

THE MYSTERY OF ONENESS AND PASSION

A Challenge to Something Greater in Marriage and the Church

Proverbs 18:22

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

MARRIAGE

First, Marriage is a choice, it is not required. Singleness in service of God is also a noble thing.

All love is a gift from God and the love between a man and a woman in marriage is a special gift. This wonderful blessing is under assault by Satan and our worldly culture that wants to pervert and twist it into something unrecognizable or destroy completely this beautifully thing God gave us.

We need to challenge the effects our culture is having on the body of Christ. We need to embrace all that God has given us to enjoy. We need to use what God has given us in his work for his glory WHILE we enjoy it!!

THE MYSTERY OF ONENESS

Ephesians 5:25-33

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing^[b] her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."^[c] ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

There is a great mystery surrounding marriage. It is the way that two become one. A man that sleeps with a prostitute becomes one with her in the physical sense as it tells us in I Corinthians 6; however, oneness in marriage begins with the physical union but is so much more. It is oneness in commitment, in life, in choice, in plans and goals, in parenthood, in heart, in mind, in passion, in spirituality. It is difficult, maybe even impossible, to describe what a lifelong

journey of “oneness” with your spouse can mean. Not everyone achieves it. And each couple grows together in their own way.

As the years go by you grow together and change each other. You each become something together that you were not separately: More than the sum of the two selves. You reach a point where you are still individuals but you become one entity inseparable in heart and mind and spirit. Look at many of the couples around you in the church. It is hard to think of them separately! They are one entity even to the rest of us, as they should be: In all ways, even spiritually.

SPIRITUALITY

The need for love and unity – oneness - is true spiritually. God made us social beings. We need each other. And God gave us many outlets for this social aspect of our lives: The family of our youth, the Body of Christ, friendship, and especially the bond of marriage.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

⁹Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: ¹⁰If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! ¹¹Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? ¹²Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Marriage is the ultimate Team designed to serve and glorify God. God intended teamwork – it works best. He wants the whole body of Christ to work together in congregations. He wants people to get married and have families. He even stated that it was best that those who serve and lead in the Body, the Deacons and Elders, be married and have families. This helps them understand others who are married but it also helps them understand unity and love and oneness.

ROMANCE & SEXUALITY

Proverbs 30:18-19

There are three things that amaze me— no, four things that I don't understand: how an eagle glides through the sky, how a snake slithers on a rock, how a ship navigates the ocean, AND How a man loves a woman. [\(NLT\)](#)

Love is a powerful gift from God. The love between a man and a woman is particularly strong and designed so by God. This mysterious combination of deep affection and sexual attraction we call romantic love was designed for us by God. While it serves to solidify the home for children to be raised, it is not just about

procreation. It is about the goodness of God and his blessings. It is to teach us about love and the love God has for us.

In all that romance and sexuality entail we need to fight against the world but embrace what is good. Deep affection, passion, and sexuality are so important that an entire book of the Word of God is dedicated to them! Yet we hardly ever talk about The Song of Solomon!! It is also so important that God commanded that we each give control of our bodies to the other!

I Corinthians 7:2-5

²But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. ³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

THE SPECIAL BOND

Romance, affection, and sexuality are a special bond. A cement that helps two people become one entity. If we each have only one partner in life than this bond is extremely strong. The more sexual or romantic/affection partners we have the more the bond is diluted and weakened. Widows can remarry and we can rebuild relationships after sin, but God intended one partner for life.

This bond provides a safe place for children to be raised, but it also provides a safe place for each person to mature and flourish and serve God.

Embrace the romance and sexuality in your marriage. (Note that I almost always mention romance and sexuality together. The world wants to separate them and make sex just an animal impulse to get pleasure with anyone anytime without love or commitment.) This romance and sexuality is a gift from God. The Bible tells us that God has given us many things for our enjoyment: work, sunshine, food. Many of these things we pursue and try to excel at. Many people put great effort into their work. Others learn many ways to prepare wonderful food and use what they have learned to give enjoyment and serve others. (You know this if you have ever been to a Pot-luck dinner!!)

Sexuality is another of the things God has given us to make life good. Pursue sexuality with your spouse like you pursue excellence in work or the way you pursue good recipes and great food. Make it a hobby to please each other and nurture the physical relationship. The Bible states that each person's body doesn't belong to them alone, but belongs to their spouse as we read in I Corinthians 7. If your body belongs to your spouse, you shouldn't just give it to them; you should use it to please them.

It is fun to please someone you love, to give to them. Give your mate what they need and what they want and watch your relationship blossom. Don't be ashamed and don't be shy. God intended and designed you for this! Embrace and relish in it and praise God and thank him for it! God is great!

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

⁶ Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its ardor unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. ⁷ Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away.

This is easy when love is new but what about as the years pass?

MAKING IT LAST

Proverbs 5:18-19

¹⁸ May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.

God makes it clear that marriage was intended to last a lifetime. The love and affection in marriage was intended to last a lifetime also!

It is here that I am going to respectfully disagree with many in the church. Over the years I have heard Christians advising those newly married to enjoy the passion for it will pass and be replaced by something deeper but not so passionate.

I disagree. Passion does not have to die, not unless we let it. God intended love to last and the deep affection and strong passion can live on, too, if we make it so. And I now have scientific proof to back up my belief!

CNN ARTICLE: Love Can Last a Lifetime

<http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/01/04/true.love.found/index.html>

Love is a choice. We all know this and mention it often. But we are generally talking about agape love, Godly love, wanting the highest good for someone. Many people say that you must love someone but you don't have to be friends or you don't have to like them as if these aspects of love were beyond our control. Far more is under our control than we like to admit.

The secret is that all love is a choice: Godly love, friendship love, Eros love, attraction, and passion. All are under our control. They aren't easy. We cannot choose to be attracted to one person and not another and switch the next day. But we can day by day make choices and choose to be attracted or not be attracted to someone. We can choose to be passionate; we can choose to be a friend. The power of what we think is amazing. Choose to love; choose to be best friends with your spouse. Choose to be romantic. Choose to be attracted. Act it. Think it. Live it, and it will happen. If you have been married for some time and it has gone away, decide to make it return.

HOW CAN WE MAKE IT GREAT AND HOW CAN WE MAKE IT LAST?

Malachi 2:15-16

¹⁵Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. ^[e] So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ¹⁶"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself ^[f] with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.

First and foremost, it isn't a great or perfect husband, or a great or perfect wife, that makes a marriage great. It's a great and perfect God and two people who submit to him, that's what makes a marriage great!

So do things his way. Marriage, and love, and passion, were his idea, he made them, so read the instruction manual and do it his way!

LIST OF MARRIAGE HINTS

I collected a list of ideas to help make a marriage better. This list comes from many sources including from several people here, some books, and a few of my own. I would like to share some of the items on the list, and the list will be available on the back table. **(See attachment)**

Follow these ideas. Make your marriage great. Work at it. Challenge yourself. In the future there will be more lessons about marriage. We will have some

seminars, weekend retreats, and Bible studies. If you are interested in any of these see one of the elders or Doug. This October there is a weekend seminar available at the York Church of Christ. I would recommend that you attend if possible. Information will be posted on the Local Activities bulletin board on the back wall to the left.

THE MYSTERY OF ONENESS AND THE CHURCH

Ephesians 5:29-32

²⁹After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰for we are members of his body. ³¹"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."^[c] ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

The uniting of a man and woman, the great mystery of oneness that those who are married can experience is an analogy for the church! The church is the bride of Christ.

Being the bride of Christ is to be in the ultimate romance. Jesus is the greatest "knight in shining armor." His deep affection and love for us surpasses the greatest love any man ever had for a woman! He loves us and longs for us. He is passionate - about you. His passion does not abate.

He wants us to become one with him!

I Cor 6:15-17

¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! ¹⁶Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."^[b] ¹⁷**But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.**

We are called to be one with the Lord in spirit. We are called to be his bride whom he loves deeply.

Jeremiah 3:14

¹⁴"Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion.

Isaiah 54:5-7

⁵ For your Maker is your husband— the LORD Almighty is his name— the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

⁶ The LORD will call you back as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit— a wife who married young, only to be rejected," says your God.

⁷ "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

Ephesians 5:31-32

³¹"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."^[c] ³²This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

We can grow together and be one with Christ as a couple grows together over the years. This is the great mystery, that the mystery of oneness in marriage is an analogy for the mystery of oneness with Christ in the body of Christ!

What a profound and humbling mystery! We the church as the bride of Christ can become one with him!

Is this God we serve not the most amazing, loving God!!

I would like to give you the following challenges:

1. For the single:

- a. Embrace singleness and submit to God
- b. Support marriage in the church through your service.
- c. Be the bride of Christ – that's enough love for anyone!

2. For those seeking marriage:

- a. Build a relationship with God first!
- b. Have patience and trust in God.
- c. God wants to give you good things. Pray and believe
- d. Look around at those doing it right and ask them about it

3. For those divorced or in difficult marriages:

- a. Choose to make it work. Don't give up
- b. Humbly submit to God and seek his path
- c. Start today to do it God's way – one step at a time
- d. Get help – Spiritual, personal, professional:
 - i. From God through study and prayer
 - ii. From His Word – by listening and doing

- iii. From Christian friends
- iv. From Christian counselors
- v. From Christian professionals if necessary
- e. See what can be, not what has been:
 - i. Realize that the future can be far better than you think
 - ii. Accept that it is possible with God (Mark 9:23, 10:27, Phil 4:13)

4. For those who are newly married:

- a. Aim high – start today to make it the best marriage possible,
- b. Start now to build good marital habits
- c. Feed the fire in every aspect of your relationship and keep the passion!
- d. Together go after life, but remember...

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

⁹Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. ¹⁰So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

5. For couples with children:

- a. God 1ST, spouse 2ND, children 3RD

6. For those who have been married for some time:

- a. Renew your vows, love, commitment, and passion,
- b. Enjoy life with your spouse,
- c. Set an example for those around you
- d. Build each other up

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

- e. Team up and use what you have to serve God, to serve the body of Christ, and to reach out to others,

7. For all of us:

- a. Be in awe of the love of God,
 - i. Always remember that the deepest love a man has ever had for a woman pales compared to how God loves you,
- b. Be humbled by the love of Christ,
- c. Acknowledge that love and seek a deep relationship with God and Christ

Micah 6:8

⁸ He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

INVITATION

If you need help with your relationship,
If you want to rededicate your relationship before others,
If you want to rededicate your relationship with God,
If you don't have a relationship and would like to learn how to have one, and how
to be part of the bride of Christ,

Please come as we stand and sing.

LIST OF THINGS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO A GREAT MARRIAGE

1. Put God First,
2. Believe it is possible to have a great marriage,
3. Choose to have a great marriage,
4. Commitment for life. Period,
5. Remove divorce from your dictionary,
6. Communicate your commitment regularly,
7. Be the man/woman that God wants you to be,
8. Have a good sense of humor,
9. No secrets,
10. Be willing to learn and admit when you are wrong,
11. Develop good listening skills,
12. Ask God for wisdom,
13. Think before you speak,
14. Acknowledge the other person,
15. Love is a four letter word spelled G-I-V-E,
16. Mutual respect,
17. Make your marriage your #1 hobby,
18. Take two daily lists: One you make about what about your spouse irritates you, and the other you should make about what you appreciate about your spouse:
Consciously take the list of irritations and throw it away and don't think about it.
Read over the list of what you appreciate and keep it. Refer to it often, add to it tomorrow, and share it with your spouse and others,
19. Realize the differences in your spouse and modify your actions to match your spouse,
20. "Be" with your spouse on a regular basis, turn EVERYTHING off that distracts,
21. Have regular date nights, even if's at home with a movie and popcorn -- get rid of the kids if possible,
22. Always woo/date/pursue your spouse - never stop trying to win them,
23. The 50/50 principle: meaning you should be a united team,
24. The 60/40 principle: meaning both parties should try to give more than they get,
25. The 100/0 principle: you take 100% responsibility for your relationships and act to make them better while expecting 0 in return, <http://store.simpletruths.com/the-1000-principle-p2060.aspx>
26. Begin every morning with a kiss and an "I Love You",
27. Instead of a peck on the cheek, grab them and kiss them. Twice.
28. Don't make any major purchase (say above \$250) without discussing it with your spouse,
29. Never criticize your spouse to others. (Some light joking is OK within reason)
30. Focus more on experiences than things,
31. A small heartfelt gift is better than an expensive "guilt offering",
32. Deal with finances together,
33. Do a regular study with your wife - alternating between the Bible and improvement books such as on how to strengthen your marriage,
34. ALWAYS speak glowingly of your spouse never negatively,
35. You are the master of your words until they are spoken, then they are the master of you. Choose your words carefully.
36. Have a Positive Attitude,
37. Treat your spouse better than you treat anyone else,

38. Apply all the passages on how to love and treat others to your spouse first,
39. Key on the positive and negative example of parents and grandparents on both sides, embrace and emulate the good, choose to overcome the bad,
40. Surround yourself with good examples in the Body of Christ,
41. Have a desire for a long term good marriage - be in love with love and marriage, picture yourself and your spouse as a happy old couple with children and grandchildren facing the challenges of later life together. Look for examples in the church,
42. Invest for retirement with good planning and regular payments – in your relationship, not your money,
43. Believe that love and romance does not have to die after the honeymoon but can continue to grow (1 in 10 people together for 20 years feel as strongly about their spouse as newlyweds!
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/HEALTH/01/04/true.love.found/index.html>),
44. Commitment to never, ever, consider separation or divorce; the words do not exist in the dictionary. Discuss this before and during marriage. Communicate it often,
45. Limit the physical aspects of any relationship prior to marriage and only have sex with one person, your spouse. This will make the sexual bond stronger,
46. Choose to desire your spouse. As we think, so we are,
47. Choose to be passionate. Act it, say it. As we think, so we are
48. Read the Song of Solomon together, or even to each other,
49. Enjoy and pursue sex with each other, always try to please each other,
50. Never use sex as a bargaining tool and never withhold yourself,
51. Pursue sex and pleasing each other as some pursue learning to cook well, make it a shared hobby,
52. Don't put the children first to the detriment of your relationship. The most important thing you can do for your children is to take the time to have a good marriage,
53. See your own flaws and overlook your spouses,
54. From day one, and each day, look at your spouse and see them as the measure of beauty in the world. Communicate this frequently,
55. Learn and work at the secret to long term attraction: Look at the thousands of physical and behavioral characteristic of your spouse. As you age, only some of them will change. Key on what doesn't change. That's how passionate older couples "see" each other,
56. Communicate everyday how much you love your spouse,
57. Communicate every day how much you appreciate your spouse,
58. Communicate every day how much you desire your spouse,
59. Never communicate the negatives to others,
60. Always communicate the positives to others,
61. Count your blessings,
62. Overlook the negatives that exist because of the positives you appreciate so much, they are often related,
63. Seek it everyday, Find it everyday, Think it everyday, say it everyday, believe it everyday - Whatever is positive about your spouse and marriage,
64. Practice Godly love,
65. Realize that each of us has the potential to sin, including adultery, therefore plan to avoid it and don't get into any questionable situations,
66. Say you're sorry and then act it,
67. Be quick to say I love you and tell them everything they do right,
68. Be slow to criticize,
69. Never, ever, ever say, "If you love me, you'd..." or "I'm going to leave, unless you..."

70. Never try to change the other person, change yourself,
71. Join the CMAT club "Can't Miss A Thing" Life is very short. We only get on average 77 summers, 77 Christmas mornings, 77 New Years. In marriage we will be very fortunate to get more than 50 years together. Relish your sweethearts presence while he or she is here,
72. Don't sweat the small stuff; and more of it is small stuff than you think,
73. Be devoted and give preference to one another. (Romans 12:10)
74. Accept one another. (Romans 15:7)
75. Care for one another. (1 Corinthians 12:25)
76. Carry each other's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)
77. Forgive one another. (Ephesians 4:32)
78. Encourage, build up one another. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
79. Spur one another on to love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)
80. Confess your sins to one another. (James 5:16)
81. Pray for one another. (James 5:16)