

Read also Proverbs: 31:10-31, Genesis 29:16-20. Check out the service, which is recorded on www.fpcd.org.

Did you catch the words to the anthem?

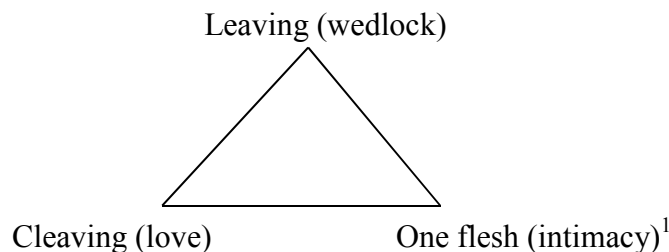
Love is not proud. Love does not boast. Love after all matters the most.

Does that describe most marriages you read about in magazines?

*Love does not run. Love does not hide. Love does not keep locked inside.
Love is the river that flows through. Love never fails you.*

Does that describe your hope for marriage? It does mine. I love those words.

Let's go back to our triangle which we learned about last week.



We leave our father and mother and marry. We cling or bond to each other and become one. He's the one! She's it!

One person likens the triangle to a tent of protection which God has provided. But, sometimes that tent gets a little complicated, like this one. (Picture - the caption reads, "This tent was too complicated and had no directions.")²

So how do we build that tent? How do we keep it standing?

If you ask pastors, many of them will admit that they prefer funerals over weddings because it's hard to counsel men and women before the wedding – when she thinks he's a knight in shining armor and, she is absolute perfection to him.

Did you hear the reading? "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her" (Gen 29:20).

He's in the perfection stage. But then comes reality – breakfast, not candlelight dinner; dirty dishes, diapers, and piles of laundry. And we wonder, how does this thing called marriage work?

¹This triangle illustration came from *I Married You* by Walter Trobisch, an excellent book for those considering marriage.

²<https://plus.google.com/u/0/photos/104129294200934627696/albums/5058949950318212145/5058950195131348130>, accessed 9/20/12.

Is there a manual somewhere? Well there is! God gives lots of helpful instructions in His manual, the Bible. Let's turn to it now.

READ Ephesians 5:21 (*The Message* gives an excellent translation which will help you hear this Scripture in a fresh light.)

Out of reverence for Christ be courteously reverent to one another. (v. 21)

There's your starting point. Jesus is a part of your tent. You cannot learn to leave, cleave, and become one flesh without Jesus. He's willing to help.

Now I hope you asked for His input when you chose your mate because if you chose someone with issues, it will be more complicated. If you are in the "knight and perfect lady" phase of new love, this glaze comes over you, particularly if you are sleeping together, and you won't see reality. You bring to your marriage all of those habits from the past. So CHOOSE WISELY.

Now let's read. Women first:

Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands. (v. 22-24)

Let's isolate some words from that passage:

- Understand
- Support
- Lean on him for leadership
- Submit

Wives, taking this approach to your relationship does not mean you are weak or incapable or secondary. Did you hear the reading about the wife from Proverbs? Were you impressed with her resume? You, too, are to do something you love. You have a call. But, you are not independent of your man. To God, success comes not only in your achievements, but also in interdependence with your husband.

Notice, there's a reassurance here:

Husbands are to lead "not by domineering, but by cherishing."

So this relationship is a dance. Have you ever danced a waltz or the two-step when both partners are trying to lead? You are not going to win *Dancing With the Stars* if you both lead. When my dad taught me to dance, he said, "relax and follow."

God's method for success in marriage is two people working together as one.

Now that may seem hard, women. Often I believe I have a MUCH BETTER idea. But one day it occurred to me – there's more than one way to do things. Perhaps I could pray and trust Jesus to guide him. Perhaps I could even support him.

Paul said let your relationship with Jesus be your example. Do you support Jesus? That is, do you invite Jesus into what you are doing? Do you ask His advice? Do you allow Jesus to guide you?

Paul was single. But he leaned on Jesus for leadership. He didn't make decisions without Him. He listened to Jesus. **Do the same with your husband.**

See how it all weaves together? When you trust Jesus, His life permeates your life and your relationships. Ladies, do you trust Jesus? It will make a difference in making your tent strong.

Now let's turn to husbands. Paul writes:

Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives. They're really doing themselves a favor—since they're already “one” in marriage. (v. 25-28)

Again, let's isolate some words:

- Go all out in your love
- Giving not getting
- Love that makes whole
- Evokes her beauty
- Brings out the best in her
- Dazzling and radiant

Paul is smart. He says, men, when you do this, you are really doing yourselves a favor. There is something very unique in your “oneness” with your wife. You can't lead when you are still only concerned with you. If you try to lead your wife and you don't set yourself beside her in this “dance,” you are going to look back and she is not going to be following. To be intimate, to have this bond – to be one flesh is both a body and spirit thing. *God says you've got to love her.* Isn't that amazing that God cares about that? **God wants us to succeed.**

Paul adds: (v. 29-33)

No one abuses his own body, does he? No, he feeds and pampers it. That's how Christ treats us, the church, since we are part of his body. And this is why a man leaves father and mother and cherishes his wife. No longer two, they become “one flesh.” This is a huge mystery, and I don't pretend to understand it all. What is clearest to me is the way Christ treats the church. And this provides a good picture of how each husband is to treat his wife, loving himself in loving her, and how each wife is to honor her husband.

How do we do it? How do wives show respect and follow? Husbands, how do you share God's love with your wife?

Paul says, “It's a mystery. We will never fully understand it.” It's a bond of one, and yet two full individuals. It takes time to get there.

What do we do, then, about the times we yell, show impatience, disrespect, become abusive, fail miserably. You say a great big “I am sorry” and FORGIVE. If you need counseling, get it – don’t give up – because there’s always hope for being transformed by the LOVE of Christ.

And as we submit ourselves to be like Christ, not getting our own way but caring about each other, we enter a dance of love. It’s a dance of giving and receiving as we build a strong tent. It makes the dishes and the diapers and the burnt toast okay.

Then, because of Jesus’ love and respect for you, you find that you can change, and instead of saying, “I promised what???” you will say, “I’m so glad I made that promise.”

AMEN