

02. How to W.I.N. at Marriage Workshop

“Identity”

(8/19/23)

Welcome to the second study in our “*How to W.I.N. at Marriage Workshop*” which will be a 2-part presentation.

The “**I**” in our W.I.N. acronym stands for ‘**Identity.**’

We’re using the word ‘**Identity**’ in terms of—what is your identity as husbands and wives in marriage.

Or to put it another way—what are the roles God has assigned to husbands and wives in marriage?

It is critical that couples follow God’s design for marriage if their marriage is to be healthy, fruitful, and blessed.

In fact, if we look at God as our “Manufacturer”—the Bible then becomes the ‘*Manufacturer’s Handbook.*’

A manufacturer always includes with their product (especially a complicated piece of technology) an instruction manual that explains the product, how it works, how to care for it.

But it also includes a section that tells them how to trouble shoot problems if they arise and what to do to fix them so that their product operates the way it was designed to.

The Bible tells us that we are “*fearfully and wonderfully made.*” (Ps. 139:14)

In other words, we are a complicated ‘*piece of technology*’ and only the One who made us (our Manufacturer) has the expertise to tell us how He designed our lives to function and how to care for them (spiritually and mentally) to ensure smooth operation and maximum productivity.

But especially, how to troubleshoot problems that arise in the course of everyday life and what to do to “fix” what is broken and bring us back to wholeness and full working order as individuals and couples!

So, the Bible in general is God’s instruction manual for our lives—which if followed will allow our lives (including and especially our marriages) to function the way God designed them.

We either follow God’s instruction manual, containing His wisdom for life—or we’re left with trying to live our lives by following the ‘*world’s wisdom.*’

Paul the apostle said that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world (which is nothing more than fallen men and women trying to figure life out apart from God).

And He did so by comparing the lives of people He has saved and who are now living in obedience to His Word—with those whose lives have been damaged or even completely destroyed by worldly wisdom and pursuits.

God’s Word tells people that obeying what He has said produces a life of joy, fullness, and fruitfulness—as opposed to living life by following the wisdom of all the so-called experts in the world!

‘Experts’ who constantly pass out advice to others, dropping it down from their ivory towers of academia upon the lowly, ignorant, uneducated masses as to how they should live their lives—when their own lives are a mess.

Like the secular marriage “expert” who charged \$300 for a weekend couples’ seminar (early 90’s) in order to give couples the expertise they needed to have strong healthy marriages—when she herself had been married and divorced five times!

As Jesus said, “*Physician, heal thyself!*”

And yet, people have been made to believe that man’s wisdom is better than God’s Word for living their lives.

And so, they reject the Bible in favor of the wisdom of the world which is the ultimate foolishness!

But in fact, it’s worse than that.

James tells us that the wisdom of the world is: ‘*earthly, sensual, and demonic*’ and produces selfishness, confusion and every evil thing.

Whereas the wisdom that is from above is full of good fruits (produces many blessings in life).

God has included in His Word the identity of both the husband and wife in the context of marriage.

These are the God given roles He has created for marriage—reverse the roles and the marriage will be damaged and won’t work the way God designed it to.

At this point I’d like to have Cyndi come up and share with the women us what God has said about—**the role of wives in marriage...**

The Role of Husbands

Ephesians 5:25, 28–29 (NLT)

²⁵ Husbands...love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her...

²⁸ In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. ²⁹ No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church.

In the N.T. there are 3 main passages that speak of the responsibilities of husbands to their wives in marriage—Ephesians 5 along with the parallel passage in Colossians 3, and then 1Peter 3.

In looking at these 3 passages, 3 main responsibilities emerge—3 things that a husband must be to his wife (our identity as husbands in marriage)—1. A leader; 2. A learner; and 3. A lover.

1. A Leader

Ephesians 5:23 says, “*For the husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church.*”

God has ordained that the husband is to be the ‘head’(leader) of his marriage and family—the one who ultimately has the responsibility to make the final decisions that impact his family.

As someone has said, “*This is important because you can’t have a ‘two-headed monster’ running your home.*”

And so, the husband and wife are to approach each important decision with mutual input and prayer—and if their marriage is healthy and their relationship with God is Spirit-filled—they will almost always agree on a decision going forward.

But if they reach an impasse—then the husband has to make the final decision. (Comment)

The real problem in all too many Christian marriages is not the unwillingness of the wife to *submit* but the unwillingness of the husband to *lead*—to accept and carry out his God given responsibility as leader of his marriage and family.

When it comes to a woman submitting to her husband—sometimes she doesn't not out of rebellion, but out of fear.

And why is that?—Because in the past he has made decisions too quickly without praying and seeking the Lord—and those decisions have hurt them financially.

And at this point she knows that one more bad decision will bankrupt them and so she is fighting him because she fears for herself and her children's future... (Finish)

One more thing—when it comes to a husband being a leader, it's important to understand that in the eyes of God true leadership always manifests itself in humility, servanthood (Matt.20:26-28) and by being an example of Christ's character. (Elaborate)

2. A Lerner

1Peter 3:7 says, "...*husbands' dwell with your wives with understanding...*"

A husband is to understand his wife—he is to study her, to learn about her, to be a student of her so that he can better serve her and meet her needs—spiritually, physically and emotionally.

In other words, guys, our wives are to be our primary ministry!

One pastor said,

"A wife should never be viewed as a sexual object, there must be broader understanding. A godly husband will seek to understand his wife's moods, feelings, needs, fears, and hopes. He will listen to her with his heart, demonstrate love, and stimulate joy."

So, maybe we should add another ‘L’ word to the list of what it means for a man to be a good husband to his wife—he should also be a “**Listener.**”

Men, when your wife comes to you with something that is bothering her or frustrating her—don’t cut her off mid-sentence and give her the ‘answer’ to her problem.

Listen to me now young men—she doesn’t want an answer (that’s a rookie mistake!), she wants you to listen and respect how she’s feeling.

When she’s done sharing, if she asks you for your input, then give it to her—otherwise just empathize don’t ‘educate.’

So as husbands we are to be to our wives—*a leader; a learner* (a listener); and finally—

3. A Lover

Ephesians 5:25 says, “*Husbands love your wives...*”

Husbands are commanded to love their wives—interesting that there is no such direct command to wives to love their husbands in the N.T.

The reason is because husbands represent Jesus and 1John 4:19 tells us—“*We love Him because He first loved us.*”

When a man loves his wife like Christ loves the Church she will ‘reflect’ that love back to him—in other words, her love for him will be a response to his love for her.

Note the following story from the early 1800’s:

“It has been said that an Eastern newspaperman went “down South” prior to the Civil War to interview the southern ladies. He had heard they were more feminine, desirable, and submissive to their husbands than were their counterparts back East, and he desired to know why. After his interviews, he wrote an article stating that, “The difference with southern women is—southern men.” His article continued to describe how southern gentlemen treated their wives and daughters with total respect and honor. In other words, the wives were cherished, and the women’s response was to live up to their reputation of being noble ladies.”

As we come to Ephesians 5 and God’s command to husbands—it’s all built on the command in the first part of verse 25—

Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)
²⁵ Husbands, love your wives...

Then Paul proceeds in the verses that follow to define how husbands are to love their wives—

A. Willingly—v.25a

Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)
²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church...

Jesus loves His Bride the Church—willingly and enthusiastically. (Comment)

If men showed the same enthusiasm in marriage that they did when they dated their future bride—marriages would be a whole lot closer.

(Explain how some think men are ‘conquerors’ and after they conquer something like marriage they move on...)

B. Sacrificially—v.25b-27

Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)
²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Love (agape) is God’s love and is not a feeling as much as it’s a commitment—a sacrificial commitment.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

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

God’s love is a totally selfless and sacrificial (it’s also a supernatural love that only comes from God)—and that’s the kind of love God commands husbands to love their wives with.

C. Practically—v.28-29a

Men your love for your wives needs to be demonstrated in very practical ways.

Paul uses a very simple illustration to drive this home—

Ephesians 5:28-29 (NKJV)

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.

What man doesn’t love his own body by taking care of it?

When the body gets hungry—we feed it. When it gets tired—we rest it. When it gets sick—we *pamper* it and *recreate* it and *exercise* it etc.

Well Paul is saying, “*Husbands—love your wives like you love yourself.*” (Elaborate)

D. Unconditionally—v.29b

Ephesians 5:28-29b (NKJV)

²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives...just as the Lord *does* the church.

Paul said that husbands need to love their wives just as the Lord loves His Bride, the Church.

God's love is undeserved and therefore unconditional.

God's love is not performance based—or in other words it's not based on the worthiness or deservedness of the one receiving it.

Many men say things like, *"I'll love her like Christ loves the Church when she starts—respecting me—stops nagging me—and takes better care of the house..."*

Men you're not understanding the unconditional love Jesus loves His Church with.

The love of the world only gives to those who are *deserving* or who have 'earned' the right to receive it.

That is performance-based love—don't demonstrate performance-based love to each other in your marriage—God doesn't love us like that!

A. Willingly—v.25a

B. Sacrificially—v.25b-27

C. Practically—v.28-29

D. Unconditionally—v.28-29

E. Permanently—v.30-32

Ephesians 5:30-32 (NKJV)

³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ "For this reason a man

shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. ³² **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.**

The key word is the word ‘**joined**’ in v.31.

The word refers to a strong bonding together of objects and often was used to signify *gluing* or *cementing* 2 things together in a permanent bond.

Marriage from God’s perspective was always intended to be *permanent*—a lifelong bond that only death could break.

In Mark 10 Jesus Himself quoted this verse from Genesis 2:24, *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

And then He commented further on what God intended by saying—

Mark 10:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ ...so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

The word “*separate*” is from *chōrizō*, which in the context of marriage always carried with it the idea of divorce—not simply temporary separation.

And so, an accurate paraphrase would be—“...*what God has joined together, let not man divorce.*”

When Paul commanded husbands to “*love their wives*” the Greek word he used was ‘*agape*’.

Agape is the word used most often in the NT for God’s love—a selfless, sacrificial love.

However, as our culture has moved away from God's love to self-love in marriage the result is that more and more couples (and even Christian couples)—are ending their marriages for almost any reason.

This was going on in Jesus' and Paul's day—

Matthew 19:3 (NKJV)

³The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

You see they had come to a point in their society much like the one we have come to in ours—where people no longer have a high view of marriage.

Oh, we still make a big deal about the *wedding*—most people still get married in church, they stand before God and make their vows to each other promising to be faithful and stay by each other's side for better or for worse until death separates them.

They rent a hall and invite all their friends and family and celebrate this wonderful thing called marriage—but it's nothing but a *formality*.

Most people don't really intend to remain faithful to their spouse if the opportunity presents itself to have an affair.

And when they say, "*Until death do we part*"—they really mean "*Until divorce do we part.*"

Is there really any hope for a damaged marriage to be restored? —the answer is "YES!"

We will study this in the last session of our "How to W.I.N. at Marriage Workshop."