

We are currently covering a series entitled, *The Institution of Marriage*, and today is *Part 3*. We may get through this today. I'm not really certain, but we shall see.

Before we begin today it's important that we stop at this point and really stress more than what has already been done concerning certain things Christ said about this subject. As we look more closely at what he said hopefully it will help everyone come to see even more deeply just how serious the institution of marriage is to God and just how serious each of us should take this as coming from God. That's really the focus of this series in so many ways because it isn't a matter of going into different things that happen in marriage and different things that people can work on and differences between men and women and all those kinds of things, because this is the basis of it all, this is the foundation of it all, and if these things aren't deeply embedded in our minds and we don't grasp then the importance of what God placed on this then how we look at this subject, how we address this subject, is going to vary a great deal, obviously.

The more we grasp the importance that God is at the forefront of all this and God's desire for us is very strong in this particular area and why it is then we will be more sobered in that respect, we will be more cautious in that respect, and hopefully we will take those things far more seriously in our own lives and strive to live in a manner that God desired from the beginning because that was God's desire a long, long time ago, that marriages be a certain way, but because of what Adam and Eve did all mankind has followed the same way, and that is one that's based on selfishness. Not until someone is a part of the Body of Christ, the Church of God, can individuals begin to really zero in on the kinds of things that need to be changed and why they need to be changed, and then themselves to begin to experience something on a plane that as a whole is just impossible for human beings to experience. There are various levels of successes in marriages on a worldly scale and there is a difference in that when it comes to the Church and those things that God gives to us through the holy spirit.

So let's go back here to Matthew 19 and pick up some of this again and continue to build upon it, and continue to more fully stress the importance, if you will, of what is being said. **Matthew 19:6** –**So then, they are no more two but one flesh.** Again here, too often people focus on only one small, little aspect of this, when that isn't the focus at all. It is about becoming one! One family! That's what it means by this. One unit. One family unit. There's a unity and a oneness that God desires there that is so important for society, so important for the world, so important for children that come into a family and it all begins right here.

Then it went on to say, with great stress of importance here if we grasp this, **Therefore, what God has joined together...** How did God join it together? Because He made it possible in the first place that man and woman could marry and begin a family unit, have children in that family unit,

bring children into the world - which if we grasp that is the purpose of God's creation - if individuals choose to do so, to be able to bring children into the world knowing that many would choose to do that in their lives. If they choose not to, that's their choice as well, but the point being is that mankind as a whole would begin to bring children into the world because it's the beginning of something far, far greater. It's the beginning of that which God is going to work with in time with millions and billions of people, to bring them into His Family, to offer that. That's God's purpose: His Family. It isn't just to experience human life. It's far, far more than that, but in this human life when God begins to work with us then there is more that we can learn and grow in until we're able to see what God is really offering us when that time comes.

So, **Therefore, what God has joined together**, and how else does He join it together? Because individuals say, they promise, they make a vow before God Almighty - as a whole, especially in the Church, and this is for the Church. This isn't for the world. What I'm talking about today isn't meant for people out here to be able to tune into and listen to although they would profit from it. But the ability to hear what's being said, that's another matter. Unless God is working with certain things in people's lives there are certain things they just aren't going to be able to receive. So individuals, whether it just be one in a marriage that's a part of the Body or whether it be two, have to say that which is a vow and a promise before God. That is no small thing. That is exceedingly important in life, of what we promised to do.

It says, **let not man put asunder**; don't separate, don't divide. Now, it's not outsiders. It's not talking about outsiders ending this; it's talking about those that enter into this relationship not to end it, don't bring it to an end, don't separate, don't divide, because God has united this. That's powerful! But there are choices in life that people make, there are things that happen in people's lives, and so it's important to understand God's instruction and what God is striving to help us to grasp and comprehend in human life and what is going to be established here now, what is being established now that, candidly, is the way the Millennium is going to be established. This is the beginning of all this.

It's just as important here what we're going through now, of what's being established, of what God's revealing to the Church as it is to understand the matter of women after 6,000 years no longer in the kind of bondage and the kind of things that have happened for 6,000 years, the oppression that has taken place, and the freedom that God is granting and giving finally to no longer be under, if you will, that curse that started in the beginning because of disobedience. That's all it's all about; it's about disobedience. God is now bringing the world to have the ability and the opportunity to obey and with that comes freedom. Awesome! For men and women. This, too, is exceedingly important to understand. There is greater freedom, joy, and peace in life especially in this kind of a relationship.

So what is it that might end a marriage? Who will end a marriage? For what reason can one end a marriage? "What God has joined together, do not let man divide." Those are strong, strong, strong words from God to His people. The point being in those questions, again, it is not a small thing to

bring a marriage to an end, except for only one reason and one reason alone. Yet even in this God allows some few exceptions, which we'll touch upon. They're not desired, but they're still allowed. There are certain things that are allowed because of God drawing us out of the world, calling us out of a world, and the process we go through in conquering and overcoming various things in our own lives and the battles we have as we go from darkness to light. So, otherwise to end the marriage is a very serious thing, to separate from what God has joined together.

Verse 7—It goes on to say, **Then they said to him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement to put her away? And he answered them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, so we've gone through this and what that means, allowed you to put away/divorce your wives.** Again, very clearly here a world that was very much a matter of something that God worked with what the world was like. He wasn't trying to change the world then. He wasn't trying to change all of Israel from the way the world was, the way they were, because it couldn't be done. He gave them laws. He gave them laws in the wilderness, but they couldn't live by those even, but He still gave them to them and expected them on a physical plane to obey those things. But they didn't do it and they continued to reject God over and over again. Again here, He was dealing with the world ruled by men. That's the kind of world. That's the kind of society that existed, has existed for thousands of years. As a whole, that's the kind of world.

A lot of people today, even in God's Church, who hear stuff like this they maybe don't know what it was like back in the '40's before World War II. They don't know what society was like or what it was like even after that because that didn't change everything, but it did begin a process that began to bring about certain kinds of change, and then on into the '50's and '60's and some of the things that women began to address in their own lives. Yet it's easy to find fault with some of those things because they did many things in a wrong way oftentimes, but understandably so, because of what they were fighting and what they were battling—"The ERA." It would be stated: "Eve ruled Adam." We realized, no, that's a part of it, but they didn't know how to do it. They didn't know how to address this on a spiritual plane. They addressed it on a physical plane.

How do you deal with hard-headed, selfish men? How do you deal in a society that so oppresses you? So often things happen by a kind of rebellion. Look at nations. When there are certain kinds of governments, how do you change that? Well, sometimes it gets bloody. Sometimes it ends up in war. Thankfully, it didn't get that bad. In some cases it did. In some rare cases things happened where people did lose their lives over some of these things. Sad!

So he said, **Out of the hardness of your hearts he allowed you**, permitted it. It wasn't what God desired, but because of what you are He permitted it as a people. **...but from the beginning it was not so.** It was never meant to be. It was never God's mind, never God's purpose. So we can begin to see through this, who can receive this? Because those are the comments that are made later on that we're going to take a look at again because it's so important to grasp that. Who can receive this? Who can receive such instruction? Who can receive such things into their lives?

Because Israel couldn't, meaning the world can't. The world can't. They can't understand. They can't receive this. So again, it's God's will that no marriage ever come to an end. That's what God's will is. That's what God's desire is that people obey Him because that's what it comes down to. It comes down to obedience to God and work! It takes work. It doesn't just happen. It doesn't just happen. It takes work to make their initial commitment a success by each one working to obey God's way of life and promise to one another and to God, the promise they made to one another and to God.

So again here, so much that's being said. But, again, there are all kinds of situations in the Church, and I'm not trying to address all those. There are some where just one is in the Church and so there is a great responsibility on that individual to strive to live this way even more so, to live God's way, to obey God's way, and to be the loving wife or the loving husband that God wants them to be. That will have an impact on their marriage. It's not a guarantee because people have choices. Even then things can happen in the world because it depends on the other individual and the choices they make. It's always been that way.

Verse 9—And I say unto you, whoever shall put away/divorce his wife (or put away their husband), **except for porneia**, that's the word, a type of immorality of the mind and how they're living. We understand, again, the physical aspects of adultery, or whatever it might be, that might happen in a marriage, and that's the easiest one to grasp and comprehend, but this is far beyond that. Again, this is not to the world, yet it is to whatever degree they can receive certain kinds of instruction, just like Israel and the things they received.

If someone reads through the Bible and they read something like this then they are able to deal with it on a physical plane and be sobered by it and strive to live better before God. Those who in the world strive to obey certain ways or certain laws and whatever ability they have, they're blessed for it, they're better off because of it because there are laws in motion. If you obey certain things you're blessed. It's like tithing. There are people in the world who tithe, but not to God, not to God's Church! But they believe what's said and so they tithe and they're blessed in that because there are laws in motion that affect those kinds of things in life. So on and on it goes. How people treat each other - the better they treat each other, the better they treat their neighbor the more they're going to be blessed, because there are just laws in motion in life that regulate life.

...whosoever shall put away his wife (or husband) **except for porneia, and shall marry another, commits adultery.** So this is how strong it is and to us we understand this is on a spiritual plane, even more so on a spiritual plane, and it involves things in a relationship within the Church.

Then I'm going to jump on down to **verse 10—His disciples said to him, the disciples, If this be the case, in other words, of a man toward his wife** (with his wife/toward his wife), **then it's not good to marry.** It's like, "How can this be?" Now, they didn't have the holy spirit. They were being drawn by the spirit. They weren't yet in the Church and they didn't grasp what they were being

told. They didn't grasp the magnitude of some of the things that were being revealed to them on a spiritual plane, and so Christ made it clear here in how it was answered. **He said, All men,** or **All,** because the word "men" isn't even there, **All,** meaning men and women, candidly, **cannot receive this saying, except to those to whom it is given.** I love that: "To those to whom it is given." It's not given to the world. It's given to those (because it's a spiritual thing), who have the capacity, the ability on a spiritual plane to drink in what is being said, to be able to address those things on a spiritual plane, of what is being said. "To those to whom it is being given," it's given to the Church. Well, the Church didn't start for some time later here, at whatever point this was stated here. I think this was toward the very end so we're looking at a short time, 31 A.D., when finally when they were given the holy spirit, impregnated with God's holy spirit and began to grasp and see and understand some of these things, but it's still a long process because there was so much to be revealed to the Church, and this was such an abrupt change as far as the world was concerned and people being drawn out of the world into a Church because that was the beginning of that. It hadn't happened before. Before that God just worked with individuals here and there.

So porneia is a spiritual immorality that results in one in a marriage becoming disfellowshipped from God's Church. That's what happens if it comes down to that. Sometimes some things can happen where a person can repent, obviously, of things that they have done in their life and relationships can continue on. But if individuals come to a point where they reject God, reject God's Church, reject God's rule in their life, if they get to a point where they begin to fight against the Church or go against God's Church, obviously they can't be a part of it anymore. Then an individual has choices to make. They don't have to live in that environment. Sometimes it's far better if they don't, but it's a choice. It depends on situations because sometimes there are children involved. Sometimes there are other situations involved in life and people have to work through various things of how they're going to address that in their lives. All situations are different.

No one can look at something and make judgment about what others are choosing to do and how they're doing it, or how they're being led, and guided, and directed by the Church. So sometimes this has happened within the Church, where individuals judge others and give their advice as to what they think should be done and how they think it should be done. That's not good. That's not wise. There's a way that God works.

So if the grounds for divorce have nothing to do with one spouse becoming disfellowshipped then on what grounds, what reason can one have for a divorce? That's pretty strong. There are a few. But some simply cannot reconcile certain differences and can separate and divorce in God's Church but never remarry. Now, a lot of these things have become established and clearer to us just over the last couple of years, and even over the last year here. I'd say even over the last six months or so, though there were various things here that God was clarifying and bringing to a point to establish this is the way that it is. We'll get closer to that toward the end of the sermon here, very specifically so.

So, hopefully this has helped to emphasize and stress all the more, all the more so the seriousness of vows and promises that are made at the time of marriage.

So this brings us now to a certain portion that was covered at the end of *Part 2* last week.

Ephesians 5, we'll do a bit of review. There is so much said in Ephesians about relationships, and so much of this has to do with this relationship because it actually builds up to this and it brings in certain aspects about the Church and so forth, but it brings us to a point here of focusing on certain things about marriage.

Ephesians 5:25—Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it. So God is saying because of the responsibilities that are very clearly given here in a marriage for a certain kind of order and the way things are to work in a marriage, and the like, that there is a certain guideline here. It's like in the ministry. That's why we went through the things in the ministry. When you have a certain function within the ministry there are those things that must change or become solidified in your mind as to how you look toward or look at the Church, how you desire to serve and give to the Church and what that means because it's a matter of taking on a responsibility. It's not a matter of being "over" and looking at it in that way because too many in times past have looked at that aspect of being over individuals. It's never about that. That's not God's way. That's not Christ's way. Christ's way is one of being a servant, candidly, of serving others, of sacrificing for others. That's God's way that He gave to Christ, a matter of serving and sacrificing to others. They're the perfect example through all this, through time as far as God Almighty is concerned, and then Jesus Christ for the past 2,000 years. Awesome!

So it's a simple matter here of conveying then to anyone who has a responsibility, husbands in particular here, in this particular case, or ever how government is established, whether in the ministry or whatever, that there is an example here to follow, and it's Jesus Christ. His responsibility, the way he received that and what he is reflecting here and what he's showing was one to love through sacrifice, sacrificing, to give to others, sacrificing your will: "Father, if there is any other way take this cup from me," but he knew there wasn't. Nevertheless, knowing what he was getting ready to go through he said, "If there is any other way." Now, there is no man who has ever thought in those terms towards their wife, as a whole. Though in rare situations in life sometimes people are brought to that, having to make a choice as to what they're going to do, but this is on a different plane. This is on a continuing plane in life in how you live your life day by day by day and what that means. What are we willing to give up? What are we willing to sacrifice? What are we willing to swallow our pride in? What are we willing to do and how long are we willing to do it?

"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church." I think of God's patience. I think of Christ's patience, God the Father's patience in working with us. I marvel. Sometimes I just flat marvel at that. In my life toward me, and toward us as a Church, being human beings and having

the weaknesses and the problems we do. But thankfully, God sees the end product because that's what's in His mind. He sees the end product. And what's that? Elohim, being in the God Family, knowing that there are these segments in time and we have growth and there are things we're doing in our lives and growing in character. Sometimes as human beings, because we live through it, we don't think that way. We can't see it that way. Sometimes we wonder, perhaps, what has changed? Where have I grown? Anyway, that's the way we are as human beings sometimes and we don't realize what we've been given and what it means that every time, if you choose to repent (what a beautiful thing), if every time in life that you address a matter and you've said something wrong, you said it in the wrong way, you've done something wrong, or whatever, and things that enter into the mind, and you can go before God that day, whatever, and say as soon as it happens, "Father, forgive me." I love it. It's beautiful. "Forgive me through Jesus Christ, my Passover," because that's what you're doing every time you do it. Every time you do it you're reinforcing something here.

I think of a sermon being given at the Feast here. I don't want to get into it. I wish I could remember this to give it then. Awesome, what God gives to us and how these things are reinforced in our minds, that it's our mind that God is transforming. Every time you reinforce certain things in your life. I think of the spirit world. That's what I was thinking of, angelic beings who were confronted because they were all confronted with a different spirit at certain times and they all had to make choices. We know that a third of the angelic realm made the wrong choice, but even in a spirit plane with a spirit mind, when there were those beings that made the choices they did they reinforced, they became stronger. Because, see, to that point in time there wasn't a matter of that kind of change in their life. There wasn't the matter of that kind of development in their being individually. They just accepted everything that God had given to them, but then there came a point when they were challenged. They were challenged by Lucifer and as to how they thought toward God. Those that have continued through time they've just become stronger. God's, God's angelic realm. Those who are demonic, the moment they chose Satan, Satan's way, they were gone because of the spirit.

Human beings are different. So that which happens very gradual, we just don't see it in the same way. God sees it because it's of the spirit, it's of the mind, it's a transforming. So every time, every time you continue to fight and say, "Father, forgive me," you are becoming stronger. Your mind is being solidified and being made stronger and healthier on a spiritual plane that God is right and you are wrong. That's a beautiful thing! It's a beautiful thing for us to come and be able to have that humility of spirit to acknowledge, "I'm wrong. I'm a big whatever," you know, and mean it. "That's what I am." As individuals, selfishness, that's what we are and yet God has mercy upon us. So what an incredible thing that we can say over and over again, day by day, "Father, forgive me. You're right. I am so wrong. I don't want this mind. I don't want this kind of thinking. I don't choose this. I don't want it in me whatsoever." That's a beautiful thing. So you grow in character. It doesn't mean the battles ever end - until you're out of this body because there are going to be battles there until the day it's over with. Day by day there are going to be battles,

there are going to be things and either we address those things in our mind day by day or we just live life frivolously. We don't think about some of these things and we don't pray and come before God, but as a whole we're to continue to grow and become stronger. Grow in character. God sees it. God knows what's in the mind. He had mercy upon us. He blesses us. He helps us in such incredible ways and has such incredible patience.

So, **husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it.** Sacrifice, fighting against human nature, fighting against selfishness, acknowledging and admitting selfishness over and over again because we're just selfish beings. That's what we are. We should be able to look into a spiritual mirror and say, "I am a selfish being by nature." Now, the longer we're in God's Church and the more we fight and the more we grow that selfishness should become less and less and that which is outgoing and what we open up toward God should become stronger and stronger in our relationships and how we think and how we truly think, quickly, about people and situations and circumstances. That requires God's spirit and God's mind. It's not ours as human beings. That's why Paul made it very clear this battle that you fight day in and day out, there is a battle.

I love those verses there in Romans when it talks about those things, when you go through Romans 7-8 and in through there. Awesome, what he brings up: "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and just because it's impregnated with the spirit of God, you still have a carnal mind. I still have a carnal mind because I'm still carnal. I'm still physical. I'm not in a spirit body yet. So that doesn't change. God doesn't just take that away. Sometimes people, I don't know, maybe think at baptism all of a sudden they don't have a carnal mind. That's what I thought when I came into the Church. When I visited a particular Church area and moved there and lived there for six months I was dumbfounded. The first account I ever had when my mind was opened up was a husband and wife fighting with each other. They'd invited us over to their house. They had different people over at their house and here they were fighting with each other. I was shocked! I was shocked! I thought how can anything like this happen in God's Church? I thought with God's spirit people are pretty much living perfect lives.

Well, anyway, I had my eyes opened and I had to start dealing with reality. No, we still have carnal human nature, and every one of us has that capacity to do bad, to be bad, to disobey God. We all have and we all do. Hopefully, less and less and less.

So again here, incredible what Jesus Christ said. Every time I've ever given sermons since I've been a minister this has been one of the most important I've ever given when it comes to marriage, especially considering the environment we lived in through Worldwide and into Laodicea, Philadelphia into Laodicea, because we were still grappling with and still didn't understand some of these things that God has given to us now. There were things that weren't fully understood about what it meant that a husband was the head of the home. It was taken as authority and government only, as a whole, and that a wife, no matter what was said, basically had to do what their husband said. You think, "Well, that's a bunch of bull!" in reality because

that's not true, but we didn't know because we're still growing. It takes time to grow, even with the Church and the way God has worked with us in Sardis and coming more and more into the truth. So there are things we've had to go through and learn and experience. You learn through experience of certain things that don't work and certain things that aren't right.

I think of the ministry. We learned! One of the greatest and most powerful lessons ever - even beyond the angelic realm in what Lucifer did - is what happened in the Church of God with the ministry because you can have 150,000 people, you can have 1.5 billion, you can have 15 billion, you can have 150 billion people, but we have to bring it back down to size because we only needed 100,000 to have this, 150,000 to have this driven home.

Mr. Armstrong couldn't be in every Church area. Mr. Armstrong could not ensure that the ministry would serve the brethren like he did in his mind. Mr. Armstrong could not ensure, though individuals were brought into Ambassador College to learn, be ordained, and sent out to serve in Church areas, and brought in regularly for ministerial conferences, he could not ensure that individuals would go out and faithfully teach what they were given let alone that they could even grasp what was given to them in some cases. Because if some began to sin, they began to cut themselves off from the flow of God's spirit and would do things their way, which happened a lot. Yet God had patience with different things that took place (I guess mercy is a better word), and protected much of the Church from that, but those are things that happened. And what happened? Only God's government in spirit form, in Elohim can be trusted to always, always, always, always do God's will, always and faithfully teach God's way. That's why we have to have something better than this physical, human form, because human beings cannot be fully trusted with what God is giving. That's why we experienced what we did in the Church. Even with the impregnation of God's spirit, even with ordinations, this does not ensure in any fashion or form that individuals are going to continue to faithfully teach exactly what they are taught, exactly what they are taught and not deviate from it.

So what did ministers experience? Well, they experienced things that differed from booklets that Mr. Armstrong had written. They experienced things from evangelists, as one comes to mind here, that began to teach a 14th/15th Passover at Ambassador College and when they start playing around with such things and deviate from what they know Mr. Armstrong wrote they made choices. Sad. So since they experienced that from evangelists and from teachers at Ambassador College they thought they could do the same thing. They started establishing certain things that they thought, "Well, we'll do it this way. Not the way I was shown." Anyway, those things happened a lot more than people know. That's why we had the Apostasy. That did not happen overnight.

When someone leaves the Body of Christ or is disfellowshipped from the Body of Christ it didn't happen that week. It didn't happen that day. It goes on for a long time. Nothing ever happens overnight, nothing like that kind of a change. Individuals who have left, some you've known, let's

say since 2008, even within the ministry, that did not happen overnight. A matter of fact, some of it started in 2008 for some that led to their demise, choices that they made.

Anyway, incredible. That's why God is creating Elohim because it will always be of the mind of God, always be in unity and oneness with God. So God gives us as human beings an opportunity to begin experiencing something on a physical plane in our little environment, whatever that is, within a family environment, this truth, the importance of oneness. They become one flesh, one family, one unit. That is so powerful and important to understand and comprehend on a spiritual plane.

So again here, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it." Not just in the end, but that's his mind continually, to give of himself. What they do, what God the Father does and what Jesus Christ does, they do work that we have no comprehension of, on a plane that we sometimes really don't grasp in how they work in our lives. Awesome! So this mind, everything being done to give a right and a healthy environment in which to flourish and to adorn, provide, and give nurture. Powerful!

Finally again here, this verse that we've already gone through. I want to read this again because this is so important. This is also why the following verse should be magnified at this time even more so and expounded upon even more within the Church because this has been so abused. This has been so misused. It's been so ignored. I'm just going to read it to you: **1 Timothy 5:8—But if any provide not for his own... Now, we can grasp this on a physical plane, but it is so much more than that. It is so much more than that when you talk about a family because that is the one thing you can look at and make judgment in and say, "This is not right." If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he has denied the faith and is worse than a nonbeliever.** That's what's being said. That's what it means whenever it says "gentile" like this. It's giving an example here of that, an individual who's able to believe and know God's way of life and that which doesn't because they haven't been called. What a hideous thing if we've been called and we've had the ability to make changes in our life, and yet if we don't do some of the most basic of things God says. We actually have denied the faith - that means a belief of what God has given us to believe about what we're to do and how we're to live life day by day, week by week, month by month, especially when it comes to a household then and what God expects.

And that's why even there have been situations here now over the past several months that some have been addressed about this. "You are not providing in your family. And it starts with you. And if you're not going to do it you're worse than a non-believer and you have no right in this Body. You have no right in the Church of God. You have no place in the Church of God because you were given opportunity." How sick is that? "You were given opportunity for God's way of life and you aren't doing what you need to do on a physical plane? You would rather be taken care of, or whatever it might be. It doesn't work that way in God's Church. We work! We learn to work and we learn to provide." If we can't do that on a physical plane then you're sure not going to do it on

a spiritual plane and work with your family and sacrifice in your family and give in your family like you should. It isn't going to happen! If it doesn't start here it's not going to happen.

I have witnessed that for decades now in God's Church. But now God's brought it to the point where this is what's to be lived and this is what's to be enforced within His Church because this is what is right and this is what is wrong. If something is wrong, it's that bad to be a nonbeliever, yet some are out here supposedly in the Church walking around in the courtyard, like I said, sitting out there on the swing set. It's too much just to walk around in the courtyard. Some actually bring up and erect a little swing set, spiritually, and they start swinging. If they had everything their way, especially if it's a man, he wants the wife to push him! "Get back there, babe! Push me! Push me! Wheeeeeeeee!" He's out in the courtyard. I'm sorry, but there are certain pictures we need to have in our mind to realize how ridiculous and how ugly some things are. Yet we can tend to do that sometimes as human beings. We need to see certain things that happen in family life in this regard. That's how bad it is. If we really grasped that then we're going to hopefully and prayerfully, if we want this way of life, change. Change.

Now, there's teamwork involved too. Sometimes it requires both. Before I go any further I do want to say this thing that I probably shook up a hornets' nest in some cases when I mentioned about check books and everyone being able to know what's in everybody's account. I don't even care. I am horrible with a check book. Don't give me a check book, okay? That's why I don't do it. My wife's great. I came into the Church at a time when we actually heard sermons and I sat there and I heard certain things being said that I knew were wrong at that time, and that was for me to digest and not say anything about, but it was for me to receive and I knew it was wrong. It was basically stated that any many who lets their wife deal with the finances of the family, if he doesn't write the checks then you're not the head of the house. You're letting someone else be the head of the house. If you don't write the checks - honestly, sermons - if you don't write the cheques and if you're not in control of that you're not the head of the house. You're letting someone else do that. Give me a break! It's sharing.

Now, I have to say that it should be the goal. Some people have gone through different things in life and depending on what you're coming out of there are certain fears and certain things that everybody has to examine and deal with in their life, but the goal should be that no matter what individuals make - one flesh, unified. Sadly, though, there are some who abuse that and misuse that. Sadly sometimes it's the man. It's often because of this thought that's in the mind of what it means to be the head. It isn't at all the way God intends it to be.

So sometimes we can see things in a way that's distorted and not the way God's spirit leads individuals to grasp and understand what things are like on a spiritual plane, what Jesus Christ said, how he serves, how he gives to the Church and sacrifices for it, how God has sacrificed for us from the beginning of time. As soon as He created the angelic realm He began to sacrifice because He knew that one day, one day there would be a being who would take peace from what He'd created. That's an incredible sacrifice.

If you go through scripture you'll find that the great desire of God is to get back to that point - to bring the angelic realm and His family back to the point of peace. Jerusalem because that's what it means. It's about a place of dwelling of peace. Awesome, to understand God's great desire. So that's why we see the world the way it's been for the last 6,000 years, not peace in nations, not peace in families, not peace like God intended at all, not peace between races and different kinds of people and different nationalities and so forth. Horrible, the sick world we live in and what it's like. I'm so thankful we're getting close to it being changed.

Going on. We focused on the last part of Ephesians 5 when Jesus Christ reveals what the marriage relationship should be for those who are in the Church of God, for those who are in the Body of Christ. Now, chapters again here, if we understand, they weren't in scripture. Man has put those in here and added them to it for ease of being able to find various areas and so forth, but the verses and the chapters were not there in the original writing. So it's good sometimes to grasp the context and the flow of things and where they're going. That's why even in this book here, that's why I mentioned before there is much here in Ephesians that is good if a person is focusing on this aspect of marriage, and what comes up here finally in chapter 5, because much of it works towards that. It works together with some other things and a lot of what it works together with is about the Church.

Anyway, let's just back up here a little bit and notice some of the context. There is so much. We can go to different places. Anyway, there are things being stated that lead to what Paul was inspired to write. Jesus Christ gave this about a right husband and a wife relationship in marriage, what it's supposed to be like.

So again here, let's notice, **Ephesians 4:12**, breaking into the flow, talking about the ministry in the Church and why it was given because we're talking here about places given by God for service, for working with His Church, and yet there is such an incredible tie-in here with understanding those things in individual family units, husbands and wives. So he says why it's done here. It says, **for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, of service, for the edifying of the Body of Christ**, a body, very much like a body that people are to recognize in marriage. You have become one flesh. You have become one unit. This is what it's about. **...until we all come in the unity of the faith.** Look how much God desires this for the Church. Look at what the goal is and the purpose here, the unity of where you're headed, the goals, the desires of what you're sharing together. We're blessed to share, then, and choose that, "Yes, this is what I want to share in. I want what God has given and what He's given us to see and to believe and to hold on to these things and to live it, and to have this unity." Then as we have this unity with God and Jesus Christ it's actually reflected in how we have this with one another within the Church. It really is. It's reflected in a very powerful plane in the fellowship that we're able to experience within the Church. That goes all the way down then into individual units as well.

...until we all come in the unity of the faith, of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect/matured person. So this is a process we ever grow in, but this is God's desire on a

spiritual plane. There's a sharing in this. There's a sharing we have with God, with Jesus Christ the more we grow, the longer we've been in God's Church. There is that bond. There is that unity that comes through various experiences of things we've shared. My mind toward God, my mind toward Jesus Christ and the strength of spirit that I have to this day is there because of things that God has blessed me to share in from the beginning of my calling until now. God desires that for marriage. It's in the sharing. It's in the things you share together in life that make the relationship stronger and more powerful. It's a beautiful thing, but God gives us areas of life where we can learn these through these experiences that we're able to have. **...until we all come in the unity of the faith, of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect/matured person unto the measure and the stature of the fullness of Christ,** and so ever growing, ever so much to grow in.

Verse 15, notice, but, speaking the truth in agape. You know, this is about the Church and what we're to come to, that we can come to the point in time where we have a love for the truth. It inspires us. We can look at any of the 57 Truths and think, "How blessed am I to see and to know the things that I know, to love the truth." Whenever speaking about any of that truth, whether it be in my own life and how it's lived, or whether it be with others in the Body there is an excitement, a love, an appreciation, a thankfulness to God Almighty to know and to see these things. So, "but speaking the truth in love." This hasn't always been the case in God's Church. Everything that has ever happened that's gone astray is because some stopped speaking the truth in love and actually get to the point where they speak against the truth in selfishness and bitterness and hatred. Everyone who's left God's Church, as a matter of time, and I think especially in the last 12 years, they've all come to this point in time where they could no longer speak God's truth in love, to really love this way of life, to be willing to address anything that needed to be addressed in their lives, to be able to hold on to this no matter what, to continue to fight for what God has given. There comes a point in time where people choose to quit fighting. That's wrong right there. It's not loving what God has given to us. It's not speaking the truth in love because it's coming to see something in a different way that is just wrong, about this way of life and how that's a constant battle to the very end. You have to, if you want it, God says you've got to put on armour. You've got to be spiritually close to Him. You've got to put on spiritual armor. You've got to desire to fight and to war and to battle. And to expect that this is going to be a cake walk and easy going? You miss the mark. You miss the boat. You don't know what you're calling is about then. Our calling is about a lot of fighting and battling, and mostly on self first and foremost and if you ever take you mind off of that and begin to point it somewhere else you've made a big mistake. It's always this first. This is what we have to battle and fight first.

...but speaking the truth in agape may grow up in him in all things into him who is the head—even Christ—from, and this is a word that means "from out," **from out of whom the whole body,** because this is what it's talking about. That power and that ability to make changes comes from God and Jesus Christ, out of them into our lives and gives us the ability to address, to see things that need to be seen as we pray for help to do it, the help to do it and the ability to fight against things that are wrong.

...out of whom the whole body is fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies. If we see this and embrace this in the way that God says for a Church, for each one of us individually, "fitly joined together," what about marriage? What about the family? A husband and wife and then children and whatever is there. "Compacted," as it says here, "joined together and compacted together by that which every joint supplies," especially if you look at two in a marriage, a husband and a wife, by what both contribute within that marriage, by what both do to share and work to make something unique and special, to have goals and to discuss those things and how you're going to acquire those things and work at those things in life. It's about the sharing! If people can't share and they're not sharing, then it's not a marriage. It just isn't. It's not what God gave us if we can't share. People can do that in a physical way in the world. We have to do this far above and beyond that.

So if we can understand this in part spiritually then why not in a way that we should see it even more clearly?

"...of whom the whole body..." What makes up a whole body? What is the whole body? Well, there's the spiritual body, the whole body, and there's also another whole body - one flesh, one family unit that is to be unique, to share. It's not the same as another family unit. That's why people should not judge one another in how they do various things in their lives because there are many areas of freedom, of things you can do, and how you can do it, you know. And in large part, too, you can't expect certain ones to be where you are in certain areas of your life, if you are at a certain place that is better. Sometimes it just isn't. It's just our harsh, nasty, sick judgment sometimes on other people and how we think they should do things in their life. Because why? Well, because my way is better. Our ways aren't better. God's is. We have to seek to be at-one with God, but we have to be very careful how we judge others in the Body, but what we should judge is ourselves and our own single family units, whatever they are.

Maybe there's just one person. Great! Do it this way. Do things the way God says to do it. Learn to provide for yourself, if you don't know how; 1 Timothy 5:8. Because you're a single family unit and if you're not providing for yourself and if you're not doing what you need to be doing to improve your lot, to provide for yourself, then you're worse than a nonbeliever. If you grasp it, you've been called to be a part of a body, a larger body and your opportunity, your ability to excel and do better, to be able to give to God, to want to give the best to God, to realize we've been called to a work of God. Sometimes I marvel. I've know of individuals who have turned down various things or wouldn't do various things they could have done to improve themselves so they could do better in life for themselves and for God's Church, but it's just too hard so they wouldn't do it. I've known of things like this just in the last few months in God's Church. I think, "What's wrong? Where is God in the picture? Where is the Church in the picture?" It's about the thinking and the mind we have toward why we're doing what we're doing. Why are we doing it?

...fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working, and this "effectual working" means "active" and even "proper," those words in

the Greek language and what it entails. The proper kind of work that we should do. In other words, it's right before God. It's what we should be doing. It's active, it's filled with activity. It's how we should be living and how we should be working in life and providing. **...effectual working/ active working, in the measure of every part.** So any kind of a body, especially within the Church, we all have functions and we all have things to do, as far as work is concerned and praying and so forth. Sometimes people minimize that, about what we pray about and what we're to pray for. Well, it's about the Body. It's about others in the Body and so forth and how we think. In our own lives as well, the desire to change and to grow in those things. **...in the measure of every part.** Oftentimes then in a marriage people have to sit down and discuss these things, about how they're going to seek to accomplish certain goals in life and that it may required both to do work, even on a physical plane, whatever that means for an individual family or maybe you have a different kind of goal. Maybe you've been blessed in certain other areas and you can divide up various things within the family.

That's why I mentioned what I did last time. If both husbands and wives do work then when they get home it isn't the wife that has to do all the rest of the work of the household. That's just sick, you know. I have to finish that about check books. It's fine ever how you do it as a family as long as both of you know, you're in agreement and you work together in that and you know what the bottom line is and you share in that. And individuals that can't, well, sometimes there are reasons for that, until a trust is built, but sad that it can't start out that way at the beginning of the marriage.

But sometimes because of what people have experience in the past, sometimes there are certain fears and things that they have to work through, but the goal should be at some point soon, if everybody is doing their part, that ability to know exactly where you are and to be able to work with in the best means of whatever is in the family that you know where everything is, you know what's going on, you know what's there. I hope that makes sense. I shouldn't even have to say any more. But that should be people's goal in life, to share everything. When people hold that back, and if they do hold it back, to me that's a danger. That's like a big, red light, not a caution, not an orange light, getting ready to stop here, but that's the red one. Stop! Something's wrong.

...the effectual working and the measure of every part makes increase in the body unto the edifying of itself in agape. It's God's love. Well, that should be in marriage as well. The more two individuals, if both are in the Body in the sense of in the Church, then the richness of the marriage, the richness of that life should be so much greater than what it would be in the world, obviously, far, far beyond that and the ability to grow in agape, as God says here.

So this is a kind of relationship that marriage is to be. It really is, not just in the Church. It's in the Church but it starts where? It starts in the family. So consider again what God has given His Church for the definition of marriage. I want to give this again: *"The legal and/or formally recognized union through a vow (through promise) between a man and a woman to share life..."* That's what God's given us in the Church, to share life. His way, but to share life. We learn that

and we embrace that. "...and live together by forming a uniquely exclusive, single family unit." You know that's what's God's doing. That's what the Church is. It is, in that respect, a uniquely exclusive, single family unit. That's why we can't build bridges with others who are of our past because they're not the same. It doesn't work. God has one single family that's structured in a specific way, and that's what we're blessed to be part of. We work within that.

Let's continue on here, **verse 17— This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that from now on you are not to walk as other gentiles walk**, in other words, as the nonbelievers walk. We're to be different in every way, **in the vanity**, and this basically means "the emptiness or the futility" **of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God**. This world is really sick. It's really sick. ...**having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart**. So with technology, the way selfishness is, there is only one thing that's going to happen. It's going to get worse and faster. It just accelerates. That's what we've been experiencing in the last many years. I think of the 21st century here, how fast evil has accelerated on the earth just because of technology and how it's used, how people use it because people don't see and understand God's way, don't desire to really want it in their life. Maybe they want certain aspects of it, of certain things they hear, and then others, they kind of want to go off and do their own thing when they want to do it. It doesn't work that way. That's the way the world is. Sick. Sick! Sick in the use of technology. ...**having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart**. They can't see and so there's only one outcome until God changes this earth.

...**who being past feeling**, in other words, past having real feeling of regret and remorse (that's what it means here), **have given themselves over unto lasciviousness**, or immorality. So as time goes on, as human beings become worse there is less regret, there is less remorse, and for things that people do it gets to a point where I hate that when I see it, where people don't even have that kind of a mind anymore. To be able to be sorry about something? To believe that everything they do is justified and right? No matter how sick and evil, putrid it is, they're justified in what they're doing. ...**have given themselves over to**, this word means "immorality, corruption, lewdness." It's everywhere. You just turn on your TV's. It doesn't mean you've got to become totally alienated and don't know what's going on, to where you have to throw that thing outside, but you have to be careful in here, in the mind in what you reject and what you see and what you think about what's there. We have to make those kinds of choices day in and day out in life. ...**to work all uncleanness with greediness**, in other words, for selfish gain. **But you have not learned such with Christ**.

Well, the point of going through some of this is, again, these kinds of things need to be applied to marriage and how people think and how they're thinking in their mind, and how they're dealing with the things that are going on in the world around them. This world makes it so easy, if people aren't thinking right, to go off course in their thinking, to think wrong... to think wrong. They can

destroy family, can destroy marriage quickly if they're not striving to be right and faithful in the things that God has given to them.

I want to read this in the Living translation. I don't normally use that because I kind of loathe that translation, but sometimes there are things that different translations give to give a bit of an understanding about something that's being stated out of the Greek language into English. It's when they twist and distort things to fit into a Protestant kind of thinking that I hate it. This book does it a lot. That's why I don't like using it. Sometimes I even cringe a little bit about even telling you the name of the translation because I don't want people thinking they can go there and that's a good source, because it's sick, as a whole, in a Protestant way.

Verse 18—Their closed minds are full of darkness. What a shame if that happens in marriage because it happens out here. Sometimes people just close their minds. Wham! It goes shut. They won't even think about different possibilities or different things that need to be considered. They get to a certain point where they don't want to work at certain aspects of it anymore, or whatever it might be, and definitely don't want to change certain aspects in their life because whatever. **Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds.** Think that happens to people? Think that can happen to the human mind and someone in God's Church that an individual can just shut their minds to certain things that they need to think about? Absolutely it happens. It happens every year in God's Church that some come to the point that it's so shut they can't be a part anymore. Will not listen. Will not even consider. Cannot be a part anymore.

...because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. What does that mean? It means they don't want to hear what He has to say. So often if that's in the Church and comes from the ministry we get to a certain point, if we're not careful, "Well, that's his way of seeing it." Do we see God or do we not see God? Do we grasp where we are? Do we grasp who we are? Do we grasp what God has given to us? And if we do we'd take those things to heart, but we can close the mind because we want something different and we're tired of the fight. You think people get tired of the fighting? All the time. All the time in the environment of God's Church because it's hard. This calling is not easy. It forces you to look at things. It forces you to see inside, to acknowledge, to work with certain things in your own mind and in the world that otherwise we would just as soon ignore, not be around, and not have to address. But God brings us face to face with things over and over and over and over again in life so that we can make choices. God's concerned with those choices because it determines where we go, but they're our choices. So we're tried and tested in those things oftentimes, not by God, but because of who we are.

But the environment God will let us have for a purpose knowing we're going to go through tests, we're going to go through some hardship. Just the fact that we're in the world He already knows we're going to go through a lot of hardship to become a part of what He's offering us. But there are certain things He allows to come along in life because we wonder, "Well, why am I going

through this? And why is this?" I'll just tell you right now, this time of year people are going through a lot of things out here. Are we surprised? Sometimes people are surprised. It's like, "Why is this happening? Why am I going through all this? You know, in God's Church it should be a little bit easier, shouldn't it? These things shouldn't be happening to me." God allows it. God allows a spirit world to broadcast to you, sometimes to others who can get to you even more so. Shall we be surprised as we approach Passover season or as we approach the fall Holy Days? Know exactly where it's coming from. The quicker you can spot it the better off you are. Pray to God for help. Pray for help to know how to think and how to work with it. My thinking in those situations is I'm not going to give them the satisfaction of enjoyment to see that it bothers me in any iota, and I choose something different. I choose to think different. Because you can allow certain things to rile you up. That's a choice. Do you know that? No one controls your happiness but you. No one controls your thinking but you. No one controls your response to things around you but you. So how far or to what degree are you going to let certain things get to you because there are things in life around you you can't change. Only self. Only self can you change.

True in a marriage as well. Now, hopefully both in a marriage are going to be doing that, but that's not always the case, especially if there is just one in the Body. So sometimes extra pressure to make sure, to go beyond, above and beyond to do things well.

Their closed minds are full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. They don't care anymore about right and wrong... Isn't that sick in the world? You think that can happen to people in God's Church? **...and they have given themselves over to immoral ways.** It's a choice. That's a choice.

It's a choice to use a computer and to go online and to click a button and to look at things you should not look at, to view things you should not view. I know that happens and happens way too much because I know human nature and I know how we are as human beings. There are battles you had better be fighting because if you're not you are corrupting your mind and allowing it to be corrupted. You've got to fight to do and make right choices. Okay? I'm talking about young ages too, very young. Boys and girls. Men and women. We just live in a sick, sick world and you have to make the choice to reject it and to fight against it, period.

They don't care anymore about right or wrong. What a sick thing when people get to a point where they don't fight anymore, where they don't battle and just give in to whatever it is they want in life. Life in God's Church is not that way.

And they have given themselves over to immoral ways. People who leave God's Church, that's exactly what they've done. That's exactly what they've done in their life. They begin to become weak for specific reasons. They begin to cut themselves off from the flow of God's spirit for specific reasons and choices. **Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed.** We have to fight against those things because that's the world around us. You can't stop fighting because it'll affect your mind if you allow it to. There are things you have to guard in your mind and to

recognize evil when it's evil and to acknowledge it before God, to recognize the things that are good and right and balanced and sound.

You can be watching a program on TV or a movie and you have to make choices in how you think about certain things you see. Is this right? Is this good? Is this bad? How does it affect your thinking? What are you thinking about it? Do you think that doesn't happen? Now, sometimes people just don't think like that. They don't think about what they're watching and seeing. They just fill their minds. After a while, if you're not careful, if you're not on guard it can corrupt your thinking, but you have to be on guard all the time, all the time in marriage, to work at, to work at doing things God's way. To work! It takes the work of both.

And then it goes on to say in **verse 20—But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ!** So we know what God has given to us. We know, as a whole, how we should think, how we should be. We know, as a whole, when there is sin. We know, as a whole, when we're not thinking the way we should and how maybe we're thinking about someone else in the Body in judgment or whatever it might be when we have perhaps a jealousy, an envy, a resentment, a superiority type of attitude and looking down on someone else because this happens all the time because it's who we are as human beings, but it shouldn't and we should battle against that in our own hearts and minds in how we think about different ones. I've seen this a lot in the ministry regarding women who have been ordained and how men, oftentimes, and other women treat them and speak to them. See? Because there's something wrong in their thinking and they're allowing it to come out. We have to guard against that. This isn't something that's done in a dark place. This is something that's out in the open and it happens all the time in God's Church because we're still not fully addressing, in many cases, the things that are inside of us that need to be changed and understanding the unity and the oneness that God desires in the Body. If we do that on a spiritual plane in the Church it's happening in family.

Verse 21, going on here, King James, **if so be that you have heard him, Jesus Christ, and have been taught by him**, so we have in the Church, **as the truth is in Jesus**. It's in Jesus Christ. God the Father and Jesus Christ have given it to us and sustains us in it. We're able to stay in the truth. **...that you put off the former conduct**, that's what this word means here, **of the old man**. That's a constant process of growth. Sometimes God brings us to a point by something we go through in life, and sometimes in marriage that we're able to see something in ourselves, or whatever it might be, but this is in the context of marriage and sometimes we're able to see something in ourselves that we realize I need to change. This part needs to be changed in how I react to various things or to certain kinds of things when they happen. I need to make a change in how I address it and what I'm doing. I still strive to do that. I've been doing that over the last few weeks. By going through this it's helped me to have an even stronger focus to do a better job. That's what I'm striving to do. Hopefully. That's what we hope. That's what we desire, all of us in life, to make changes in growth and do better in how we do things together, always improving,

always growing. So that's how we should be, realizing there never comes a point in time where you can't do things better, that you can't do more because you can!

...if so be that you have heard him, of Jesus Christ, in other words, and have been taught by him as the truth is in Christ Jesus, that you put off concerning the former conduct of old, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. I'll tell you, this is a hard thing for human beings. Ever as we grow there are some things we see. I don't care at what stage you are in (in your spiritual growth) there are some things you still can't see. There are things in here you still can't see. No matter how long you live in this physical body before your change comes, or before you die, there are still things here that we haven't addressed or have been able to address in our thinking that we're blinded to. We go through many things in life where God refines us and works with us, but we'll never be perfect. You can never be perfect in this physical body. We're justified. We become justified because of belief and because of faith, and it's attributed to us for righteousness, for making certain choices like we do day by day, but we'll never be perfect. There'll always be something that's clouded in your mind that you can't see.

But what an awesome thing when you go through various hardships and trials and difficulties in life and you're able to come face to face with it. Now, we don't tend at first when that happens to jump up and down and say, "I'm so glad! I feel so good about this." No, it's a lot different. The reactions a lot different because it's hard, because it's unpleasant, the circumstance is unpleasant. You don't want it to happen. If there was a way to get away from it oftentimes you would try to do whatever to not even have to face it. But God blesses us, blesses us to come face to face with many things so we can make choices, and prayerfully, the right choices. Do you know what happens when we don't make the right choices? Sooner or later we're going to repeat it; we're going to repeat certain things.

I think of individuals who don't tithe like they should and they're addressed on it. "You're not tithing. You can give 5% but you can't give the other?" Hmmm... So whatever people do in their own minds, but they're not tithing fully - just every once in a while sending something and sometimes then because of certain things that happen in people's lives they're addressed on it. Now, when a person addresses that, and hopefully they always do (but not always, sadly) and begins to tithe, you know what? They're going to face a trial again in that area. Something's going to happen in their life. God's going to allow something to come along so they're going to have to make a choice, "Do I continue to put God first? Do I continue to put God's tithe first, because it's God's, it's not mine and I can't fudge with my finances and play games here. This goes to God. It may be hard. I may go through some difficult things, but God comes first." I'll just tell you I have seen over the decades over and over and over again, especially within the ministry, where this battle has come up in some people's lives over and over again and they don't learn it. Sometimes it comes to a point where I ask, how many times is this going to continue on? When are you going to quit? In one of the most basic of things, one of the most basic things that even Sardis had, and

you're not willing to obey that on a physical plane, let alone address it on a spiritual one? Because it begins physically - choices.

So think about different things in your life that happen and where the result and the product is bad and evil. Sometimes then we go through it again because there's something we need to see in ourselves in life and need to address and change. This is a part of what it's talking about here.

"So put off the old man." That doesn't stop. You continue to fight against self, **which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts**. Do we still see ourselves that way as human beings, that what naturally comes out of us in the way we think oftentimes is not right, that you've got to fight against it? Now, the more you've fought against certain things and conquered it then that part of your thinking is cleared because your mind is set in certain areas and it's never going to be a trial again. Just like people who have battles, they had battles when they came into God's Church with smoking. It's a small thing, it really is, but sometimes it's a giant thing. Again, its repetition and how many times you have to go through it before finally it's set and it's never a trial again. That's the way life is. So you go through many things to refine your life spiritually and it just goes on and on and on and God continues to show you more and more and more of what's inside here that isn't right, that needs to be changed, that needs to come into greater unity with Him.

What about marriage? Does anybody think that they're perfect in their marriage? Does anybody think they don't have something to change in their marriage? That means self first. Because, "Oh yeah, I wish they would change that!" No, that's not what we're talking about because this is the way we have to look. What do I need to change? That's what we always have to do first and foremost.

Verse 24—and that you put on the new; that takes work, and it doesn't stop. It doesn't stop as long as you're in God's Church. You're always working to put on something new. God helps us to grow and mature in the Church and when we hear things we haven't known, like some of the things in this sermon to the degree He's giving it. There are things here we haven't known to this degree. Do we put it on, accept it, acknowledge it, comprehend it, recognize, recognize the greater seriousness of what God has placed before us and become even more determined to fight this fight. **...and put on the new, which after/in accordance with God is created in righteousness and true holiness.** So that's a growing process that never stops in our life and it never stops in marriage. It's something that's ongoing, ever growing. No matter where you are you can do better; you can become more at-one with God, more at-one in life in a single family unit if both are working that way.

Now, dropping on down to **verse 30—And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath...** This word means "indignation in the sense of justifying one's self for perceived injustices and thereby becoming scornful and judgmental of another." I think of marriage. We can do this in marriage in life, the thing about bitterness. I've known of people who have gotten incredibly bitter toward their mate, toward

their spouse, and I think, "What is wrong with you? Where is God in the picture? Why are you bitter?" That's a choice to be made in how one feels and how they respond to various things. We have to fight against bitterness because it's not right, it's not of God, it's not of God's spirit. It's of selfishness, but bitterness can't be there. Yeah, sometimes there can be hurt. Sometimes we go through things in life, but we have to be careful then of our response and our reaction to another person.

I marvel at how God has brought up things over the past year that have been addressed and some who haven't been able to address these things and where they are spiritually because of it. That's sad.

So, **Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger...** It blows my mind where anger comes out, where voices rise, where words are said, where things are said out of bitterness and anger. You know, it's one thing to be hurt, but to take it out on someone else? That's so wrong to do. And do human beings do that? It happens all the time. Does it happen in God's Church? Probably far too often. I've known of too many cases where I work with individuals who have gotten to the point where there are screaming matches. Screaming matches. Hollering. Raising voices. Anger blurting out in powerful ways. Throwing words to hurt. Throwing words to get at the other person. Why? Because I'm hurt and I'm going to throw this at you and say things to you and curse and swear. In God's Church. As soon as that happens they're out. They've cut themselves off immediately from the flow of God's spirit. If they don't make a quick change they are out, they are separated from the Body because that's not allowed in God's Church, for people to act that way as human beings who have God's spirit, the impregnation of God's spirit in their lives. Should that be in God's Church, that two people in a marriage who made a covenant agreement with God Almighty, who made a promise to each other to love each other, to nurture, to care for each other, that they should speak harsh words to one another? But I as a minister have heard many of those things over the past year and far too many that I don't like hearing. I address them. Some people receive it and some people don't. Some people fully repent and go on and grow through it and their lives become richer, and some don't. That leads one way: out, out from the Body. What a horrible thing.

So through all this sermon hopefully we grasp in a profound way what God sees and what God desires and what God has called us to and where so much of our learning begins because if we can't think right in a single family unit, especially when both are in the Body, if we can't think right toward one another and act right toward one another and plan and have goals together as one another with one another in the Body, in the Church God's way (not our way), what are we doing? Can we grow? If it can't be there it will not be there. If it can't be there in the place where we spend all of our time throughout a day, as a whole, if it can't be there it's not in your life. Something has to change.

So God is having us address this as He continues to cleanse the temple, and candidly, He's cleaning up the courtyard, getting rid of the swing sets. Awesome! I love it! So not only does the

temple have to be cleansed, but the courtyard is being cleansed. Put it farther out, farther away. And you know what happens when people are put farther away? Do you know what it says? They're given over to Satan. That's profound. I've seen hideous things happen in people's lives when that happens because they're so cut off from God, so cut off from the flow of God's spirit. Who wants them more than they want anyone else? They have the world. They want them. They want you. It's choices. Awesome to understand.

So this thing about anger and outcry, outburst—that's what it's talking about—harsh reactions to various things and people get in arguments and fights. It shouldn't be in the Church of God let alone in a marriage, and slander, talking down about others, putting others in a bad light **be put away from you with all malice**. In other words, with all intentions of evil. So that's why it comes back around in chapter 5 to the place where it all begins, at the home in the family unit.

It's time to now focus even more so on the kind of strength and reinforcement that God is placing in His Church, and He is stressing to it a far greater purpose and importance that we need to see in all marriage relationships. We're going to look at some things that God has given to be stated about the binding force of the covenant of marriage for people in the Church. This has actually been stated to several married couples over the past many months, of their need to more fully recognize this and live by it.

So what we're now going to focus upon is what everyone needs to grasp about the importance and magnitude of the covenant relationship entered into upon marriage. I'm going to read this as it's an official stance about marriage and any dissolving of a marriage relationship within the Church. So this is what's been sent out to several people over the past many months.

The reason for this letter is to make clearer to you the seriousness of where things now stand concerning your relationship to God's Church.

You entered into a covenant relationship with God at baptism and you again entered into a covenant relationship with God when you were married. You covenanted with God that you would love your spouse and work to be one with them. This involves your promise to cherish, honor, respect, and love them.

When a marriage within the Church comes to an end then there are only a few things that can lead to that result.

First, one or both in the marriage are not living as they should be in their relationship before God. If one or both are in the courtyard rather than in the temple then a divorce can become warranted. If that is the case then one or both will likely become disfellowshipped from the Church.

Second, if one or both are so spiritually weak that they cannot learn to dwell together in harmony and love toward each other (because of selfishness, because that's where it comes

from) then there are times that divorce can be allowed, but if both remain in the Church then neither can remarry.

In such cases where one or both are becoming spiritually weaker because they cannot get along, they cannot learn to live together in peace and care and concern for one another, then in order to get their lives back on spiritual track it is sometimes better to separate. If they still cannot reconcile differences because of all the harm done in the past then its best that they simply divorce, but that result is a great shame.

In all cases of divorce the Church, the government in the ministry, must judge the matter to determine the standing of each individual and what course of action is to be followed. This is not a private matter only between the two who are married. This also involves one relationship with God and thereby the ministry of the Church. It also involves the Church and fellowship within the Church as members of the Church do become involved through some knowledge of what transpires (the result or outcome of the marriage), and this always affects relationships.

Always does.

Throughout this process of the ministry seeking to judge such matters of separation or divorce there will likely be correction that is given. The only exception is when one in the marriage is fully striving to live God's way of life faithfully and the other has lived so badly in the marriage that they have brought themselves to the state of disfellowshipment through their own actions. For one who lives faithfully before God there is no correction that is given them and they are not only free to divorce, but are also free to remarry if they so choose.

That is the stance of God's Church. So there are different things here involved. This is just everything in a nutshell as far as a stance, as far as how God's government works in this in a way that it never has fully in God's Church before. God has brought us to this point because God wants us to grasp and understand the age we're getting ready to go into as the whole world begins to be taught about God's way of life and that people understand what they're doing when they say, "I do." It's powerful.

Let's return to one scripture here in Ephesians 5. We'll do this in closing here. This will be the end of this series. It's good to return here because this is some of the flow. We've gone through certain things here in Ephesians and it's incredible sometimes the flow and where it leads.

Ephesians 5:1—Therefore, be followers, and that word means "imitators; to follow the example of," **of God,** of God, of Jesus Christ and those things that only the Church can really grasp like I mentioned about peace and what God did when He created the angelic realm knowing that the day was coming that peace would no longer be in the angelic realm like it had been, like it would be from the beginning. **Therefore, be followers of God as dear (beloved) children; and walk in**

agape... That's something we can't do of and by ourselves as physical human beings. This is a love that comes from God. This is a love that the source is God Almighty and it only comes into your life as you cry out for help that it be in you, that it live in you. That means there are changes in thinking that have to take place and you cry out for help to not think in certain ways, to think in the right ways and to act in the right ways, to live God's way of life toward others, especially in two who are to be one. Incredible.

...and walk in agape, as Christ has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. That's God's desire. That's what He desires to see in people's lives and what people share in their lives together and the unity and the oneness that is learned in a unique relationship that has so much to do with even understanding things about the Church. It requires sacrifice, a willingness to do so. **But fornication**, the word "immorality," **and all uncleanness**, impurity. We should understand those on a spiritual plane, not just a physical plane. Physical is easy to see. **...or covetousness**, in other words, desiring more, desiring something different that isn't right for us, that isn't good for us, that isn't healthy for us, desiring something different. I think about marriage. You want something different than what you said in the beginning toward each other? What is it you want that both of you aren't in agreement about? What is this different thing you want? What is it? Why is your mind thinking that way, to want something different? What does that mean? It can mean a lot of different things. It can mean a different person, different environment, different this, different that. I don't know. It can be a lot of different things if people build them up in their minds, but it breaks down a marriage.

So all these wrong things it says, **let it not be named even once among you, as becoming saints.** Awesome! It should never happen. That's why I can mention certain things and you think, "How could that ever be in God's Church?" That someone is going to curse each other and maybe so much so they even take God's name in vain as they're doing it, as they're cursing. Now, isn't that a kicker. To think that can happen in the Body of Christ, that two people get so enraged, so out of control in their fighting with each other and things that are being said that even God's name is taken in vain. That says it all because that's what they're doing by what they're doing, taking God's name in vain because that shouldn't be in God's Church. It shouldn't be named once amongst God's people. So that's why something has to happen. Either change, great depth of repentance, or sayonara, auf wiedersehen, dos vedanya, bye-bye. That's what it is because it can't be in God's Church.

So, **let it not be named even once among you, as is becoming saints; neither filthiness**, in other words, shameful or sordid behavior, **nor foolish talking, nor jesting**, in other words, jabbing, ridicule, **disrespecting**, disrespecting one another, things that are stated out of disrespect. People who don't know how to respect one another, **which is not convenient**, meaning "not proper or fitting," **but rather the giving of thanks.**

You know, that's an awesome thing to understand. It's such an incredible change in the way people can think. They allow human nature to get in control, you know, be in control or to be ruling in

the sense of jealousy, envy, bitterness, anger, resentment, disrespect, superiority, all these different attitudes of mind that sometimes can enter into people's lives in these kinds of relationships when things aren't right and the battle that begins to take place. It's so sick. It's so wrong yet there is something that totally gets rid of all that - a different mind. You know what that is? The one that gives thanks. The one that begins to look at the things they have to be thankful for in the other. What an incredible thing. Instead of finding the things that they're not content with or that they don't want or that they want something different (whatever that might mean), but to be thankful for what they do have. It's an awesome thing because this happens in the Church a lot too as we grow and we see these things take place. Sometimes people can get to a point where they're not thankful and grateful for various things that come from God, that come from the Church, or whatever it might be. Yet we learn to be thankful.

I marvel at the very physical life we're given, to give thanks to God day by day. What an awesome thing to be thankful for, life itself, that you have another day. This means a whole lot more to me now than it used to because I've gone through this several times now because the last time I went around this I talked to my two children because I wasn't sure that I'd see another day. That's where I was. Basically I let them know God's Church continues on no matter what. What God has planned and purposed, it doesn't stop. Do we understand to be thankful every day? The more you have to be thankful for, to look around you at the things that God has given us to drink in, do we thank God for what we have around us in this world? The things you can drink in. You heard the expression, "Stop and smell the roses." People pass them up and they don't even know, don't even see.

Do you see the world around you? Do you see the awesome things that God gives you to take in? I think of just the colors! The sky! The beauty! The variety! I don't care what it is. Is that a part of our thinking? The more you think that way that endears you to God Almighty more and more and more, but it has to be genuine and it has to be true. Someplace that has to start. It comes through stopping and thinking about it and saying, "God, thank you." The beautiful autumn, the leaves are changing. The magnificence of the trees when they have no leaves. Beautiful in the way that God created it to be, knowing that spring is coming and that all the green will come back. The cycle of life that God has given to us to imbibe, to drink in. If you live in Hawaii you don't get to experience those things. Just kidding. You get to experience other things to be thankful for. But we all experience different things. What an awesome thing you get to experience different things in your own family in life. Do you think about those things and one another and thank God for it? And maybe thank the other person more often?

Those are things we have to grow in and it's something you have to think about and then do, otherwise it doesn't happen. These things don't just happen. We have to learn. I had to learn how to do various things in God's Church that weren't a part of me like how to give a hug, how to think differently toward individuals and people around me that wasn't in me. See? I had to learn to say, "Father, I love you," and mean it with every fiber of my being. Because in the first many years I

wasn't able to do that. Can you be in God's Church for that long and God have patience with you and love you and you growing spiritually until you finally come to that point? Yeah. I'm walking proof of it. It wasn't until I was ordained a minister, shortly after that, that I began to see certain things and recognize how God was working in my life and I was able to say it in spirit and truth, "Father, I love you." Awesome! We go through healing because of what we come out of in our physical lives and the things that so scar our minds and scar our thinking. As time goes along we go through an awesome and a beautiful healing process and it changes us in the way we think.

So whenever you're down about various things, when things aren't going well and things aren't going right and you begin to think in wrong terms think about what it is you have to be thankful for, not just toward God, but especially in that union. What is there to be thankful for? Because if there is nothing, it's over. There's no marriage, but if there are things to be thankful for and can be built upon then even if it's one sided at least it's one sided, and if the other can't do that then there's not going to be anything there. Those are choices and stuff that people come to in life sometimes, sadly.

So this thing of thankfulness, brethren, I cannot stress that enough. I could give several sermons on that alone, the importance of just being thankful. You have to think about that because it doesn't just happen. You know what? Selfish human beings just don't think that way. If they are thankful it's a selfish thing, as a whole. If it comes out of you it can be very selfish because it's what you're getting and self is happy and they're thankful that they're happy because they're getting, getting, getting, and I'm getting my way. That's not what real thankfulness is all about. I hope you understand the difference.

Verse 8—For you were once in darkness, but now are you in light in the Lord. We're supposed to be totally different. If we're not totally different and there are certain things happening and God says it shouldn't be once named, shouldn't be in the Church, well, then that's the answer. There's either repentance or not in the Church. **Walk as children of light.** It's a choice. **(For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.)** That's what God's spirit produces in your life, in your thinking. You can't control anyone else's thinking, but you can control yours in the worst of circumstances around you. I make choices as to what it is or who it is I'm going to allow to bother me, to get me upset, or anything of that nature. I don't have to have that. I don't have to think that way. I can choose to think differently. That's our goal, to think differently. **(For the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, that's what it produces, and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.** I love that word because it's about this thing again of that means you've got to put it to practice. You've got to exercise it. To prove something? You know, people used to take that as being they get out their Strong's Concordance and their Bible and they start going through, "Oh, there it is - Husband's the head of the wife! I proved it!" No, you didn't prove diddly squat. On the contrary, you just became an ogre.

So proving what is acceptable unto the Lord means you have to put it to practice. You have to do it. You have to live it. You have to exercise it.

Verse 11—And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, no fellowship. Don't have anything in your life that you're allowing to exist that is divisive and harmful and evil and things that are stated to one another, **but rather reprove them**. That means to correct them, to change them, to do your part in changing self because you can never change another person ever.

For it is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret. Nothing is done in secret before God Almighty. Adam and Eve tried it. Isn't that amazing how many things go back there? They really do. I've got a sermon coming up, the next series here, goes back there to Adam and Eve again. It's where it all begins. If we can understand what happened there we'll get the big picture, we can build upon what God has given to us. So they tried to be in the garden. They tried to be in the trees. They tried to be wherever it was amongst the things so that God wouldn't see them. Duh. But we do it spiritually if we're not careful.

But all things that are reprov'd, in other words, corrected. This means, basically, we're addressing it, we're seeking to correct it, being reprov'd/being exposed. That's what the word means in the Greek. That which is being exposed. Perhaps we're coming face to face with something we never even knew was in our thinking and because God's helping to expose it and we're seeing it and then we have decisions to make. This is what this is. **But all things that are reprov'd/exposed are made manifest by the light**. It's God's spirit that shows things that are in error and things that are wrong. What a beautiful thing. **...for whatever makes anything manifest is light**. So we make choices about drawing closer, getting closer to the light, doing things God's way.

Verse 14—Wherefore he said, Awake any who sleep, and arise from the dead. That's what God shows us. When we're not doing things in a right way and on a right path it's leading in a wrong direction and that's the outcome if we don't repent and change. **...and Christ will give you light**. **See to it that you walk circumspectly**, that means carefully, with exactness, in other words. That's how we need to plot out our lives and think about our lives and not just let it happen to us, but think about those things that God gives us. Just in the area of thankfulness, as I mentioned, and gratitude, you have to think about it. What is it in your family that you have to be thankful for? If you need to write it down, maybe start there. Maybe start there, by writing down certain things and then thinking about those things. The more you focus on those things the happier you'll become as they become more a part of you and you think in that way because, you see, the things that selfishness thinks about are the things to be unhappy about, the things that aren't going "my way."

See to it that you walk circumspectly, carefully, with exactness, **not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time**, making the most of the time you have in God's Church, in God's way of life,

because the days are evil. Boy, it couldn't be better said at this particular time in the world, I'll tell you.

I think of Noah's time so often and where we are and I marvel and so desire to see an end to all this. I look forward to a particular time here that's coming so soon when this, of what we've gone through, is the foundation and the mind of people as they begin to learn this is what marriage is to be, this is what people are to work at, this is the beauty that God has given and meant for people to live in the beginning but couldn't because of wrong choices and then people being able to have the ability to make right choices, to live, to practice, to put to work God's way of life in their life.