

Breaking Free

Empowering Authentic Families Part 4

The Purpose of This Series: These six messages are for the purpose of equipping individuals who are planning to or are already in a marriage. We want to assist marriages in reaching their highest potential of relationship and effectiveness. Some of the teachings may be lessons already learned, but it will never hurt to brush up to renew their simple truth. Other things might become a new revelation, and just in time, because we are not getting any younger. Keep your hearts open to allow the Holy Spirit to give you new insight to what will give you the ability to live in a life relationship as God expected marriage to be.

Today's Message- Often, marriage is not what it was expect to be. There really is a challenge to the statement that says, "As long as you really love each other, it will work out." I Corinthians 13 tells us that love is the basis of marriage, or any relationship surviving for that matter. When we look into the one manual that gives us a realistic view of marriage, without a doubt, it's the Bible.

Draw Near To God

One of the challenges we face today is that God is drawing us to Himself, and in that process He is drawing us to tend to life as he would like us to. As a Christian, I, as a believer have a role to embrace, and that is to become the Bride of Christ. That is not so easy as a man, but it is what it is. At one point I am a brother and another I am a Bride. The challenge of it does not excuse the expectation of it. I am a Bride.

In saying that, unless I take my appropriate role as He indicated, our chemistry will just not work. I can tell you a cold hard fact, in this relationship we call Christianity, **God will not change**. For it to work, we have to change! And in that, this ever drawing relationship that began at the beginning of time has been tugging on men's hearts to draw near to Him.

In response to that tug, we don't always come willingly. Actually we find ourselves very resistant or somehow independent even though we think we come willingly. There are several pockets of independence and resistance that lies deep within us. Some of them are there because we have a natural resistance to change. We may not like the fruit of some of our non-Biblical actions but we dislike the change to get different fruit more. We like things staying the same with different results...did someone say that sounds much like the definition of insanity?

What Hold's Us Back?

Ok, so now we come to five areas that keeps us from responding fully to God's call on our life:

- 1) **Lack of example**- Many people never had a Biblical example of what a Godly, Bride of Christ looked like. Because of the lack of modeling, naturally we don't have a clue as to what this bride of Christ think looks like. Without knowing, if it showed up written in a cloud we would possibly resist it because it would be so foreign to us.
- 2) **Lack of understanding**- There is no doubt, leaning something modeled would really be the easier education, but because of the lack of that example we struggle to describe what this Godly example looks like. So, poor communication skills, bad teaching, abusive and lame attempts at living like this Biblical person gives way to skepticism, fear and rejection. When someone wants to tell me about something that

- demands great change on my part, I have to admit, it takes me a while to be “all in.”
- 3) **Lack of care**- This sounds sort of rude but certain stages of my life are actually ruled by “I don't care.” It doesn't matter what the advise is, I'm set in my ways and don't care if I could make a million dollars or win the lottery, I don't care. It's sad, but without the help of the Holy Spirit and a sensitive heart, I just won't care how I act in certain ways. I can say that I love Jesus and die for that confession of faith but I can also “not” care is I am not bothered with prejudice thoughts and statements, I can know that Jesus died for the world but I don't care if I have hate in my heart. I can know that Jesus' blood redeems man from every form of sin but I can also “not” care if I don't watch the words that come out of my mouth, the anger that is expressed or the injustice that I tolerate. I don't care is somehow accepting the grace of God so great that it covers everything I don't care about. I can “not” care because God's grace is big enough to excuse that. I don't think of what I need to line up biblically with my life, I concentrate on God's grace and think, “Whew, thank you Lord, I couldn't love someone like me but thank you so much for loving me!”
- 4) **Lack of guidance**- There are many areas where guidance should take place so that we might be best developed into the proper Bride of Jesus Christ.
- As a **pastor** I have to take some of the responsibility for communicating the true Word of God...
 - And so we should as a **church**. We have the responsibility to value and continually guide those who confess that Jesus is Lord to reflect the position of being the bride of Christ. We have to be reminded often that we were bought with a price. Our spiritual freedom was bought at a high price--Jesus' death on the cross. Because our freedom has been "purchased" already, we shouldn't submit ourselves again to slavery of any sort. It's hard for us to admit, but without Christ you become enslaved, not free. Those who cast down the standard, (truth) of God's Word for the saving, (grace) factor of God's Word has much to learn. If we are not guided to become this bride then we have the tendency to believe that we are doing just fine. Listen, there are many areas of improvement needed in our lives.
 - We need the guidance of the the **Holy Spirit**, a convicting, pressing of our heart. This guidance awakens us to new levels and new devils, areas that haven't been resolve through the full work of the Holy Spirit. If we are going to be the bride of Christ, I've got to have the help of the Holy Spirit.
 - We need the guidance of **God's Word!** There is nothing so clear and so relevant for us today. The Word of God gives us clear direction as we process our life and review it through the filter of God's truth. You can receive guidance as you apply the Word of God to every situation in your life.
 - I believe that we need guidance provided by **believing parents**. I know that it sounds like I covered this in the first “lack,” but I want to reiterate it here, your guidance, not just example is important in those who are to become the Bride of Christ. Guidance is something that comes with verbal expectation. An example of this is someone who lives the example but doesn't necessarily train the way, they just show the way.
- 5) **Lack of Obedience**- This is the one that nobody wants to admit, to lack obedience is to ignore the obvious. **It is justifying unjustifiable actions, behaviors, beliefs and**

judgments. Like I said earlier, we have so identified with grace we can't recognize the need for grace. Our lack of obedience is a weakness to do the right thing. It is an area that has to be redeemed by the blood of Jesus.

Our Present Condition

I would risk saying that 90% of those hearing this message today did not have an *example* of an Ephesians 5:21-33 marriage which means that your "*understanding*" of how to Biblically respond in a marriage is either...

- **Optional**, (you care or don't care),
- **Not optional**, (you care, you want it but recognize you need guidance), or
- **Not willing**, (you don't care to know what the Bible says, you refuse to obey.)

One of the most difficult things that we deal with in our walk with God is that we come to Him often without the proper chip installed. We spend much of our time looking for that chip which would allow us to function according to His life manual. But we come with a defective, default setting that somehow brings us back to failure to connect because of our woundedness, our lack of submission or lack of understanding God's life giving principles.

Many people who come to Christ do this seriously after much failure and destructive pasts. A pattern is set in their process and there is something unhealthy laying underneath the gloss of our Christian coating. It is something that we continue to fail at, something we become broken over, something that we lose heart with because of this poor condition that we harbor in our heart.

Now here are a couple of things I need you to keep in mind:

1. **We need to adhere to this message because it is the Biblical expectation for every couple that has called on Jesus Christ as their Lord.**
2. **We need to adhere to this message because it is the Biblical connection for every couple that will call on Jesus Christ as their Lord.** We have to began thinking generationally, we have got to realize that it is more than our problem, it will be our children's problem. Listen, I really believe that children don't care to go to church if it doesn't change mom and dad. If Jesus hasn't changed you, why do you think it will last past your generation? There is a need for this message because it is the foundation for future generations in our church. I believe this teaching will be the foundation of families coming to church together, taking up rows at a time because Mom and Dad are realizing that God's Word does not lie and son's and daughters will want what their mom and dad has. They will want to share, shout and express that gratitude in the house of God together. There is something real about this message and we cannot take it lightly!

Renewing The Mind

Before we get too far I want to look back one chapter before our main reading today

²²You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

Here we get a glimpse of Paul's teaching to the Ephesians. He reminds them of a teaching he had with them that was very important for them to adjust from their former life to the life that Christ has for them. It is here, in our minds that we can be intrigued, with deceitful desires, that corrupt us, in other words, they drag us back into thinking that will not or cannot set us free. That's why they are deceitful, once these thoughts enter the mainstream of our mind we give way to unhealthy, unrealistic thoughts that lead us to listen to, entertain and eventually submit to a lie. It is here, in the mind that the stance has to take place. A conscious decision has to be made, a new self, which now looks like God, (in His image), in true righteousness and holiness. This is how you USED to live, this was your FORMER way of life. Sure....

The Bible teaches that there is a deceitful spirit that can corrupt your mind, it can drag you back to behavior that was your "old man," the past. That old lifestyle can take over again unless you have a process of renewing your mind and protecting yourself for this deceit.

Think about it, there are areas in your mind that has had difficulty, limited or at times controlling. For some, there are thoughts that get in the way of your confidence when it come to God loving you and others loving you. These same areas of the mind are attacked with thoughts that get in the way of your confidence when it comes to your love for God and your love for others.

See, it's not that you have never been truly born again, or that you did not really "believe" when you called on the name of the Lord for your salvation. For many, the problem is not your spirit which is redeemed by Jesus blood and your confession, but it is within your soul, your mind. Your mind has not been totally renewed. Though our "spirit" is recreated, our minds are not. The Word of God teaches us that our minds actually have the greatest influence in our lives. You can almost hear Paul loudly proclaiming to the Romans...

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 12:2

It's possible, since you have come to know Christ that you have heard teaching on this matter or perhaps you haven't. Whatever the case, we all face circumstances in our lives that expose deep rooted problems as we react without even realizing why. The reason we respond to difficult and unexpected circumstances is because we have reflexes deeply rooted in our minds!

Football Drills- I found it interesting that each year we played football, we would practice over and over again how to fall down and get up. We would do that over and over again, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. What it did, was it taught us how to run down the field and get knocked completely on our rear and in the next moment be on our feet ready to make a play. How we practiced getting up from a fall was as important as knowing what the plays were.

The fall is in the mind, it is the place where we are drawn away and eventually confused, tempted and fail. If you try and change your *attitude* or even your *behavior* without dealing with the way you think, your mindset, you will only see temporary changes. Because your

mind will take you right back where you end up failing again and again.

But the mind “renewed,” transforms both your attitude and behavior. Life changes as our minds change. Your mind is the control mechanism of your entire life!

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...”
Proverbs 23:7 (The Amplified Bible)

Your mind is a magnificent tool, and when you know how to use it, it will be a powerful tool to help you become what God is calling you to be. **You will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.** That leads me to a **key statement:**

1. When you change your thinking, you change your life!

You can change your thinking both in a positive way or a negative way. When you change your thought process in a positive way, you will begin to start seeing positive changes in your life. On the other hand, if you are entertaining unhealthy thoughts, harboring bitterness and unforgiveness, allowing corrupting thoughts to gain momentum, you will see negative changes that could eventually overtake you in every aspect of your life.

2. Most of the decisions you make are not conscious decisions.

Most of the fights that we get into with our spouse are not started by a conscious choice, but are preconscious, preprogrammed, subconscious decisions of how we will respond and react. Our preprogrammed thought that responds to circumstances in an ungodly or/and unhealthy way comes from a mind that is set and unchallenged.

We might review in our minds, “I don't like what is going on.” or “I am so frustrated with this relationship.” Or, “I can't stand it when this happens.” But the bottom line is, we will continue to act out and respond in unhealthy ways until we challenge our minds and confront our subconscious minds. The subconscious response must be “renovated” or “renewed” as it says here in Romans 12.

3. Most thoughts in mind were developed within us, not chosen by us.

The summer after I graduated from college, Carol and I traveled over the United States with nine other group members of a ministry to the deaf. We spent a week at a deaf camp and I was in charge of recreation. On one particular day I took them all hiking. It was interesting because we walked down a dry river bed with tall, steep banks. Trying to be funning, I told them about “Hop-A-Longs” who were strange men who looked a lot like goats with one leg shorter than the other so they could run fast on the side of the banks. I thought I'd get a laugh, but no one seemed to think it was funny at all. To save embarrassment I quickly pointed ahead and directed everyone to follow me. I had walked about another fifty feet before I turned around and realized that they were all huddled together where I had just left them. They were afraid that the Hop-A-Long would get them. Now these were teenagers. If I said that to anyone of our youth they would laugh or roll their eyes, but no one would believe me. But these deaf youth had no reason to “disbelieve” me. I had given them no reason to think I didn't know what I was talking about. I had graduated from college, I had shared Christ with them, I had worked with them, got to know their names...why would I lie now? The process supported belief in me, not doubt. The norm was, “Believe anything I said,” that was

the norm. It wasn't like they "chose" to believe me, they never doubted me. My statement developed a "truth" in them that was not true, there was no question. I had to repent to them and ask for forgiveness.

As a child moves through childhood, additional programs are fed into their memory banks, never challenged or questioned. Their primary source of input: parents, grandparents, baby sitters, teachers, friends and neighbors. Their attitudes and thought patterns can become your attitudes and thoughts. Their lifestyle can become your lifestyle. Even their gestures can become your gestures. The spirit of their "mind" can reflect the spirit of your "mind."

Over and over again, we repeat the good and bad examples of our parents and those who have somehow "developed" our thinking. Alcoholic parents can produce alcoholic children. Abusive parents can produce abusive children... The sins or the blessings of the parents are passed on to the third and fourth generation according to Numbers 14:18.

"The Lord is long-suffering and slow to anger, and abundant in mercy and loving-kindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation."

Numbers 14:18

4. The cycle must stop or its curse will fall on the next three or four generations

You and I began school and perhaps started going to church. The development of our beliefs, attitudes and thoughts began to be fed into our minds. We took them in without ever questioning the validity of their statements in reflection to the Word of God. Friends and relatives compounded the shaping of our minds and tack on all the mindless television and literature. As we now live in the "real world" we just assume that this is how life is, this is how marriage is. Our minds have adapted to a way of thinking that is not like God at all. In some ways it is actually "hostile" toward God.

"For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will."

Romans 8:7

For the first fifteen to twenty years of our lives, we are put together with this package of information that we have gathered from all around us, this is our "mind." This is ground control for our life. What we believe and think comes from this. We take what we have and we approach life with it. We can continue to dive into more information, college, books, training, but our "mind," is pretty much developed by the age of twenty.

For the most part, life is just living out that package of information. We simply follow through, unconsciously, or subconsciously and never really make any new strides in who we are. But there is something we can do, we CAN renew our mind. Changing our minds takes an unusual great desire for "real" change." In a time of "real" change, you do not realize until you are made aware of these thought factors forced to the surface by special incidents or relationships.

All mind changes require three steps.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:22-23, almost 2000 years ago that they must

“...put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Ephesians 4:22-24

So Paul says that there are actually three things we are to do to be in this freedom. Too many people get stuck in one of these steps and never live in the fulness of their relationship with Christ or with others because they are stuck...never really living in freedom,

1. **Put Off**- your old self
2. **Be made new**- in the attitude of your minds
3. **Put On**- the new self

It is not a matter of just putting off, **if you don't go deep into your mind, you will go back in your life**. This is where we get the term, “backsliding.” Many of us have attempted to quit something. We get all fired up, prayed up, sermoned up and then we go back and blow it. We attempt to “put it off” but that’s where it ends. There is assurance that we started out new, but we don’t know how we got right back where we were. How did this happen? We made a commitment but it didn’t fully change our minds. After we do turn and commit to renewing our thoughts, if we don’t know what to put on, this new self, which is really being challenged today, we will continue to float back and forth and possibly, eventually, give up, back off and disappear.

- Today we need to **put on a new mind so we can have a new life**.
- If you put on a new way of thinking, you will see a new way of living.
- When you change your mind you change your life.
- You must embrace what reflects what you just renewed, the mind of God.
- As you renew your mind, and the spirit of your mind, that preprogrammed way of thinking will begin to change.

Marriage In Your Mind

Change your mind, change your marriage. Marriage comes with it's challenges,

“...But those who marry will face many troubles in this life...”

I Corinthians 7:28

This scripture **didn’t say that we wouldn’t experience joy and happiness, but it specifically tells us that marriage has the tendency to have many troubles**. Today's message is to discover the reason for some of those troubles and attempt to give some instruction and guidance how we might change the way we do life.

3 Key Instruction For Men

*“Husbands, in the same way **be considerate** as you live with your wives, and **treat them with respect** as the weaker partner and as **heirs with you** of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.”*

I Peter 3:7

1. **Be Considerate**= according to knowledge, get information to know how to talk to them, learn “what women want!” **Insight and skill!** A woman can never be appreciated enough.

Because of the world we live in today, girls can't determine the difference between “relationship” and “seduction.”

Guys can't determine the difference between “love” and “lust.”

- **Relationship**- occurs when both parties work supportively for the benefit of the other individual.
- **Seduction**- occurs when one or both parties work for their own benefit to satisfy their emotional, physical or sexual desire. At times, seduction takes place in an exchange of having both parties getting what they want, at least temporarily.
- **Predator**- a predator has no purpose for interaction emotionally or to act on the behalf of the other party. A predator acts to get, never to give.

1. **Be Considerate**
2. **Treat Them With Respect= Appreciate and Value.** The whole women's movement was based upon this, “Do you value me?” To feel valued is a huge, important need of a woman.
3. **Heir With You= Co-equal. Equally of same worth.** As men we want them to be the counter part of ourselves, they make up what we are not. They are different, but we are to make them equal.

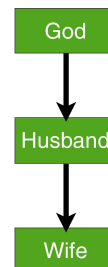
Three Models of Marriage

1. **Top-down Traditional Marriage**

“²⁵Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.”

Luke 22:25-26

- Husband's Position: King
- Leadership Style: Lord
- Goal in Mind: Personal Benefits
- Effects on Marriage: One **winner** and one **loser**

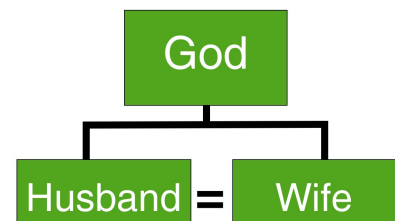


2. **The 50-50 Identical Marriage (Sameness)**

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:28

- Husband's Position: Partner
- Leadership Style: Leaderless
- Goal in Mind: Equality
- Effects on Marriage: Difficult Balance This is the

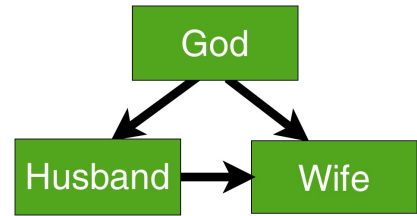


business model that fails more than any other is partnership.

3. **The Side-by-Side Biblical Marriage**

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
Ephesians 5:21

“³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”
Ephesians 5:32-33

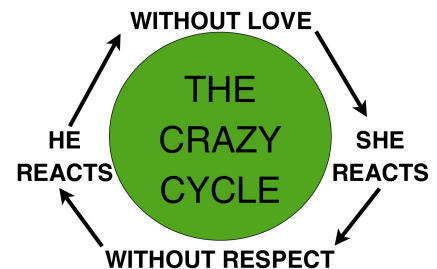


- **Husband's Position: Biblical**
- **Leadership Style: Oneness**
- **Goal in Mind: Responsibility and Sacrificial**
- **Effects on Marriage: Healthy, Happiness and Harmony.** Every woman should feel, “I am valued and significant.”

Crazy Cycle

In Emerson Eggerichs Love and Respect Conference he says that His and her deepest value is Love for her and Respect for him.

Without love she reacts without respect.
Without respect he reacts without love.



The major mistake couples make is that he will become unloving to get respect and she can be disrespectful in an attempt to get love. How crazy is that?

Can a good marriage become better and poor marriage become good? Yes!

“Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun— all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.”
Ecclesiastes 9:9

Issues In Marriage

There are many issues that rise up like thorns in the flesh and rocks our relationships. The most common marital issues are:

- Finances
- Children
- Chores and Responsibilities
- Sex
- In-laws
- Vacations and time alone

I hold my spouse responsible, (I blame them), and expect them to make the first move. Who moves first?

The one who sees themselves the most MATURE!

“But my spouse makes me so mad!” Here's some news, your spouse doesn't make you mad. What happens during a fight and the phone rings? :) You pick it up and say, “Hello, oh, wow, what are you up too?”

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions...”
Galatians 5:19-20

In response to these issues we hurt each other, **we devalue** each other by one of **three ways**,

1. **Ignores**
2. **Violates**- Makes more than healthy demands, verbal, sexual, physical abuse
3. **Belittling**- Nonverbal sarcasm and skepticism, rolling the eyes, deep sighs of scorn, argumentative, constant unresolvable issues

How Does A Husband Love His Wife?

- When you want to be with her one on one
- When you don't have any resentment or anger toward her
- When you empathize with her
- When you initiate resolve and reconciliation with her
- When you treasure her

Men

“For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”
Ephesians 5:23

“²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”
Ephesians 5:25-27

“²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body.”
Ephesians 5:28-30

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”
Ephesians 5:31

Women

- **Appreciate His desire to work and achieve**
- **Appreciate his desire to protect and provide**

- Appreciate his desire to be strong and to lead
- Appreciate his desire to analyze and counsel
- Appreciate his desire for a shoulder to shoulder friendship
- Appreciate his desire for sexual intimacy

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.”

Ephesians 5:24

Become Vulnerable- When no one becomes vulnerable, everyone is in the sin of blame! The goal is to win the argument, play the game to win!

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16

7-7-7

Every 7 days have a date

Every 7 weeks have an overnigher

Every 7 months take a vacation or three day trip