

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of February 7, 2010  
"Marriage – Love and Submission"**

**[Today's message focuses on marriage as an intimate relationship reflecting the life of God in us.]**

**[Topics: Marriage; Relationships; Life of God; Love; Submission]**

**Excerpt:** Today's sermon is called "Marriage – Love and Submission." It's the 3<sup>rd</sup> part of our series. A couple of weeks ago, "The Good Night Kiss" was the first one. It showed what's happening in our culture and the need for us to be proactive in working with our children and also to have appropriate sexuality in our own relationships.

Two weeks ago, we talked about "Out of the Closet and Into the Church" dealing with the gay community. And how we can work with all the people in our culture, who are expressing themselves that way.

And so today we're going to talk about marriage. Pastor Glen isn't going to tell us that you men take charge of your house and you women put up with it. So let's all go home now. Instead we're going to see that marriage is a relationship, not a legal agreement.

And sadly in our culture today, marriage has been turned into a legal agreement. And sadly that's why we're having all the fight over whether same sex marriage is legal. And if it is, why not polygamy?

Sadly when it becomes just a legal agreement, it becomes something we can also undo legally. We just go to a court and they end it, because somebody signs a piece of paper that says you are no longer married. Oh, if it were that easy. Some of you who have been divorced know it's not that easy. A signed piece of paper doesn't make all the emotions and hurt go away.

Today we're going to focus on the big picture of relationships. Let's start by turning to **Ephesians 1**. Paul's letter to the church here is about Christ and his relationship to the church. The first three chapters talk about how Christ is working in calling the church. And the last three chapters tell us how this all works out. They show how that relationship flows down through the church into various human relationships.

Paul talks about ministry, marriage, children and all kinds of relationships and shows how Christ's relationship with the church flows through to all of our relationships.

**Ephesians 1:3-12** talks about God's original desire for mankind, and how he brought us into his relationship. **3) "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."**

**4) For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."** So before God ever created us, he had it already worked out what he was going to do with mankind. He had this relationship with humanity already preplanned.

**"In love 5) he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will"** – So before creation, God out of love had already decided he was going to adopt human beings and bring them into the relationship he already has as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He was going to draw us into and experience that relationship.

We've been talking about the last year and a half about the dynamic relationship that flows between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. They have this intertwining, face-to-face relationship.

**6) "to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."** God has done this so one day in the future after the resurrection of Jesus, he can say, "Look what I did! I multiplied my relationship billions of times over."

**7) "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8) that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."**

God is doing what it takes to help us to become what he is. One of the early Christian writers Irenaeus said that Jesus became us, so that we could become him – meaning so that we could become part of his relationship.

**9) "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,"** So he brought the church along to tell us what this is all about in sharing this relationship .

**10) "to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."** When Jesus came 2000 years ago as the incarnated Son, he brought mankind into relationship with the Father. And as a result, he became the head of all of us.

**11) " In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,"** So God had it all preplanned so that it happens according to his will.

**12) "in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."** Starting with the first century Christians all have been brought into that relationship with God.

So God is doing this marvelous thing through humanity. And the church is sort of that early stage so that we can go out and draw others into that relationship. Now in chapter **2:1-10**, we see that human beings, before the work of Christ, were cut off from God through their sins. Paul says, **"We were dead in our transgressions."** Verse 8 says, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith."**

All have brought into that relationship. That's what Connie Weber was talking about earlier today concerning the young man in the homeless bad weather shelter. During their conversation, he said, "Do you mean that Jesus loves me?" And Connie kept saying, "Yes, he loves you. And he loves everybody in this room."

Now that's a pretty amazing statement considering the room was filled with a lot of homeless people. Most would consider that they were the dregs of society. And when this man went through the line to pick up his food, he said, "That's really good news you've got there."

Yes, the Gospel message is really good news. But so many people have been told that God doesn't love them and that they are in trouble with him. Instead we need to tell them that God loves them. And ask if they want to enter into that relationship.

Now let's go to **Ephesians 3:7**. "**I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.**" So Paul is saying that he was brought in as a servant to help spread the word about Jesus Christ.

**8) "Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9) and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things."**

While this mystery was hidden for some time, the apostles were now revealing it so that all of us can reveal it to others.

**10) "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,"** This is such a powerful verse. Now through the church God is making known to the heavenly beings what's happening. Even the angels are learning from what we, in the church, are learning and experiencing now.

Today in America, it's rather cool to tell people how far short the church has fallen – that the church doesn't do enough. We're really good at picking at what the church is not doing or doing right. In spite of all the things the church maybe falling short on, we need to see how God is revealing his wisdom through the church.

**11) "according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12) In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."** So because what Jesus has accomplished – please note that the verb is in the past tense – we can approach God through this amazing relationship of freedom and confidence.

Do you realize the freest beings in the universe are Father, Son and Holy Spirit? They're free to be whoever they want to be. God offers us his complete freedom to live God's way. And when you live God's way, it's joyous. Now when you live other ways, you've got to keep looking over your shoulder to see what's going to catch up with you.

If you are a liar, guess what? You're always looking over your shoulder trying to figure out what you said to whom. There's no freedom in that situation. You're all tied up in knots.

Now in **Ephesians 4**, the first six verses tell us that we are to maintain the unity of the faith. So as we begin to understand this glorious relationship, now we have to do some things – that is how does all this walk out into the church? God says that he has created this wonderful unity and it's our responsibility to walk it out.

**1) "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2) Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3) Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."**

We are to be in a loving relationship with people, even though we're going to trip up and say things not quite the right way. We are to be humble and gentle with one another and make every effort to keep the bond of peace. And then Paul goes on to talk about that there's one body and one Spirit. So it's all about being focused on being one.

**17) "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18) They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts."**

So God is saying that he wants us to enter into the life of God and not get caught up in the ways of the Gentiles that tend to separate us from the life of God, from this glorious relationship.

Now when we get into a fight with someone, is not the relationship broken? Yes. And does it affect your relationship with God? Yes. Peter wrote to sort out issues with your spouse so that your prayers be not hindered. Sometimes we can hardly pray because we have a broken relationship with someone because we have this knot in our belly and it's all we can think about.

**19) "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."** Separated from God, people get caught up in sensuality and all the fleshly stuff of this world. They just get further and further from what God desires for them. Doing these things makes it harder and harder for them to experience a relationship with God.

**29) "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."** We are here to help others draw into that relationship with God. We have to be careful not to hurt others and harm our relationship with them.

**Eph. 5:1-2, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2) and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."**

We are to enter into Christ's love and then share that love with others. Probably most of us fall down in that regard. Too often we say things we shouldn't say or we say things that people can take the wrong way. But our desire is not to do that so that the love of Christ flows through us and impacts others.

Then in **verses 3-7**, Paul talks about not letting sexual immorality come into our lives because they break the relationship. Those activities destroy the life of God that is to flow among us.

**5:18, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."** Paul is saying let the Spirit of God flow in you. It's the Holy Spirit that brings that unity and life between Father and Son. Theologians talk about how the Holy Spirit is the fellowship between Father and Son. And it's the Holy Spirit that draws us into the life of God.

**19) "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,"** Now most of us were uplifted by having our kids singing up here today. It lifts us up. One of the things that America has lost is singing together. We hardly ever do sing-a-longs any more. We now plastered to a DVD and we let someone else sing to us.

**20) "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."** So being grateful and thankful stirs our relationship with God.

**21) "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."** So what has this letter been saying so far? It's been saying that before creation ever happened, God was planning to adopt mankind and bring us into this relationship through Jesus Christ's coming 2000 years ago. And now through the Holy Spirit, he draws us into that relationship.

And Paul also says don't do things that stir things up and break our relationships. Instead he says he wants us to submit to one another. That means keep that relationship going. And that means when we talk to others we submit to them – we take the lower rung, so to speak. The most important thing is the relationship, not whether we are right or wrong.

**22) "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord."** Now this verse has been used for all kinds of things such as you women need to toe the line. You need to submit to your husband. It doesn't matter he's a jerk. Sadly, we've told women in the past that they had to stay in a marriage even when their husbands were beating on them. We told them to submit to their husbands and when they do everything would work out.

But is that what this verse is saying? Let's pop down to verse 32. Yes, Paul is talking about marriage here, but he says in **verse 32, "This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church."**

So we need to understand that the topic didn't change. All the way through this letter we've been talking about this relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and our relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Marriage just gets tossed in here as an example of how to do that. This verse is technically how to make a relationship work and how to keep a godly relationship flowing.

**22) "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23) For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."**

So when a man married a woman they become one flesh. So that which flows down from Jesus into the husband and down into the wife. And so now they are part of Jesus' body as

Christ is the head so the husband is the head. But it's not some dictatorial – I'm in charge here situation.

How does it flow? What do we call the beginning of a river? It's the head of the river. What do we call the river when it empties out into the ocean it becomes the mouth. The head is where the river starts. God is the head. It flows down to Jesus as the head. And it flows right on down to the marriage to the husband and ultimately to the wife. It's that relationship that is flowing down.

**24) "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."** So a wife is responsive in the relationship as to what God is doing in that marriage. Christ is allowing his relationship to the church to come into a man and woman and they flow together.

So the wife is looking to see how is she responding to Jesus through her husband. And the husband should also be thinking how is he responding to Christ through my wife? The main point Paul is making is this: How is Jesus relating to his church? He does this out of submission as the church submits to him, he submits to the Father.

**25) "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."** So husbands are you dying to your wife? Are you allowing the relationship to flow to your wife by not being a tinhorn dictator? You're not to be an "I'm in charge guy." And you're not to be out of the picture because you don't have time for wife and family.

It's challenging to always be in the marriage. The hardest thing for pastor Glen to do is when he's dealing with his sons is to take his "pastor hat" off. That's because he wore the "pastor hat" a long time before he wore his "dad hat". It's also easy to have his "pastor hat" on when he's dealing with his wife. It's so easy to allow other things to interfere with our relationships.

We need to learn how to pick up on what we are hearing. Our wife might say, "I wish you would get off the computer." Or, "I sure wish you get off the game." That's often all she will say. But the husband has 47 reasons why he can pretend he didn't hear it. But what does this do to the relationship?

And the wives have their things they can be doing and the husband would say, "I sure wish you would..." And the wife could say, "Who do you think you are?" Or ignore it. We are so busy with our lives trying to get everything done that the relationship becomes sort of incidental, instead of putting the relationship first – and putting all the other stuff second.

Paul is saying that the God relationship is crucial and it should flow down into your marriage. And as we go through life, we should experience that.

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

Now the way Christ does this is to send his voice, his spoken word down to the wife – the church. And it flows through the church to cleanse it. Now this doesn't mean you husbands are responsible to clean up your wife. No, your job is to present the life of Christ to your wife

and let Christ fix your wife. Our job as husbands is to love our wife and to show them what Christ is like and to build up that relationship.

Pastor Glen said he has to work at this because that's not his natural inclination. Pastor Glen said he's a green-type person (as described in Servant's Passage classes). Greens figure out all the details and how things should work. Now that doesn't work very well in a marriage.

**28) "In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies."** Christ loves his body. So he lets it flow down. **"He who loves his wife loves himself."** That's because she's one flesh with her husband.

Now it's very cool these days to say, "I no longer love her, I'm going to get a divorce." Do you realize how crazy that is? That's like saying, "I don't like my right arm anymore." A husband and wife are one flesh.

It's like saying, "I don't like my left foot anymore. It keeps stumbling on things and kicks the bed in the middle of the night, so I'm going to have my left foot taken off." But when we come to our spouse, who is half of our flesh, we say, "I'm choosing not to love them anymore." Perhaps we should say, "Maybe God wants me to choose to love her." When we say, "We grew apart" that's a choice we make.

**"He who loves his wife loves himself. 29) After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church"** Christ nurtures and takes care of the church because he realizes the value of the relationship. And he does every thing he can to keep drawing the church into the relationship.

So when a husband does the dishes, it's not because the wife asked him to, it's because it nurtures the relationship. It's not about the dirty dishes – it's about what she thinks of him. So we need to be nurturing the relationship. The key is the relationship that Christ has for the church and so we need to manifest it in our marriage.

**30) "for we are members of his body. 31) "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."** The husband and wife now take their relationship and it becomes a new way of showing the relationship of God.

But sadly too often married couples bring mom and dad into the picture. So when things go wrong we run home to mama or daddy. And they're interfering in their children's marriage. We get it all mixed up. The marital relationship must be different than the family relationship.

That's why God told the man and woman to leave their parents. It's because of this relationship of Christ and the church. We also need to leave the world, in one sense, and become one with the church and have a relationship with Christ. We are to cast off the old first Adam and we enter into the new second Adam, Jesus Christ.

**32) "This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church."**

Remember this whole letter is about Christ and the church and how this relationship flows down. Paul simply used marriage as an example of how that relationship flows into the church. This is all the more reason why we should be drawing closer to Jesus Christ and

praying in the Holy Spirit and seeking him so that our marriages represent the life of God flowing down into the church.

**33) "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."** This is almost an after thought by Paul. It's like he's saying, "Oh, by the way, do this in your marriage too." Did you notice the main thought isn't a formula for marriage? It's merely an example of how that life flows into the church. And marriage is a key way.

**Eph. 6:1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2) 'Honor your father and mother' – which is the first commandment with a promise – 3) 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'"**

So Paul is also saying that this relationship also flows down through the kids, as children respond to their parents and honor them. As well as you parents are parents to your children. Too many parents today are afraid to be parents. We're letting society dictate how our kids function and what they spend their time on.

Kids, no matter 50 years old or 5, need to learn to respond to their parents because that's how the relationship of God is flowing down into the family.

**4) "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."** Paul is saying that fathers need to be fathers by not being on their case all the time but on the other hand be a dad. Stand up! Wear the pants. Man-up, as we say today. Only do it in a way that doesn't exasperate your kids. Do it out of love.

Dads need to be dads. And mom, let him be dad. He doesn't think like you. Children need some man-up in their home. And doing this will cause some discipline to take place. Now that's what God does to the church, doesn't he?

Do it out of love. Do it out of nurturing. Do it out of this relationship of Christ flowing right down to your children. Father – don't be a little tinhorn dictator than exasperates your children, but bring them up in this relationship. That might mean spending some extra time with them, or whatever it takes to make that happen.

**5) "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ."** Paul is saying let the relationship of the holy trinity flow right down to the slaves and their masters.

**9) "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him."** Paul is saying that masters should let that relationship flow down to their slaves.

So this whole letter has been about the same topic. And marriage flows out of that. It's the relationship that's crucial. And finally, Paul talks about wearing the armor of God. The armor of God keeps out those things that will break that relationship – those fiery arrows of Satan.

We need to wear the armor of God because protecting that relationship is work. It's a challenge. So in our marriages, as we see the life of God flowing down through the church, down through our marriages, into our childrearing, we see God start to bubble up. But if we

get high minded or think too much of ourselves or we exasperate our wife or kids instead of building relationships with them, then God's relationship can't bubble up.

God wants his life flowing in the church. So Paul wrote this whole letter to let that life flow. Pastor Glen's first two sermons talked about relationships that tend to break that life, that tend to hurt that life. Sexual immorality, as Paul said in chapter 3, breaks that life because we're not connecting with that person in a way with eternal love, but in a temporary selfish thing.

So Ephesians is a powerful book. Marriage gets used as an example. Pastor Glen could give three steps on how wives should submit and three steps on how husbands should love. But that's not the point of the passage. The point of the passage is: how does the life of God flow in you in your relationships including marriage?

Are you representing the life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? And is the fellowship of the Holy Spirit being represented as you work in your marriage or your childrearing? And as we do that the life of God will come out.

Now we have an opportunity to come to the communion table today. Jesus wants us to still be in that relationship. He wants us to remember that relationship. He wants us to participate in that relationship.

So he gives us a little piece of bread and says, "Come and remember that I want to participate with you. I want you to be healed. I want you to respond to life. I don't want you to continue to carry all this stuff you did wrong before you knew me, which brought your brokenness."

"So I want you to take a little piece of bread and say, 'Father, make me well, because I've had these other relationships beside my marriage. Take away those times in my marriage when I've been broken and I've harmed those around me. Take away the pain because I haven't dealt with my children the way I needed to.'

And so Jesus invites us to come and receive his body and participate. And he also has a cup for us and says, "What ever you've done before, it's OK, you're clean, I've taken care of it." And so Jesus invites us to be clean. So we come for the cup to receive his forgiveness, so that the relationship can flow all the way through all of us.

**General Group Question:** What is the over-all theme of Ephesians? How does marriage fit into this?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. What did God determine beforehand for those who believe in Christ? (Eph. 1:6)
2. What is the purpose of God's will for humanity? How does Christ fit into that purpose? (1:7-12)
3. What is the mystery of Christ that Paul preached to the Gentiles? (Eph. 3:3-7)

4. What has Jesus Christ already accomplished for all humanity? (3:11)
5. What key factors help achieve unity in the church? (4:1-3)
6. How do broken relationships separate us from the life of God? (4:17-19).
7. How are Christians to imitate God? (Eph. 5:1-2)
8. How should Spirit filled believers relate to one another? (5:18-21)
9. How are we to treat one another out of reverence to Christ? How do we do that? (5:21)
10. How does the relationship between Christ and the church serve as a model for the relationship between a husband and wife? (5:22-27)
11. Why should the bond between a husband and wife be greater than a bond between a parent and child? (5:31)
12. What should the responsibilities of a husband and a wife toward each other look like?
13. What's the result when the relationship of Christ flows down to a married couple's children? How do the parents treat the children? How do the children respond to their parents? (Eph. 6:1-4)
14. How could slaves serve the Lord while working for their masters? (6:5)
15. How did Paul want owners to treat their slaves? Why? (6:9)
16. How does the life of God flow in you in all your relationships including marriage?