

Weeks 9-10

Lesson 6

There, the children heard the gospel on a regular basis. The couple invested thousands in the best private Christian education. The scrupulously protected their children from the negative influences of the outside world.

Except one: them.

Worldliness in our homes. James writes of this in chapter 4:

4You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

In the opening example, the couple's life even undercut the power of the preached word in their children's lives. There is no underestimating the impact of all that Christian upbringing, but what is highlighted here is that we either **help** or **hinder** our children's conversion by our example.

We could all reproduce some kind of proverb like "more is caught than taught" or something like it. Two points I want to make about this.

First, the fact is that God presumes upon the taught Word: preaching, teaching, and discipling. It is the Word preached and spoken that God uses to save souls and grow Christians. Whatever views we might have about how people need to "see" the gospel in us are wrong if we think that what folks see doesn't need to be accompanied by what we say to them.

- The same is true for our children: they must be **taught** the Word.

Secondly, however, in the Bible if we look at the words "imitate, imitating" or "imitators" in the New Testament we see a consistent theme.

Imitate (5/12)

2 Thess 3:7	For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you,
2 Thess 3:9	It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate .
Heb 13:7	Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.
3 John 11	Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.

Imitating (1/12)

Phil 3:17	Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
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Imitators (6/12)

1 Cor 4:16	I urge you, then, be imitators of me.
1 Cor 11:1	Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.
Eph 5:1	Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.
1 Thess 1:6	And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,
1 Thess 2:14	For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews,
Heb 6:12	so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

There is a powerful place for imitation in the kingdom of God! In a real sense, we are built to imitate. This is a blessing and a curse!

When Mom and Dad preach one thing but do the opposite, and don't repent to their children, it makes the world attractive and the gospel irrelevant (107)

Farley writes:

Our marriages preach. They preach a message that either attracts or repels our children (106)

We know that we're being watched, but we may not believe our examples have much effect on our children; that "surely, they'll believe what I say and not what I do."

➡ Table Discussion: How do you see your children imitating you? ⬅

- In what ways do we minimize the effects of our examples on our children?

[We persist in sinning against them]

[We fail to uphold righteousness in the home: music, movies, language]

[We don't discipline them for sin]

Had you ever stopped to ask if you are disciplining your children for acting just like you?

It is strange, indeed, that Jesus' ministry was one of **doing** and **teaching** rather than just teaching. He could've been perched in some synagogue somewhere and the people would come to Him to hear His wisdom.

Instead, He did **everything** that He calls us to do. READ:

Matthew 16:24-25

Philippians 2:5-8

John 8:29

Whatever the leaders are, the people become...Biblical history demonstrates that people will seldom rise above the spiritual level of their leadership (108)

Your children will be no less than who you are. They may be more – God willing! – but they will never be less. The **boy** will be you as a husband; the **girl** will be you as a wife.

Is that what you want?

We cannot expect and hope that our children will be all that God is asking them to be and think *that* will look much different than how you live.

If we are truly serious about the spiritual condition of our children both now and in the future, then we need to get serious about what we're modeling to them in marriage.

If marriage is the theater and our children are the first audience, it is important that we know what we're supposed to be modeling.

Let's spend some time reviewing marriage basics. If we were to talk about communication, forgiveness or budgeting reform in your marriage, if those things are not placed on a proper foundation, they still will not be examples we want followed.

Foundations: A Theology of Marriage¹

Marriage is and is **not** something. Properly defining marriage is crucial. A theology of marriage should include discussion on at least the following: the origin of marriage, its nature, its purposes, its order and its acts.

Origin of marriage asks the question, "How did marriage start?"

- Read Genesis 2:15-25. How did it start? Whose idea? When?

[God's idea before the Fall]

Nature of marriage asks, "What are its characteristics?" Its nature is tied to its origin: because it began a certain way, by a certain Person, it will have a certain character. How it started will determine what it's like.

- Since it was God's idea and His creation, what can you say about its character? What phrase from Genesis 1-2 can you use as a summary?

[Good; very good]

- Has the Fall changed its fundamental character?

[No; it is still a glorious picture and a blessed relationship: Proverbs 18:22]

Purposes of marriage, like its nature and origin are weighty to consider. Certainly, God had an intention in mind when He made man and gave him woman.

We can consider the purposes of marriage to fall in two tiers or levels. The first tier, we could classify as God's primary intention. (They don't summarize all of what He intends for marriage, but they are its most important purposes.)

TIER 1.

God's **primary** aims in marriage's purpose regard reflecting Him in His creation. We do this in two ways: to represent Him (Genesis 1:26-27) and represent His relationships.

1. **To Image God** (Genesis 1-2).

- a. God is Plural; He is Three Persons and One God.

- How does a married couple demonstrate plurality like God?

¹Excerpted and adapted from *More Than A Wedding*, © Gabe Sylvia, All Rights Reserved.

[Union, oneness, closeness]

b. God is a Person; He is personal.

- How does a married couple demonstrate personal relations like God?

[The oneness of the Trinity also includes personal-ness. They are each in perfect openness and communion with each other. No distance, no walls, no secrets.]

c. God is Purposeful; He has specific intentions with all things. Consider especially Genesis 1:28 and 2:15, 18.

The Trinity is also purposeful in their relationships. God made Adam and Eve and He didn't tell them to "go play." He made them and gave them work.

- What was that work?

[Adam – tend the garden and keep it]

[Eve – help Adam]

[Work together on the Creation Mandate]

- How does a married couple demonstrate differing roles and different responsibilities like God?

[Complement each other]

2. **To Demonstrate the Christ – Church Relationship** (Ephesians 5:22-33).

Human marriage is a picture of something far greater – an eternal, heavenly marriage.

The eternal marriage relationship (5:32) was forged through the gospel; without the gospel, there is no marriage. In marriage, we don't preach the gospel exactly: the gospel is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (for us, in Him; in us, for Him; remember?).

In marriage we do something different. Farley says

It exists to illustrate the fruit that should follow the preaching of the gospel in the church (110)

God created marriage in order to **visually depict** the relationship between Christ and the Church. In other words, marriage is where the fruit of the gospel is most clearly on display.

Fruit of the gospel in life is love and its varied manifestations: Galatians 5:22.

Fruit of the gospel in marriage is love and submission. These are the two vehicles that the husband and the wife use in order to achieve the purposes of God.

If we want to know what a husband is to do, then we look to Christ.

- What is the husband's part?

[Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33]

- In what ways should it mirror Christ's?

[Visionary – long term]

[Patient]

[Bring benefit to her]

Farley summarizes

The gospel is the good news that the Groom loves his bride. He loved her so much that he humbled himself, descended an infinite distance, became man, and suffered poverty and abuse for thirty-three years. Then in the greatest display of love in history, he allowed himself to be tortured to death on a cross in his bride's place (111).

Look at the top of page 112 and the contrasting examples provided by the husband:

- What is the example set when a husband loves a bitter or difficult wife?

["It says that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, even our failings" (112)]

If we want to know what a wife is to do, then we look to the Church.

- What is the wife's part?

[Ephesians 22-24, 33]

- In what ways should it mirror the Church's?

[Loyal]

Again, Farley summarizes

But the gospel is not just about the Groom's love. It also provokes a response from his bride. When understood from the heart, it motivates her to humble herself, love the Groom with all her heart, respect him and serve him with joyful abandon (111).

Look at the bottom of page 112 and the top of page 113 and the contrasting example provided by the wife:

- What is the example set when a wife fails to trust Christ and submit to her husband?

["The Son of God cannot be trusted. He promises to exalt the humble, but I don't believe he will exalt me. He says he will take care of those who submit to lawful authority, but I don't really believe that" (112)]

TIER 2.

God's good, yet **secondary**, aims in marriage's purpose have to do with the husband / wife relationship. This differs from what we saw above in that God has specific intentions on a "horizontal" level – person to person.

3. Holiness.

One of the intentions of God behind marriage (as in any relationship) is that we grow more like Him. We are in relationships in large part so that we will be less and less self-centered and inward focused, and more other-centered and outward focused.

I see this all the time: we think that it is allowable that we use our spouses for our own selfish ends: sexual fulfillment, materialistic gain, children, position or security or other benefits. That's not God's intent.

READ Hebrews 3:13.

- Had you ever thought that marriage was intended to make you more holy? How will that effect the way you consider your spouse?

[We will look at each other as God's tools in our lives for our good rather than as enemies in our pursuit of selfish interests]

4. Companionship by covenant.

God ordained marriage as a **covenant of companionship**. We will explain this but consider first that these two important parts unite to make marriage a relationship like no other!

a. *Covenant*: read Proverbs 2:17 and Malachi 2:14.

- How these verses describe marriage; what do they say about it?

[Covenant]

b. A covenant is a binding, governed relationship.

- What does “binding” mean? How does this impact marriage?

[Once we're in, we're in – “incompatibility” or various worldly definitions of “abuse” are not biblical reasons for divorce]

[We can't act like we have no responsibilities to each other]

[Christians don't divorce except under one circumstance – even then it isn't mandatory but allowed: Matthew 19:9]

- What does “governed” mean? How does this impact marriage?

[There are rules]

[Someone else is over it – I'm not the top dog]

[If I don't act according to the rules, then I'm committed law-breaking, sin]

c. *Companionship*.

Jay Adams says that companionship is about being “united in thoughts, goals, plans, efforts (and in the case of marriage, bodies).”²

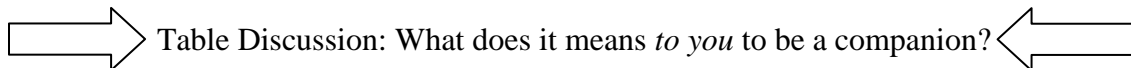


Table Discussion: What does it means *to you* to be a companion?

Marriage has an **order**. In other words, marriage, like life, is designed to operate a certain way. The Bible speaks in many places about men and women each having certain **roles** and **responsibilities**. There is always difficulty and trouble when we ignore those!

Before we talk about order (roles), let's remember that marriage is modeled after God's Triune relations – this is critically important for us because the order of marriage is counter-everything (culture, our nature, etc.).

5. God designed marriage to function in a very specific way.

READ

1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:23, Colossians 3:18

² *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing; 1980), 12.

- What do these verses say about the order of marriage – how it is structured?

[Husband is the head, wife is the helper]

The men’s retreat was indirectly about this topic: husbands need to wake up and assume the responsibilities of their position. Wives need to wake up and assume theirs. Marriages aren’t designed to be wife-led or husband-abandoned.

And, as we see from the Christ-church relationship, the husband just has the position as Head – he didn’t earn it, he was given the role. The wife has the position as helper – she didn’t earn it, it was given to her.

Husbands and wives cannot be waiting on the other to do what they are supposed to do before you act like you’re supposed to act.

Wives: if you are here and you’re thinking, “He doesn’t act like the leader. He’s lazy and irresponsible and all he ever wants is sex. I’m not going to give him the reins if he’s not going to act like it” your observations might be true but your thinking is unbiblical.

- What if he *never* acts like it? What do you do with Ephesians 5:22-24 and 1 Peter 3:1-6?

We cannot forget that we are teaching our children by our examples. If wives are unwilling to submit until their husbands have “earned” it (in their eyes), then your daughters will treat their husbands the same way. You sons will think overbearing, un-submissive wives are the norm.

They are not the designed norm.

Husbands: if you are here and you’re thinking, “She’ll never go for this” or “I can’t do this” then your observations might be true but your thinking is unbiblical.

You have been given a role and a responsibility that is by God’s design. If your wife is not on board with that, then there could be two reasons:

1. Her sin – I’ve hit that already.
2. Your sin. You can’t be lazy and be a biblical husband. You can’t be just a money-maker and think you’re doing it right (that’s the easy part). You can’t stomp around your house and make demands like a little king.

In other words, she may not be living as a biblical wife in large part because you’re not living as a biblical husband.

- When did the church become the bride?

*[After the bridegroom acted]
Until He acted, she hated him]*

Your sons are watching how you do it and will do it like you. Your daughters are watching how you treat their mama and are determining in their hearts that submission is either a good thing or a terrible thing.

When wives and husbands don’t live according to the rules of the marriage covenant (binding, governed relationship) then you are effectively saying that God doesn’t know what He’s done in making an order for marriage.

Why do spouses fail to live as biblical husbands and wives? **Pride**. It was one of the twin sins in the garden (the other was unbelief).

Pride leads to hypocrisy.

Pride is blindness to our faults, sins and failings. Most importantly, pride is blind to the existence of itself. Therefore the more proud you are, the more humble you will feel and the more humble you are, the more proud you will feel (115).

He says something remarkable: “Pride makes it possible for us to tell our children one thing even while we unknowingly do another” (115).

- Is that true?

[Jeremiah 17:9; Psalm 115:4-8]

- When we can't and won't see our sins, do they go unseen?

[No, our audience sees them: children, spouse, and covenant family]

When we refuse to live by the rules of the covenant of marriage (pride; rules that God created), in Christian homes, we create very confusing situation for our children.

1. Are you quick to point out the sins of your children but slow to point out those same sins in yourself? The Log-Speck Principle from Matthew 7.

Take a test: think of the last thing you corrected your child (or spouse) for? Do you see your own guilt in the same way?

2. Are you quick to correct but make excuses and rationalizations when corrected? Or worse, you get angry when corrected?

Take a test: ask your spouse if you are open to correction? Ask your children if you are open to correction?

Pride, manifesting itself in hypocrisy, provokes children to anger. It discourages them. It closes their ears to our instruction. It makes their hearts stony ground, where the gospel cannot take root (Matt. 13:18-21). When Mom invests herself in her career selfishly, at the expense of her children, and then expects unselfishness from them, two things happen. First, the children ignore Mom's words and follow her example. Second, they become hardened to her values. When a father takes family to church each Sunday pretending that Christ is first in his life, but in reality makes his hobbies number one, his children see it. They grow hard and calloused to church and religion.

He quotes Paul Tripp who says, “The key to the family functioning as a redemptive community where the gospel is the glue that holds the family together is parent who so trust in Christ that they are ready and willing to confess their faults to their children” (119).

The **head** is a humble head who exercises his authority but as a sinful man himself under authority. He is the head, but he is one of those leaders who inspires followers.

The **helper** is a humble helper who sees as her primary mission, assisting her husband in the tasks God has given him. She is the kind of helper that her husband finds indispensable.

We find our roles as husbands and wives difficult because we find humility difficult.

If you're an overbearing husband, it's because you're so proud.

If you not acting like any kind of leader in your marriage, brothers, it is because you are so proud, that is, you refuse to look at the rules of your marriage covenant set by its Creator and embrace and work them; you're too proud.

If you're an overbearing and domineering helicopter wife, it is because you are so proud.

If you're not acting as a helper but rather as a doormat and shell of a woman you once were, it is because you are proud. You refuse to look at the strong and equal role of a wife and confront your husband with his sinfulness.

We are poor examples to our children not mainly because we lack knowledge, but because we are so proud and we lack humility.

We can trace some (not all!) problems in our marriage and family to our lack of humility. We are proud, self-protective and self-serving people. And we don't think we are or we don't know just how much we are.

- What is the main mechanism of making us humble?

[The Cross of Christ]

- How do we tap into that mechanism?

[Repentance and confession]

The **Acts** of marriage follow from its origin, nature, purposes and order. They are: Leaving and Cleaving. These are more significant than we might at first think. But, counselors can often trace problems in marriage to these acts.

Genesis 2:24, "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Matt. 19:5, Mark 10:7-8, Eph. 5:31)

Leaving. To "leave" means that a man and woman see to it that all earthly relationships change. The marriage relationship now occupies the priority in all respects – including time spent on them.

1. Other relationships are not abandoned or utterly forsaken: Exod. 20:12, Mk. 7:9-13, 1 Tim. 5:8.

- How will your closest friendships change as a result of your marriage?

[Move into the background]

2. Radically changed parent – child relations.

- How should your relationships to your parents change?

[They become advisors rather than directors]

Cleaving. To "cleave" means cling to, stick to or forcibly stay with. In other words, it means that energy, will and commitment so reside in one's grasp to another that all other attachments are forsaken.

1. Sexual cleaving: Spouses should be the sole holders of the other's sexual fulfillment: 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

2. Financial cleaving: Spouses should be united in their financial goals even if their financial habits differ (one is a spender and the other a saver),
3. Goal cleaving: Parenting, vocational, relational goals are shared.