marriage is a laboratory, and we should be doing the experiments that God is giving us to do.

Some of the experiments are difficult to do. I doubt that the man who has to figure out how to live with his wife without arguing with her will disagree with me. Some of the experiments are uncomfortable to do. Some of the experiments are painful to do.

I know of a man that wanted a child, but his wife could not get pregnant. After medical intervention, she was able to conceive, and he and his wife had the opportunity to see the sonogram of their child in the womb, and count the ten little fingers and ten little toes. Then, one day, their child’s heart stopped beating in the womb. There was nothing that they did, and there was nothing that they could do. After the expense and discomfort of fertility treatments, after going through all of the physical adjustments of early pregnancy, after all of the planning for the future of the child, the child’s heart just stopped. The doctors don’t know why, I don’t know why because the Bible doesn’t say, and, as far as I know, no one on earth knows why.

What should be the response of the man with this problem? He has a challenge from God, and it looks as though he is not going to get the child that he desires. If he finds out that his wife actually cannot conceive seed and successfully carry a child to term, he could choose to produce the child that he wants outside of his marriage, since the fertility problem is not his. He could choose to divorce his wife, and marry someone without a fertility issue. That would be the type of solution that Cain would develop, but not one that would honor God.

There are many children in the country that need adoption, and that would be something that he could do that would benefit not just himself and his wife, but also give an innocent child an opportunity that he or she otherwise would not have.

The true lesson that we are learning in the laboratory of marriage is that we are committing ourselves to Christlikeness, devoting ourselves to the benefit of someone else, making that person one with ourselves, not just by getting, but also by giving. In our marriage, we are choosing to sacrifice ourselves for a flawed human being; we are choosing to become one with him or her, not only during good times, but for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, which is the vow of emotional exclusivity, to love and to cherish, until death do us part. Even if we can’t get our way right now.

**John 3:16** tells us:

**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.**

Marriage is the laboratory in which we can do the experiment that Jesus describes in this text. You can’t give yourself for the world. You don’t have the capacity to do so. Your life is not fit to give as a sacrifice for sin. But, God wants you to participate in His program, to be part of His Son’s bride at the wedding supper of the Lamb recorded in the book of Revelation. So He

gives us someone to be our closest companion, someone with whom we can share our life, someone for whom we can give ourselves, someone whose emotional needs we can meet, even as they meet our emotional needs, even as Jesus Christ met our need for salvation on the Cross.

If we choose to conform to God's plan, all of the problems of marriage can be solved by giving and by sacrifice. It may not be fun, and it may not be easy, but it can be done, if we resolve ourselves to do it. There may be shortcuts that we can take and we can decide that taking on the total emotional responsibility for another person is just too hard to do, but it can be done, and done successfully. The Lord admonishes us, in **1 Timothy 6:3-5, 11-16**:

**3 If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness,**

**4 he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions,**

**5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.**

**11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

**12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

**13 I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate,**

**14 that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing,**

**15 which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,**

**16 who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.**

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