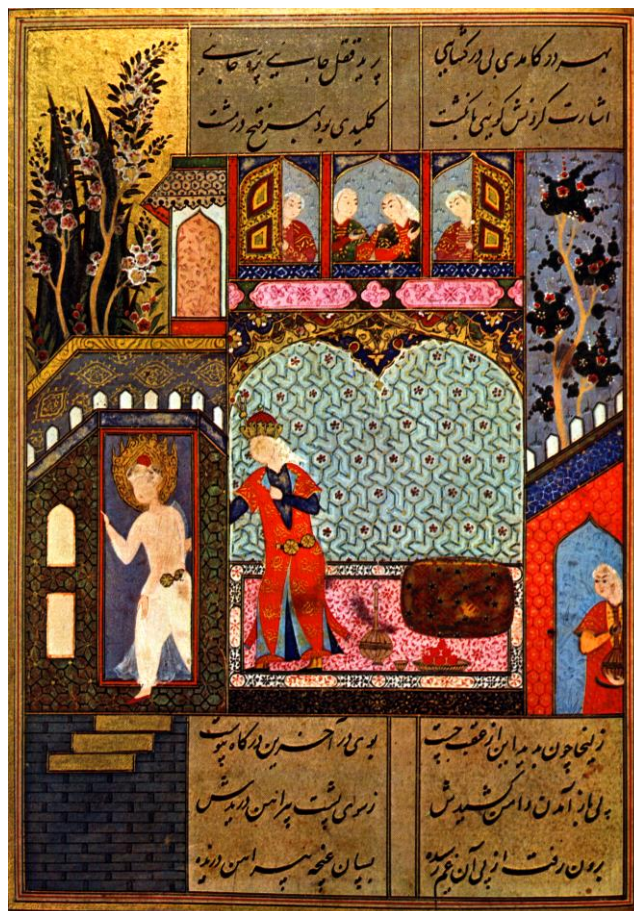


# FEASTING ON CHRIST

## A BIBLE STUDY ON LOVE



By Bill Peacock

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To William, my son, who has taught me a great deal about how to love.



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# Introduction

This study was originally prepared for use in prison. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't have an application for those who have never been to prison.

Like Joseph when he was sent to prison, we will be unjustly persecuted. Like Joseph, we will have our burdens to bear while waiting for the fulfillment of the promises of God. But most of all, like Joseph, we must learn how to deal with our own fallen nature and that of the world around us.

Scripture tells us that the way to do this rightly is through meditating on the Word of God day and night. For by the grace of God as we meditate on the Word of God our minds be renewed and our souls be transformed so that we may repent of our sins and be Christ-like in our relationships with God and with those around us.

This study is designed to assist in that process by helping you to study God's Word every day. For six days each week it provides questions that will help you dig deeper into the Word and to spend time meditating on it. While reading God's Word on a daily basis is important, studying and meditating on it is even more so.

On the seventh day, this study provides an outline of the topic that can be used for personal meditation or for a small group discussion. Coming together as a group to study God's Word can lead to the sharpening of one another in our walk with Christ and greater unity in the body.

This study is on love, the subject of the two great commandments, and the means of our salvation. It is all we are called to do. If we love God and those around us through Jesus Christ, we will be with God for eternity. My hope is that this study will help those who use it to "love loyally" with "hesed," the steadfast love of God, as we are called to do in Micah 6:8.

One note for parents: This study was prepared with adults in mind, but might also be used for teenagers. If you choose to do so, please examine closely the lesson for week 3: "Being a One-Woman Man." It contains some straightforward teaching on sex and lust.





# SACRIFICIAL LOVE



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3. Why is love so important? What are we without love?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. List the selfish characteristics mentioned here, then list the loving characteristics mentioned here. Pick one selfish characteristic that you could use less of, and one loving characteristic you could use more of.

### Second Day

3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. What does it say about why it is so hard to love in our present world?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. The future of love is guaranteed. What does the future hold in store for those who have the love of God in their hearts?

### Third Day

5. Re-read 1 Corinthians 13. How does it show you that sacrificial love of others is also the best way to love yourself?

### Fourth Day

6. Read John 19:1-16. This is the standard for sacrifice that Christ set for us. In verse 9, what did Christ do, or not do, that made this truly self-sacrificial? How can you apply this to your life today?

7. Read Ephesians 5:25-28. In one sense this speaks to how men can glorify their wives through sacrifice, but it also speaks of how Christ has glorified us. What does it tell us Christ did for us in his death?

#### Fifth Day

8. When we glorify God, we are loving Him sacrificially. Read Psalm 86:9-12. What do these verses tell you about how to love God?
9. Take one of the ways to glorify God from Psalm 86:9-12 and describe how you can put it to use in your life today to love God and or someone else in your life.

#### Sixth Day

10. Read Genesis 22:15-18. How was Abraham's sacrificial love for God a blessing to others and to you?
11. List one or two ways that you could live more sacrificially for others. Who would you particularly like to bless? How do you think you would be blessed by this?

## Discussion Outline\*

Love is obeying God's commands. If we are to love one another as ourselves, we must first love God through obedience, and we must always love God more than anyone else, even our wives and children. God in His love for us sacrificed His very own Son that we may live and love. Thus we must live out our love for Him by sacrificing our lives for Him. This is the basis for all of our love.

### I. The Glories of Sacrifice

- Through sacrifice we glorify Christ – John 21:19
- Through sacrifice we glorify our wives – Ephesians 5:25-28
- Through sacrifice comes fulfillment – Mark 9:35
- Through sacrifice we abide in God and He in us – 1 John 3:24

### II. The Questions of Sacrifice – 1 Corinthians 13

- Will this help others to know and experience God?
- Will this nurture others?
- Does this conform to biblical truth?
- Does this bring me closer to God?

### III. The Standards of Sacrifice

- God's sacrifice of His Son – John 3:16
- Christ's sacrifice for us – John 18:28-19:16

### IV. The Mission of Sacrifice: To Change the World – Matthew 28:18-20

- To change the world we must first be changed ourselves – Romans 12:1-2
- We are changed as we respond to the mercies of God – Romans 11:17-20
- We are changed as we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice – Romans 12:1
- We are changed as we renew our minds – Romans 12:2
  - We renew our minds in scripture – Joshua 1:8
  - We renew our minds as we sing praises to the Lord – Luke 1:46-55
  - We renew our minds in joyful and thankful prayer – Philippians 4:4-7
  - We renew our minds by what we think and do – Philippians 4:8-9
- Our faith and obedience to the will of God will bless us, our families and the world – James 1:12; Genesis 22:15-18

“And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” 1 Corinthians 13:13

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\* This lesson uses material from *Each for the Other* by Bryan Chapell

# Notes

The Questions of Sacrifice – Questions to Help Us Identify What True Love Is:

- Will This Help Others – Getting out of the way. Love does not insist on its own way.
- Will This Nurture Others – is this building up others in the body of Christ.
- Does This Conform to Biblical Truth – Love is patient; love is kind.
- Does This Bring Me Closer to God – “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.”

Changing Ourselves - In order to change the world, we must first be changed ourselves. God’s plan is to change the world one soul at a time, and the first soul a Christian needs to work on is his own through humility and obedience. But because this will be an ongoing process, a Christian must not tarry here for long before he goes out to work on other souls, one at a time, just as he is working on his own.

Scripture Memorization: John 19:1-3

Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands.

# Corrupted Love: Overcoming Habitual Sin



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Habitual sin, be it addiction, seeking comfort in fear/isolation, etc., is ultimately about giving in to temptation rather than turning to God. Read the story of Christ's temptation in the desert (Matthew 4:1-11). What can we learn here from Christ about not giving into temptation? What does he do instead?
2. What temptations are you faced with today that you habitually fail to exhibit a Christ-like submission to God?

### Second Day

3. Most of our repeated failures stem from one of three basic causes: 1) pride, 2) sensuality, 3) covetousness. Look in Genesis 3:1-8 for these three elements in the serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve. List where you find each.
4. Guilt also plays a role in our habitual sins. After their initial sin, what role did guilt play in Adam's and Eve's continued sinful behavior? How has guilt played apart in your habitual sins?

### Third Day

5. One of the ways we get ourselves in trouble is with our eyes. Read Matthew 6:22-23 and Ephesians 1:16-19. What do you learn about the nature of your eyes? What is it that you must seek with your eyes if you are to avoid being filled with darkness?
6. John 3:3 says that you cannot see the kingdom of heaven without being born again. Read John 3:16-21. What has God done to make it possible for you to see the light of Christ instead of the darkness of your habitual sins? What must you do in response to God's mercy?

#### Fourth Day

7. Read Romans 1:18-32. Looking at vv. 18, 23, 25 & 28, what is it that we are really doing when we engage in sin, habitual or otherwise?
8. Again using Romans 1:18-32, look at vv. 24, 26 & 28. How do we come to be lost in addiction or other habitual sins?
9. Given the answers to Questions 7 and 8, where do we have to start in our battle over habitual sin?

#### Fifth Day

10. Deliverance from sin and temptation is possible in Christ. What sin(s) of yours do you think is/are the most difficult to overcome? Now read Luke 1:34-38; John 8:31-32 and Hebrews 3:7-15. Why do you think that we so often fail to rely on, and submit to, God in overcoming our sins? What can we do to change this?
11. Read Psalm 104:30; Isaiah 40:31 and 2 Corinthians 4:13-16. Who renews us? How does it happen? What happens to us as a result?

#### Sixth Day – Read Psalm 1; Psalm 126; Romans 5:3-5 & 12:1-2 and James 1:2-8, 22-25 and answer the following:

12. How are we to participate in our renewal?
13. What are the benefits of our trials? What attitude should we have about our trials?
14. What are the results for those whose seek renewal from God and persevere in their trials? What are the results for those who do not do these things?

## Discussion Outline

"For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of destruction assailed me; the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I called. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry came to his ears. ... He sent from on high, he took me; he drew me out of many waters. He rescued me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my support." – 2 Samuel 22

### I. What is Habitual Sin?

- Other names for habitual sin – addiction, depression, bitterness, alcoholism, rage
- Sin – Galatians 5:19-21
  - Sin is separation from God, disobedience to God, deliberate wrongdoing in God's sight and disobeying God's word, a failure to love God
- Idolatry – Colossians 3:5
  - We worship ourselves, others, substances, possessions, status, success, failure
- Un-holiness – A defilement of our body and soul – 1 Timothy 1:9-10
  - Holiness – set apart from sin, purity, righteousness, power, glory
  - We are called to be holy – sin destroys the beauty of our relationship with God
- A Habit - Habits are decisions, habits can be changed

### II. Why Do We Fall into the Habit of Sin?

- We are slaves to sin – Romans 7:15-20
- Habitual sin is an attempt to hide from a holy (and just) God - Mark 4:35-41. In habitual sin, we are trying to protect ourselves, comfort ourselves, isolate ourselves from the fear of death, harm, pain – ultimately, from God's holy wrath and eternal damnation, which He pours out because He abhors sin and injustice
- God is holy, but approachable – Isaiah 6:1-8

### III. God Will Renew Us, and Change Our Habits

- God, in His mercy, gave us the law to reveal our sin to us – 1 Timothy 1:8-17
- God initiates and sustains our renewal in Christ, the foundation of our renewal – 1 Corinthians 1:23-24
- The Holy Spirit is the means of our renewal – John 14:15-18
- Worshipping God in Holiness, like Christ, is the goal of our renewal – Psalm 96:9
- The church is the body of our renewal – Psalm 126:1
- Strength and beauty, joy and gladness, are the fruit of our renewal – Psalm 96:6; 126:1-3

### IV. Participating in Our Renewal and the Changing of Our Habits– Psalm 126

- Remembering the LORD's great acts
- Remembering our great gladness in the LORD's great acts
  - Meditating on the wonders of the LORD's great act
  - Freely admitting our own particular sins
- Anticipating joyful streams in the desert of a fallen world
- Anticipating joyful harvesting after sowing in tears

"The LORD dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he rewarded me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD and have not wickedly departed from my God. I was blameless before him, and I kept myself from guilt. And the LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight." – 2 Samuel 22

## Notes

Scripture Memorization: Psalm 126:1-6 (ESV)

A Song of Ascents.

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad. Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negeb! Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.



# Holy Love I: Being a One-Woman Man



## Bible Study

First Day – While this lesson is written largely to address the struggles that men have with their sexuality, women can benefit from it as well. First, men are not the only ones who struggle with lust and this lesson can help women who struggle in this area. Second, this lesson can help women to better understand the struggles that their husbands or boyfriends may be having in this area. Third, and related to the first two, it will help unmarried women deal with dating and courting.

1. Read Genesis 2:18-25. What do you learn about the nature and purpose of a man's relationship with a woman?

### Second Day

2. Using what you learned in question 1, describe what sexual lust means to you, how it is different than the relationship we see in question 1. Use Proverbs 7:10-21 to help you.
3. Read Romans 1:24-25. What happens to us when we indulge in lust. Read Proverbs 7:22-27. What is the final result of giving in to our lusts?

### Third Day

4. Read 1 Corinthians 6:16-17. What does it say happens when men follow their lust and engage in sex outside of marriage? Thinking back to question 1, how is this different than the purpose for which God united man and woman.
5. Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. Explain why fornication is a particularly bad sin for the Christian.

Fourth Day - We have seen that sexual holiness is the natural way for a man to relate to God and to a woman. For the next three days we will look at the motivations for and means of maintaining sexual holiness.

6. Read Proverbs 5:20-23, Jeremiah 10:10 and Revelation 11:18. What motivation do these give us to maintain sexual holiness?

7. Read Proverbs 5:15-19. What motivation do we see here to maintain sexual holiness?

#### Fifth Day

8. We must begin our battle against lust with our minds. Read Proverbs 7:4-5, Proverbs 5:13-14 and Psalm 1:1-3. What does this tell us about how we can maintain sexual holiness?

#### Sixth Day

9. Wisdom helps us guard and guide our affections. Read Psalm 37:4, Psalm 40:8, Isaiah 26:8 and Romans 10:1. What should the desire and affection of our heart be?

10. As we fix our mind and affections on Christ, we can better fix our eyes on Him. In other words, we must seek holiness in our actions. Read Galatians 5:19-23. Seeking holiness in all areas of our life will also help us to maintain sexual holiness. What are some of the sinful acts listed here that you need to put off? What are some of the fruit of the Spirit that you might put on to help you in this battle?

## Discussion Outline\*

Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man. – Proverbs 27:20

- I. Lust and the Abdicating Male
  - Lust is the coveting that which is others; it is insatiable (Prov. 27:20); it is unnatural (Gen. 2:18-25)
  - Lust leads only to disobedience against God – Romans 1:24, 26-27
  - A man acting on his lust is being seduced. He is weak, he is effeminate and he is being led to destruction – Proverbs 7:6-23
  - Acting on our lust addles our minds and corrupts our souls
- II. Fornication– 1 Corinthians 6:9-20
  - Fornication is sexual activity in the absence of a marriage covenant.
  - Fornicators do not go to heaven
  - Fornication changes who you are
  - Fornicating Christians include Christ and His body in their sin
- III. Adultery – Matthew 5:27-30
  - Adultery begins in the heart. The problem is one of “heart rebellion,” and Christ makes it clear we are all adulterers. Cutting off one’s members will not solve the problem.
- IV. Sodomy
  - Is a sin. It may be genetic, but it is prohibited in the Bible – Genesis 2:18-25; Romans 1:27
- V. Masturbation
  - Is not specifically prohibited by the Bible, but can rarely be done without the accompanying sin of lust. Whatever its spiritual status may be, it is lousy training for sex in a marriage
- VI. Celibacy
  - You may be called to life-long celibacy. If not, you are called to be celibate during singleness, but you are also being called to marriage, which you should pursue with diligence, holiness and patience.
- VII. Solutions for Sexual Holiness– Romans 6:12; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Ephesians 2:4-10
  - Motivations to maintain sexual holiness
    - Fear of God. Remember that God judges – we should be satisfied with our wife’s breasts, or none at all, because God judges
    - Desire for salvation. See our lust in the light of eternity – it is fleeting and suicidal
    - Love of a good wife
    - Fear of slavery and moral stupidity; Keeping of a good reputation
    - Fear of financial consequences
    - Desire for good health
  - Means to maintain sexual holiness - Wisdom
    - Watch your doctrine – set your minds on things above. Study God’s Word
    - Watch your heart – be honest with yourself and accountable to others
    - Listen to your parents; Love your wife– the good sex that comes from loving one’s wife is a powerful protection from sexual sin
    - Watch your eyes
    - Practice self-control, a fruit of the Spirit, in all areas of your life

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\* This lesson uses material from *Fidelity: What it Means to be a One Woman Man* by Douglas Wilson

## Notes

Scripture Memorization: Proverbs 27:20 (NIV)

Death and Destruction are never satisfied, and neither are the eyes of man.

# Holy Love II: The Submissive Woman



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Wives are called to submit to their husbands. Read Galatians 3:28-29. Does this submission mean that wives are somehow inferior to their husbands? Explain your answer.
2. Read Philippians 2:5-8. What does it teach you about how wives should respond to their equality with their husbands?

### Second Day

3. Read Genesis 2:18 and 1 Corinthians 11:7-9. What do these verses tell you about the relationship of a woman to her husband?
4. How might a wife carry out this role?
5. How might a husband lead his wife in this way?

### Third Day

6. Continuing to think about the wife as a helper, how do these verses apply:  
Proverbs 1:7-8:

Galatians 6:1 & 1 Peter 3:1-2:

#### Fourth Day

7. Read Titus 2:3-5. Women, how are you doing in living out these verses out as a wife or wife to be? Men, how are you doing in helping your wife (or preparing yourself to help your wife) live out these verses?
8. Read 1 Corinthians 11:3. What is the ultimate purpose of a wife's submission to her husband? Who is the ultimate object of her submission?

#### Fifth Day

9. One way of looking at submission is as sacrifice. Read Romans 12:1-2. What do you learn here about submission as sacrifice?
10. Read Psalm 81:11,13. What does God say is the ultimate reason for people's failure to submit to Him? How are we to change our ways?
11. Read Psalm 81:12. What is the result of our failure to submit?

#### Sixth Day

12. Read Hebrews 12:6-11. What happens when women do not submit to their husbands, or people do not submit to God? What is the purpose of God's actions described here?
13. Read Psalm 81:13-16 & 1 Peter 3:5-6. What blessings of submission, for men and women, do you find here?

## Discussion Outline\*

Unless called to celibacy, every woman is called to submit to a particular man in marriage. Yet submitting to another is the most difficult task any woman, or man, faces. We all have a desire to establish ourselves as the sole authority in our lives, ruling over our universes in the place of God. Women will struggle with this pattern in marriage. But the woman who overcomes these temptations by submitting to God will also submit to her husband and find herself filled with the best that God has to offer.

### I. The Struggle to Submit: The Root – Psalm 81:8-16

- We fail to submit to God because we refuse to listen to his voice
- When we fail to submit to God we are given over to our stubborn hearts
- When we fail to submit to God we are given over to our enemies
- In order to submit to God, we must 1) listen to His Word; 2) believe His Word, and 3) yield to His Word
- When we submit to God, we receive his abundant blessings

### II. The Struggle to Submit: A Wife's Anger

- Impatience untreated turns to anger
  - Impatient with his pace, his sin, his wisdom, his habits
- Submitting to God's Word about impatience: "Love is patient and kind." – 1 Cor. 13:4

### III. The Struggle to Submit: A Wife's Fear

- Anxiety untreated turns to fear of man
  - Anxiety over security, money, his fidelity, her failure
- Submitting to God's Word about anxiety: "She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed in scarlet. ... Strength and dignity are her clothing, she laughs at the time to come." – Proverbs 31:21,25. See also Philippians 4:7-8

### IV. The Struggle to Submit: A Wife's Loneliness

- A lack of oneness untreated turns to loneliness
  - Responding to a lack of oneness with withdrawal, selfishness, fear, anger
- Submitting to God's Word about a lack of oneness: "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." – Psalm 42:1-2

### V. The Struggle to Submit: A Wife's Despair

- Grief untreated turns to despair
  - Responding to grief with sinful thoughts: unbearable, self pity, humiliation, defiance
  - Responding to grief with sinful actions: gossip, judgment, exaggeration, distance
- Submitting to God's Word about grief: "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death." – 2 Cor. 7:10 (ESV)

"The verb "be subject to" in the Greek is the word *hupotasso*, a military term which means to be ranked under in military order. This ranking of the wife under the husband's authority was sovereignly chosen by God so there will be order and harmony in the home. She has a different rank of position, she is not an inferior person. Christian wives need to see themselves as God sees them." Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife*, p. 139.

## Notes

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\* This lesson uses material from *The Excellent Wife* by Martha Peace.





# Holy Love III: Marriage



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Read Isaiah 61:10-62:5 and Revelation 21:1-4. In these two passages, we see a picture of Jerusalem as the bride of Christ. As we learn in Ephesians 5:31-32, there is a mysterious similarity between the marriage of Christ to the church and the marriage of a man to a woman. Write down what you learn about marriage from each of these passages:

Isaiah 61:10-62:5:

Revelation 21:1-4:

### Second Day

2. A husband and a wife become one in marriage, giving up the right, and in many ways the ability, to act independently. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. Explain what you learn about this from the perspective of:

The husband:

The wife:

### Third Day

3. Read Ephesians 5:21-24. What does this tell us about how and why a wife is supposed to submit to her husband?
4. Do these verses indicate that women in general are supposed to submit to men in general, or that a specific woman is supposed to submit to a specific man, that is, her husband?

#### Fourth Day

5. Ephesians 5:21, 25-30. The husband is the head of the wife. This passage gives us a better explanation of headship. Why is a man the head of his wife?
6. How is the husband to exercise his headship according to Ephesians 5:21, 25-30 and Philippians 2:1-8?

#### Fifth Day

7. Ephesians 5:21 tells us that all Christians are called to submit to one another. How does a husband, who is the head of his wife, go about properly submitting to her? Can you imagine a way that a husband might improperly submit to his wife, giving up his role as leader?

#### Sixth Day

8. In 1 Peter 3:1-6, wives are told one reason why they should submit to their husbands. What is it?
9. Again using 1 Peter 3:1-6, what role do husbands play in enhancing, or diminishing, the beauty of their wives?

## Discussion Outline\*

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish." – Ephesians 5:25-27

### I. Marriage is a Means by Which We Experience the True Love of Christ for the Church

- Love – the glory of marriage
  - We should delight in the love of our marriage – Jeremiah 9:24
  - Our joy should be in the salvation and sanctification of our mates – 1 Thessalonians. 2:20; Romans 10:1
  - Love has feelings too – 1 Corinthians 13
- Love – the grunt of marriage
  - Marriage is more work than fun – it is the exercise of dominion
  - Love often works out of pain and affliction – 2 Corinthians 1:23-24

### II. Marriage is a Window Through Which We See Christ and the Church – Ephesians 5:21-33

- Christians are specially called to submit to one another and forsake all others
  - In marriage, we give up our right to 1) exercise authority independently; 2) act independently; 3) grow independently (John 3:30); 4) love independently (Proverbs 5:15-19); 5) suffer independently
- Wives are specially called to submit to, and respect, their husbands
  - A husband is the head of the family – Numbers 30:13-15
  - A wife must submit herself to a husband who is going to fail her
  - A wife must respect her husband more than he deserves
  - A husband is a little Christ, building a thirst in his wife for Christ Himself
- Husbands are specially called to love their wives
  - A husband must love his wife more than she deserves
  - Giving himself up for her brings joy to both
  - A husband nourishes and cherishes his wife because they are one flesh
  - Through the efficacious love of a husband a wife becomes more beautiful – 1 Peter 3:1-6

### III. Marriage is a Means by Which We Become as Christ is to the Church – 1 Timothy 3

- Just as Christ has but one bride, men are to be the husband of but one wife
- Just as Christ cares for the church, men are to manage their families well
- Just as Christ leads his flock, men must lead their families in the ways of salvation
- Just as Christ is the Truth, men must know the Truth to encourage others by sound doctrine
- Just as Christ teaches his flock, men must teach our families the Truth of God's Word
- Just as Christ is without blame, men must be without reproach in their character, inside and outside their family

"And therein lay their joy - working together to build the kingdom. There is your excitement. There is your romance, to go off together slaying dragons, even if we slay dragons though the mundane work, the overcoming of thorns and thistles that is changing diapers and mowing the lawn. In short, for servants of the King, the joy comes in service, in faithful service." – R.C. Sproul

## Notes

Exercise of Dominion – "The wife is to be a helpmate for the husband, a co-laborer in the great task of exercising dominion over the earth. I should see my marriage as a means toward exercising dominion, which is a very different thing than the emotional equivalent of a trip to Disney World." – R.C. Sproul

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\* This lesson uses material from the teaching of the Rev. Paul Hahn.

Forsaking All Others - "It should be clear that anyone who enters into marriage actually relinquishes the right to engage in any other adult relationship which might be equally deep or pervasive. One chooses one's mate as one chooses one's God: forsaking all other, until death." – Mike Mason

Giving Up Our Right to Act Independently – "The special gift of marriage is that we are asked to submit, not to an abstraction, but to a person, and not to a distant person, but to the one that is closest to us. . . Such obedience ought to be the easiest of all, but it can turn out to be the most difficult, as our own willfulness rebels, under the steady eye of intimacy, that what is being asked of us is nothing short of the surrender of our very will to (or rather, through) another person." – Mike Mason

Giving Up Our Right to Suffer Independently – We are called suffer together with our spouse just as we are called to suffer with Christ. Lent is the time we focus on joint suffering as a church, though we are called to do this year-round.

Head of the Family - "Because the husband is the head of the wife, by the very nature of marriage, he finds himself in a position of inescapable leadership. If he does not love her, he is a poor head, but a head nonetheless. Meditating on this is a very valuable thing for husbands to do." – Doug Wilson

Joy to Both – "Who wants a dirty bride, and what bride wants anything more than to be cleansed, sanctified and joined with a glorious man? If you live for your own private pleasure at the expense of your spouse, you are living against yourself and destroying your joy. But if you devote yourself with all your heart to the holy joy of your spouse, you will also be living for your joy and making a marriage after the image of Christ and His church." – John Piper

Scripture Memorization: Proverbs 5:15-19 (ESV)

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.<sup>[16]</sup> Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets?<sup>[17]</sup> Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you.<sup>[18]</sup> Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, <sup>[19]</sup> a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.

# Fruitful Love: Parenting



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What do you learn from this passage about teaching your children about God's Word through godly example.
2. Orthodox Jews obey the command to make Scripture "as frontlets between your eyes" by wearing two small leather boxes on their foreheads, each containing strips of parchment inscribed with quotations from the Scripture. Do you think this would help instruct your children? If not, how could you obey this commandment?

### Second Day

3. Being a godly example for our children is the best kind of instruction we can give them. Read Exodus 20:4-6 and explain why being a godly example is so important.
4. Read James 3:13-18. What can you do, what aspects of your character need to change, so that you and your children will bear a harvest of righteousness?

### Third Day

5. Read Job 1:1-5. If you have children, for what specific things should you be praying for them now? If you do not, how should you be praying that you could be a better father if you do someday, or a better man if you do not?

#### Fourth Day

6. Read Genesis 17:1-8 & Romans 4:13-16. God made His covenant with Abraham and his offspring. Explain how a Christian, who is not Jewish, is still an offspring of Abraham.
  
7. Explain how the children of a Christian is also an offspring of Abraham.

#### Fifth Day

8. Read Psalm 103:17-18. God is describing His Covenant of Grace with us, His promise that His people will be saved by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. What does it tell you about what you can do to claim the covenant for your children?
  
9. Read Acts 2:38-39. How does this passage give you comfort about being a Christian parent?

#### Sixth Day

10. Read Isaiah 59:20-21. What does it tell you about the Spirit of God and the children of Christians?
  
11. Based on your answers from questions 6-10, what is the single most important trait or characteristic a parent can have?

## Discussion Outline\*

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\* This lesson uses material from the teaching of Rich Lusk, pastor, Trinity Presbyterian Church of Birmingham, Alabama.

Our goal as Christian parents is to raise up our children that they might walk in the way of the Lord. Nothing is more important for parents than this. We must provide godly shepherding for our children and teach them about God. However, we cannot forget that our children's fate truly lies in the hands of God. We must parent by faith, for that is how we lay claim to the covenant promise of God for our children, the promise that salvation is for the faithful and our children. In God's faithfulness, and not our own parenting, must Christian parents rest.

I. Parental Failure: A Lesson from Judges – Judges 2:10

- The Israelites failed to teach their children about God
  - 1) The parents did not speak to their children about God; 2) They did not live obediently by destroying altars and driving out Canaanites; 3) They became complacent and comfortable living with Canaanites; 4) They did not set godly examples

II. Teaching Our Children About God: Instruction – Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- We must saturate our hearts, and our children's hearts, with the Word of God
  - Instruct our children in the Word of God
  - Talk of the Word of God morning, noon and night
  - Bind them to our hands, place them on our foreheads, and on our doorpost and gates
- Formal instruction of our children
  - Read the Bible to them; read good books with biblical themes to them; catechism and Scripture memorization; family worship; weekly worship in church

III. Teaching Our Children About God: Discipline – Job 4:8

- We reap what we sow. We should not let our children sin without experiencing the consequences of the Rod (Proverbs 13:24), which should be used as a first resort, not the last. The rod should be applied with love, not anger; the rod should be understood by the child as the consequence of his/her behavior and a means of protecting their souls
- We should help our children understand the blessing of godly behavior – Deut. 6:1-3
  - Go well with you – spiritual blessings; long life – eternal life
  - Identity in Christ: setting and re-enforcing boundaries – Proverbs 25:28

IV. Teaching Our Children About God: Godly Example – Exodus 20:4-6

- So obvious, but so important, and so often over looked
- Parents can overcome many theological and parental shortcomings through godly example – James 3:13-18; Philippians 2:1-8; 1 Peter 1:14-16; Proverbs 25:28

V. Teaching Our Children About God: Prayer – Job 1:5

- Job prayed for his children as a first, not last, resort
- We should be praying now for our children's spouses, vocations and holiness

VI. Teaching Our Children About God: Faith – Psalm 103:17-18; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Cor. 7:14

- God's covenant of grace is with us and our children

The Father's unconditional, eternal love erases the dread that a momentary lapse or mistake in judgment will ruin our children or destroy our own relationship with Him. – Bryan Chappell, p. 138, "Each for the Other"

## Notes

There may be many of you doing this study who are not parents, or who may be parents of adult children. But this lesson is still for you.

Though it is a lesson about shepherding a child's heart, it can also be blessing to you, because your heart needs shepherding as well.

You can learn from the failure of the Israelites in Judges about how they failed to obey God and to speak constantly of Him and His Word. You can learn how to instruct yourself, discipline yourself and set a godly example for others (and yourself). You can learn about praying and about living by faith.

Go over the lesson. Do the Bible study. In this way, you can learn to shepherd your own heart, perhaps in ways your parents never did for you when you were a child.

Scripture Memorization: Psalm 103:17-18 (ESV)

But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.



# Brotherly Love: Friendship



## Bible Study

### First Day

1. Proverbs 18:1 talks about isolation. Read Proverbs 18:1-9 and list some of the characteristics of an isolated man.
2. We must walk not in darkness with others. Read Proverbs 2:12-19 and list some of the characteristics of those who would tempt you to follow them down the path of destruction.

### Second Day

3. Though Paul did not separate himself from the world, he kept godly company. Read Romans 16:3-16, 19-23 and list some of the characteristics of Paul's friends.
4. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2 that while we once were "following the course of this world," in Christ, we no longer do so. But John tells us (1 John 4:17) that we are still in this world, like Christ. Read John 12:44-50. What does this tell us about how you should relate to others?

### Third Day

5. Based on what you have studied so far this week, how should your relationships differ between Christians and non-Christians?

### Fourth Day

6. Christ's relationships can teach us much about friendship. In Luke 7:36-48, Christ interacted with a Pharisee and a woman. Who was more of a friend to Jesus. Why?

7. Read Matthew 7:21-27 and John 15:12-15. What does Jesus tell us it is necessary to do to be His friend? What does He say about being friends with others?

#### Fifth Day

8. In Matthew 7, Jesus makes it clear that if someone is to be his friend, He must know them. Read Psalm 32. What does it tell you about how Christ can better know you?
9. One of the many benefits of having godly friends is that they can get to know us, and our sinful ways. Read Mark 1:2-5; Nehemiah 9:2-3; James 5:14-16 and Matthew 18:15-17 and list some of the benefits of confessing our sins to other Christians.

#### Sixth Day

10. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. But we must grow in wisdom as we walk with Christ. Read Proverbs 1:1-7. How does this help you in evaluating and building your friendships?

## Discussion Outline

Why do men wind up in prison? Or in topless bars? Why do women wallow in deep depression? Why does anybody become an addict or an alcoholic. It is because they do not walk in fellowship in the most important relationship they can have—with Jesus Christ. Of course, Jesus, who was known as a friend of drunkards, prostitutes and tax collectors, is more than that. He is also the Savior of those who call on His name. Without Him, we are lost. But even after we have called on Him as our Savior, we must strive to develop and maintain lasting friendships with other Christians who can help us walk in fellowship with Christ.

### I. Walking in Fellowship with Death

- The path of destruction – Proverbs 2:12-19
- Is paved with isolation and despair – Proverbs 18:1-9
- Which sets us apart from Christ – Romans 2:22-23
- Into mutual isolation with deceivers – Romans 1:29-31; 16:17-18; Jude 16-19; Galatians 5:19-21

### II. Walking in Fellowship with Christ

- The path of righteousness – Proverbs 12:28
- Is paved with Christian fellowship and hope – Proverbs 27:17
- Which sets us apart from the world – 1 Peter 1:14-17
- Into fellowship with those who love Christ – Romans 16:3-16, 19-23; Galatians 5:22-23

### III. Walking in Friendship through Christ: Lessons from Jonathan and Paul

- We must base friendships on our relationship with Christ – 1 Samuel 18:1; Ephesians 1:15
- We must be committed to, and persevere with, our friends – 1 Samuel 18:3; 19:1-3
- We must actively show our love to our friends – 2 Corinthians 2:3-4
- We must listen to our friends – Romans 15:14
- We must pray for our friends – 2 Thessalonians 1:11
- We must teach our friends – Romans 15:25
- We must exhort and encourage our friends – Romans 15:14-15
- We must serve our friends – 2 Corinthians 11:7-9
- We must speak affectionately to our friends – Romans 16:1-2
- We must be accountable with our friends – 2 Corinthians 7:8-10

Though we take these lessons on friendship from Jonathan and Paul, we must remember that we are to love our friends in this way because this is how Christ loved us. Christ is committed to us, he actively showed his love to us on the cross and he listens to us, prays for us, teaches us and encourages us through the Holy Spirit. As we love our friends as He loved us, so will we be loving Him.

## Notes

Scripture Memorization: 1 Samuel 18:1,3 (ESV)

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. <sup>[3]</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.

# Supplemental Materials

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. – James 3:13-18 (ESV)

“You will never attain true gentleness except by one path: a heart imbued with lowliness and with reverence for others.” - John Calvin

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:1-11 (ESV)

# A Personal Battle Plan - James 1

## Preparing for Trial by Participating in God's Restoration of His Church

Pray to God – v. 2, 3, 5, 6, 9-11, 13-15,

- Praise God – and the great work He did on the Cross
- Repent - acknowledge your guilt, confess your sins, and ask for forgiveness and the willingness to turn away from your anger and fear and to turn towards God
- Thank Him for your trial and suffering
- Petition in faith for everything you need, including: His wisdom, peace, patience, perseverance, humility, the willingness to obey His commands, His gifts of strength and protection

Feed on God's Word – v. 5, 21 (Jeremiah 15:16; Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

- Listen to His Word, preached and taught, every week in Church
- Read, study and meditate on His Word every day
- Memorize His Word
- Speak of and teach His Word
- Pray His Word

Be a Baptized Member of a Bible Believing Church – v. 26-27; (1 John 1:7)

- Worship God, in your church, every week
  - Praise Him, Thank Him, Confess Your Sin, Petition Him
  - Listen to His preached Word
  - Partake in His sacraments – baptism, communion
- Be in fellowship with believers
  - Make your life revolve around the life of your church
  - Surround yourself with believers who know you
  - Submit yourself to church discipline

Minister to others with the mercy and gospel of Christ – v. 27a

- Your family
- The needy
- Fellow Christians
- Non-Christians

Developing the Habit of Obedience to God's Word – v. 3,4,5,12, 16-26; (Ephesians 6:11-18)

- Be patient and persevere in everything, relying on God's truth and gifts for obedience with:
  - Your mind – Renew your mind, meditating on His Word and thinking of God, His blood shed on the cross, and of things honorable, pure and pleasing to Him
  - Your affections – Desire only God's glory and love
  - Your emotions – Be slow to anger, fear God alone, and rejoice in your trials
  - Your eyes – Bounce your eyes from objects of lustful desire, starving them so that they can be filled with the desires of your heart
  - Your mouth – Be slow to speak
  - Your ears – Be quick to listen
  - Your feet – Let them bring only good news
  - Your hands – Keep them holy, lifting them up only for prayer, labor and love

## A Personal Battle Plan: Part 2 - James 1

## Steps for Battling Sin in the Midst Trial

Pray to God, Rejoicing in Your Trial, vv. 2,9

- This will produce steadfastness and bring goodness into your life

Pray for God's Wisdom, v. 5

- Know that He is interested in how you respond to Him

Pray for the Willingness and Ability to Serve God, vv. 12, 22

- Pray that you would obey His Word
- Pray that you would endure the trial and persevere in his Word
- Pray that you would be blessed through Christ as you obey his Word

Resist and Remove Yourself from Temptation by Repentance , vv. 13, 21, 27

- Do not succumb to temptation, but turn away from it and turn to God
- Take an inventory of your sin and confess it to God, and others if possible

Acknowledge Your Anger Before God, vv.19, 26

- Restrain anger and angry speech

Serve, v. 27

- Give yourself in service to those in need
- Ask yourself, "How can I serve in this situation?"

# Bearing the Fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22)

Are you experiencing these things in your life today? If so, what can you do today thank God for these great gifts? If not, what can you do submit to God in obedience and serve His will?

Put Off:

Have you put off the bad fruit that it is God's desire for you to shed? Such as futile thinking, a hard heart, insensitivity, sensuality, impurity, deceitful desires, falsehood, sinful anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, brawling, slander, malice, sexual immorality, greed, obscenity, foolish talk, course joking, foolishness, drunkenness and debauchery.

Put On:

Have you put on the good fruit that God would have you wear? Such as righteousness, holiness, truthfulness, hard work, sharing with those in need, kindness, compassion, forgiveness, love, thanksgiving, goodness, righteousness, truth, wisdom, making the most of every opportunity, understanding God's will, being filled with the Spirit, joyful worship of God, submission (to God and one another), humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, and striving for peace.

Changing Our Thinking

To put off the old and put on the new, we need to change our way of thinking. We must use our minds to think spiritual thoughts, rather than those that are futile or merely natural to man. Renewing the mind like this requires the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which comes only through faith in Christ. We must be in unity with the Spirit to put on the righteousness and holiness of God in practical life, believing that He has made us alive with a new resurrected life, and filled us with the Holy Spirit. We must also know God's Word through the Scripture, to correct our misconceptions about His character and plan. We must be "right thinking." Knowing the truth of God's Word through His Spirit will transform our minds, leading to a changed life which manifests itself in different attitudes and actions.

A Prayer by Horatius Bonar

Thy way, not mine, O Lord, however dark it be!  
Lead me by thine own hand, choose out the path for me.  
Smooth let it be or rough, it will be still the best;  
Winding, or straight, it leads right onward to thy rest.  
I dare not choose my lot; I would not if I might;  
Choose thou for me, my God, so shall I walk alright.  
The kingdom that I seek is thine, so let the way  
That leads to it be thine, else I must surely stray.  
Take thou my cup, and it with joy or sorrow fill,  
As best to thee may seem; choose thou my good and ill.  
Choose thou for me my friends, my sickness or my health;  
Choose thou my cares for me, my poverty or wealth.  
Not mine, not mine the choice, in all things great or small;  
Be thou my guide, my strength, my wisdom, and my all.