

The Sanctity of Marriage

By: Thomas Ackerman

Teaching

Thank you all for being here. I've been asked to speak on the sanctity of marriage, so I have to bring up the question -- what is sanctity? Sanctity is an expression meaning holiness, and holiness refers in particular to being set apart from what is common and set apart from sin. It has other shades of meaning and qualities, but that's it on the basic level.

Something -- whether marriage or morning breakfast -- can have holiness because it expresses the holy God, such as the burning bush did, take off your sandals for this is holy ground, God is thrice holy so what communicates about God is holy too, the Bible is holy, our worship is holy, marriage is holy too, as it communicates the Almighty

Sanctity in our life is also anything that brings us closer to the Lord, those things which spring from our salvation that unite us with Christ, and conform us to Him, just like sacrifice, or good works, or communion, or baptism, or prayer, marriage has sanctity because it works on making us saints, it requires we be like Christ

How does marriage do this? For the sake of time I will only go over several ways, but if we wanted we could find a long list of what makes marriage such a sacred thing.

Restores the right order in the world, ends the enmity

From moment of belief there is a new creation, a separating between light and darkness as it were, as we see God's goodness, and the darkness of turning away from Him, as we see the goodness of His law, and how harmful, and degrading to humanity that evil is, a line has been drawn in a new creation in the soul

Old language goes away, to be replaced with new words of wisdom, truth, love

Old practices fall away, sins, and worldly habits

To be replaced with prayer, Bible study, service to our brother

So too God-ordered marriage rights the old corrupt creation, and expresses the spiritual truth and virtues of the new creation

One of the first things that comes to mind, is the peace that it brings between man and woman, a conflict clearly portrayed and foretold in Genesis (Genesis 3:16), with a curse on the woman, not

the man interestingly, that **her desire shall be for her husband** – meaning she will try to control him, **but HE shall rule over you**, so that desire women have to control their husbands is part of the curse of sin, from the Fall, and man's ruling over her is not mere leadership, which Adam already had from the beginning, but a domineering, even cruel leadership, not one that understands her as the weaker vessel, not one that seeks for her good always, not one that wants to wash her clean, or protect her, just a mere control, far from understanding and caring for the one under us, we see in brief here what societies have noted for millennia, the enmity and fight for power between male and female

The world today speaks of a war of the sexes, the culture makes jokes about how couples are supposed to fight, jokes that demean the other -- and I don't use that kind of humor by the way, even though they can be funny, they pervert the truth – secular culture communicates how men are supposed to be stupid and be jerks, and women are supposed to make clever putdowns against them.

The world tries to create a war between the sexes by pushing women to do what men have always done in the work world, often taking away jobs from men who really need them, and men still fight to hold onto those jobs, and their traditional place in society, the world speaks of a war between men and women in the battles over lust and relationships that they go through, women trying to manipulate men in relationships, or to get their money, and men playing with women's emotions, lying to them just for the sake of using them as harlots, I believe Harry Belafonte wrote a song about this conflict, it began with the line – ever since the world began, woman was always teaching man – it seems to joke about women cheating men, and sleeping around -- in a sad reflection of Genesis truth, and the fall of humanity, Belafonte even used many biblical references, showing the how experienced women are in manipulating men

You can see the fallen, wrong relationship between men and women all around in the culture, but more than this, you can see it even expected, as if this is just the way the world works, it works that way supposedly because we are different, because we use each other, because we put the other down, because we do violence to the other, emotional cruelty, as if it's expected by the time a man or woman is in their 20s they have been used like trash, emotionally distraught, experiencing pain over past relationships for years, aborted several children, and have already become cynical about the idea of a lifelong loving marriage, they might not even know anyone who has one, THAT is what it seems many people expect from male-female relationships, and it is what countless get

But Christ brings an end to the enmity (Eph 2:15-16). That's a rich concept in Scripture. Romans 8 teaches that all who are in the flesh, are at enmity with God. We must go from the flesh to the Spirit. this is a part of the new creation, Ephesians 2 speaks of an end to the enmity between man and God, as well as an end to the enmity between Israel and the nations, because the law has

been abolished, these two peoples no longer have this harsh barrier between them, they are free to be one, for the enmity has been put to death in Christ,

We can speak of an end to conflict in the peace we can have with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, and I believe we must also apply that principle to marriage, because our flesh is being put to death in Christ, false social expectations die, false attitudes die, selfishness dies, we are free from the conflict that has plagued man and woman since the Garden, marriage is a chance to experience restored order, gloriously restored order, that expresses the highest degree of truth, and also brings new life, a miracle, to all of us, and that baby isn't only a gift to you, it is a gift to all society also, marriage is a beautiful place of peace

In the restored male female order, this marriage, the man and woman are not pitted against each other, they are not trying to get from the other just what they want, rather, they are responsible to love the other, to care for the needs of the other, and to each do their unique job, unique to the strengths that God gave to men and women, the man protects and provides for his wife, the weaker vessel, he holds her up as the Lord holds up the Church, and honors her as an example of godliness and virtue, He washes her as the Lord washes us, the wife helps, and submits to her husband, showing him meekness and gentleness, giving him the example of spiritual beauty and holiness

Regarding the restoration of the right order, I find it intriguing what happens to our sinful desires. The most common sins among women are those related to vanity, the most common among men, those related to lust. We think of the woman who wants the world to look at her, and receive praise, and get men's attention as motivated by pride, and perhaps a dangerous manipulator. The man who wants to treat women as harlots, we see as a sleazy, selfish creature, one who regards women as little more than a sewer for his desires. Yet notice, when the daughter of Christ humbles herself, lives a virtuous life, submits to her husband, bears new life in her womb, she receives all the praise in the world, her husband lifts her up and presents her as a godly female, no longer is receiving praise and being pretty a vain thing, it is what the daughter of God naturally receives as reward for her humility, childbearing, and walk of holiness. Her man wants the world to know how good and how beautiful she is. When the son of Christ humbles himself, sacrifices his life for his family, leads his wife in holiness and washes her clean, we find that he receives freely what he desires and enjoys his desire with his wife as in the Garden, no longer is his lust a weapon of war, and a flamethrower at the world, it becomes a desire which shows how cherished his beloved is, and brings about the miracle of new life, children to be raised in the law of the Lord and given love to: a gift to the world and to the Church. I call this the right order being restored as well. The thorns and thistles and sinfulness have gone from these desires, and they now are gifts freely received and the fruit of a beautiful life.

Marriage has sanctity because it represents God: The Almighty is the source of all holiness, and in marriage we manifest this for the world . . . think of the passage that as a people of God we are “partakers of the divine nature” – marriage is an experience of that nature, it expresses our redemption in Christ, and expresses the nature of the Trinity,

2 Peter 1:3-4 teaches

as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust

People can discuss and express in various ways what being partakers of the divine nature means exactly, and some could take that in a heretical way, but at the minimum this speaks of our participation in who God is and what God does, our participation in the things of God, in its glorious sacramental sense, in its glorious mystical union sense, because both of these make real or make visible the invisible divine power of God

We participate then in God with our marriages as we do in the Assembly. We do this first by revealing sacramentally what salvation is. The Savior and the saved people – I like to say – the Salvation Vessel – the Ark of the Church with its Captain who leads, and protects and heals it. The husband manifests the headship of our Lord, and His calling forth His special people, taking her away from anything that is filthy, or anything that is common, to wash her pure, protect her, heal her, lift her up finally to the world as a virtuous Bride, a glorious, beautiful, virtuous bride.

The wife, manifests the called people, in her honoring her Lord, meekly submitting to Him, working always for the good of his kingdom, for becoming pure and holy through her husband’s godly leadership

A man knows this implicitly, as he protects his wife, and makes sure she has all that she needs, in the household the man knows the heavy and the dangerous work is for him, not his lovely wife, he does not expect her to do the work that will break her back, or threaten to harm her, or the small child in her womb, or the small children who are close to her, he knows this implicitly as he takes her hand on a difficult path on the mountain, stepping first to see which stone are safe, lifting her up across anywhere she might fall, he knows that she is a human being with two feet and agility, but he does this naturally because he loves her as Christ, and she is the weaker vessel, he takes the danger himself, he does not place her in harm

The man knows this as he leads the Bible reading and worship in the home, not that no one else has an ability to read the Word of God, but he knows his place as the priest and preacher, I am counseling a couple who will soon marry next September, even now they are practicing their

roles, the man leads Bible study with his fiancé over the phone, and she embraces her role in receiving this washing of the Word, apart from her own reading, but as a people, under her husband, being spiritually protected, led, and washed clean, just as Christ will present a holy people to the world, the husband cleanses his wife and publically shows that she is virtuous and she is treasured

The wife also knows this implicitly, as she expresses the love, and devotion, and meek submission that the congregation has to our Lord Jesus, that we are called to have as Christians, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**, (2 Cor 10:5) she naturally admires her man's strength, and that is something decades of secular indoctrination has not changed, you can go to fairly liberal regions, which have been soaking in humanism and feminism for years, and the large majority of women will still say they desire a strong man, they are not attracted to weakness in him, they are attracted to his strength and firmness, which are two of the elements that make Him a picture of our Captain Jesus Christ, a woman knows this implicitly as she wants to help her man build his kingdom, help him to be great, be fulfilled in helping to fulfill her man's dreams, basically be fulfilled in being a helper and watching her man succeed, no matter how many sinful men have existed in the history of the earth, a woman knows a deep spiritual peace in being protected and led by her man, no wrong example of this makes the truth any less true, a woman can fully bloom as a woman and a child of God when she has the leadership and strong shoulder of her man to bring her peace, just as many plants will not grow well, or live long, without being planted next to the protection and warmth of a house, or the way seedlings need to grow even within its walls, in a sunlit place, there are anxieties, sadness, and horrors that simply fade away with the man's continual attention and protection, just as men have protected their women from enemy invaders and bandits throughout the ages, the simple strength of the man, like her Savior brings her peace, this is his love, devotion, leadership in the home, and leadership spiritually over her, he is her captain, as Christ captains the Church.

LIFELONG: The man and wife's unity represent another divine truth of Christ's actions: His faithfulness to His Church. The reality of uniting for life pictures the unwavering love of Christ for us, and also illustrates the Church's faithfulness through the ages, an unbroken unity is sacramental of the unbroken union that the Lord has with His people, whom He will present at the end of the world to His Father, Christ will never leave us nor forsake us, not merely for some sentimental love, but because that is His mission, to save a people and to make that people holy, and you do not do that if you abandon that people or if that people depart from you and return to harlotry, to paganism or idolatry, only lifelong marriage can truthfully picture salvation, that is marriage by its nature, a picture of unbreakable love between Christ and the Church, as we see in Revelation, Christ will rule: **we shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on [our] foreheads...and the Lord God [will give us] light** (Rev 22:4,5) and His Bride will persevere: **having the glory of God. Her light [*will be*] like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal...and [we] shall reign forever and ever** (Rev 21:11, 22:5)

TRINITY: This revealing of God's truth in marriage, goes further than the salvation vessel, as we know that marriage is holy also in its expression of the divine essence, the Holy Trinity, in being patterned on the relationship between Father, Son, and Spirit – we see much of this in the Gospel of John chapters 14 to 17, as Jesus teaches how the relationship between Father and Son parallels the relationship between Christ and His people. Later we learn how Christ and His people reveal the relationship between husband and wife. We understand then, that the divine loving relationship pours down from the Trinity, to the Church, and then to marriage. Read these passages yourself.

I'd love to go over a few sections I did on this theme from my book, but time does not allow it, What is revealed in John is truth which passes down to our marriages; the Father sharing His glory with the Son, and the Son glorifying the Father, the love poured out by the Father which the Son receives and shares with His people, the will of the Father leading the Son in all things, and the Son submitting His life to the Father and obeying Him; the Father dwelling within the Son and the Son within the Father, the oneness that they have together which pictures the oneness of the Church, the truth that their oneness will lead souls to believe.

In man and wife, there is a beautiful and powerful pillar of mutual love and glorification, and another one also, of headship and gentle, meek submission. This relationship within the nature of God exemplifies marriage, it pours out grace upon our marriages, it should lead us as an example, and as a mystery which also provokes our thought and meditation. Our marriages are a manifestation for the world, of the nature of God Himself. Because God is holy, this marriage is holy too. It will lead souls to believe and be saved.

Marriage is a model of the Church which is a people brought forth for sanctification, marriage is a microcosm of the holy people, and also of a godly society, there are many ways in which marriage acts like a Church in miniature, but I want to touch on one here, which is the job of **learning to help each other in suffering and with our struggles with sin,**

The traditional marriage vow that promises to be there through better and worse, sickness and health, richer and poorer, is a reminder of the kind of acceptance of hard times we will need to have, in order to both aid and to forgive the other. For many couples the expectation is the opposite. Hard times will bring a decision to give up and look for better elsewhere. Sin will breed the idea we now have an excuse to depart from our loved one.

For example, the likelihood of divorce for couples in prison, if you didn't know, is incredible – one study found that for each year a spouse as in prison, the likelihood of divorce increases by 32%, even AFTER the spouse has been released from prison – it seems the separation, the suffering, perhaps the lack of trust due to crime, the distractions while a spouse is away, the bad habits the spouse learned while locked up, inspire people to end their marriages. Being a healer, and choosing to forgive sounds beyond them.

It is also common that victims of certain crimes are more likely to divorce: There are many examples. In the case of one perpetrator (the East Area Rapist crimes), a criminal who attacked couples in their home and committed sexual assault – I read over 90% of his victims divorced after the pain of the attack, this criminal has beyond his crimes inspired dozens of divorces, because people were ashamed of their victimhood and their pain, this is very common

This is the opposite of the way we are made to be, as a two beings become one flesh, as a holy community of people, pain is a chance to sympathize with the other, to understand the other's weaknesses, to be bound in prayer together, to live by prayer which is always most fervent when there is grief, ultimately to be more intimate spiritually and emotionally because of what we have gone through in pain

My wife and I had the experience of losing a young child together, that is something nothing in the world could prepare you for, I have always felt closer to my wife after that experience, because you know each other better in seeing the other suffer, and help the other through loss, in seeking to aid the other, we know each other more deeply and are bound more strongly together, suffering has not become an insurmountable obstacle, but a building block to something greater

Some ministers today teach, shockingly, that you can even divorce your spouse if they are suffering from dementia, or serious debility, and cannot function any longer to do what they used to be able to do, this is a rejection of our role as Christians and makes of marriage a common and very unholy thing, I personally know, or have spoken with, many older brethren who take care of their spouse, through serious illness, including dementia, caring for someone who almost seems like a stranger, when God teaches to care for the suffering, the sick, the needy, that includes our own family and is a part of our marriage ministry, it cares for, protects, heals

2 Corinthians chapter 1, in one of Paul's fantastic greetings which contain theology, teaches:
Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

This passage explicitly shows that through our unity with God in Christ, the comfort which we receive from the Lord is one which we are able to comfort others. We have taken in ourselves something of the sufferings of the Savior himself, and through this have a special ability to understand the suffering of others and console them. There is none closer to us to console than our spouse.

This work is part and parcel of Christ's character and His mission. The book of Hebrews chapter 2 says of our High Priest, **that in all points He was made like His brothers, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people, for in that He himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted**, if our High Priest, in becoming man, experienced with us our pain and our temptation, so as to sacrifice Himself for us, show us the perfect man, we likewise give ourselves, we aid our partner who is suffering, our prayers, our labor, our longsuffering is for them, that is a holy calling in marriage as in the Christian life, the Christian does not turn from a spouse who gives in to temptation, or who is locked up in prison, or who is in pain. They aid and strengthen them, with their own personal being

A lot of people wouldn't like to hear this, but I really respect Camille Cosby, the wife of the famous comedian who is in prison now, Camille is still a Mrs. and not a Miss – she knows very well the sins of her husband, and probably knew of infidelities a long time ago, but she remains at peace, and respectful of her marriage, even though she actually talked to lawyers about ending it, instead she decided to do a vow renewal ceremony with her imprisoned spouse, they've been married 55 years, he is in prison, she is a good wife, they are not two but they are one flesh

If we speak of being a Church in miniature, sin in our spouse makes us part of what scripture calls the ministry of reconciliation; that ministry of helping another restore a right relationship with God, and through that they will also have restored a right relationship with others.

From 2 Corinthians chapter 5 we read:

Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

So through Christ's reconciliation at the cross, we are made as Christians, and as the Church, representatives of that same reconciliation; we point to Christ; we model Christ; we care enough about the soul of our fellow man to hate to see them in sin, to see them harmed, tainted, or destroyed by sin. Just as Christ's sympathy for the suffering of mankind becomes ours, so His service of reconciliation becomes ours.

This passage may speak greatly of our role to a lost mankind, it is reflected in our role to a lost, or sinful spouse. What greater job could we ask for than to implore ones we love to be reconciled to God? I believe those who stand for a sinful spouse, out of sincere love and a trust in our Lord, are ambassadors of this kind. Where others neglect this role they are living out a great purpose of

the Church, and helping to sanctify this world. We do it with our neighbors, right? So we do it with our spouse.

Holiness in marriage is through children: Man and wife become sharers in forming life, being vessels in which God produces new life, from the man's seed and the woman's womb . . . for the woman this expresses her own redemption, as well as the redemption of the world, We can see through both the suffering of childbirth, and also the deep love involved, that is why 1 Tim 2 says the woman is saved in childbearing, she is being united through suffering and through love with God, Eve's error is being corrected in the woman, just like the same passage speaks of the woman learning submission, meekness, modesty, it is also through childbearing that marriage is the place of sanctification

Marriage helps us be made holy through the children themselves that spring forth, raising them, sacrificing time, energy, comfort for them, children are God's chisel to make us new people, He made us new people at the cross, and He does so each day through sanctification, to know your day, your evening, your weekend is not only about you, but it wrapped thoroughly in caring for new life, teaching them. Helping them, To have a child have an accident and know that your evening is going to be spent in the hospital, not in personal pursuits, in marriage we have to be integrally united with our loved ones, which so epitomizes the Church and the command to love one another, to bear each other's burdens, to build up the other, we do not do shallow or short term relationship in the family nor the church, children force us out of viewing others as objects or entertainment, and takes us by the hand, leads us into the deep waters of knowing and loving more as God does

We know from Scripture that God can set apart our children for faith through even one believing parent,

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. (1 Corinthians 7:14)

and we have a great example of an early Christian leader who came to faith thanks to his family,

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*,

and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14-15 speaking of the young pastor Timothy)

We know others from the early Church such as Augustine who was brought to faith with the aid of his mother, and I could name a number of friends or acquaintances off the top of my head who

came to know the Lord the same way, Just as God uses the Church to evangelize and lead souls in holiness, so God uses the family in both of these powerful, essential parts of the assembly. The family shares in the mission of the Church and the great commission this way, and is holy.

Not only that, but through training, the family passes on the ways of the Lord, which is the role of the parent,

Psalm 78 says

That they should make them known to their children;

That the generation to come might know *them*,

The children *who* would be born,

***That* they may arise and declare *them* to their children,**

That they may set their hope in God,

And not forget the works of God,

But keep His commandments;

Isaiah prophesies, speaking of Israel's wonderful restoration:

All your children *shall be* taught by the LORD,

And great *shall be* the peace of your children.

In righteousness you shall be established;

Isaiah 54:13,14)

It is sad that so many parents have given up this role to turn their children over to secular education most days of the week, where they will be trained in something far different, often vile, godless, and perverse teachings, in contrast through Old Testament and New Testament, it is the parents who instill in their children virtue, the commandments, and provide God a people in the future as His instrument on this earth, a people fed with faith and righteousness, that could be simply the worker who is responsible, respectful, hard-working, and helpful to others, or it could be the future parents who will raise up a family themselves, it could be the future missionaries or pastors who will be shepherds full time, the family acts in part like the Church, and also provides a future for the Church itself, with a generation yet to be born

Marriage has sanctity because human beings have dignity – There is protection and nourishment in what it offers to human soul, to children

The incredible differences in children from stable families and children from broken homes are well documented. To view the destruction of marriage as anything less than an

emergency is inhuman, marriage helps both the man and the woman, providing them a safer, healthier, and happier environment, it protects children from the harms of crime, of immorality, of anxiety, and suicide, if you love humanity you should respect the union of marriage and should fight against its harm and dissolution, to love God's creation is holy, and in this marriage is holy as well, it is an act of love for mankind

There is great importance in having the woman in the home, for the children, for their education, for home to be a welcoming place, One essential today is being able to monitor children's media use – a recent article noted there has been threefold increase in homicide and suicide by, incredibly, 10-14 year olds, the study documented that in part is linked to social media, something much harder to regulate with both parents out of the home full time . . . the stressors of day care are also well documented, leaving the child in daycare is a harm for them in their development, is less safe for them, and creates more aggression and anxiety in children, one cannot speak fully of the life-giving nature of marriage, without speaking of the mother and homemaker who is there full time and nurtures her children

An incredible percentage of our youth are on psychiatric medication. As of 2017 the most comprehensive studies found that, of children aged 0 to 5 years old – that's right 0 to 5 -- 622,723 of them were on psychiatric drugs. Of all children 0-17, the number was 7,213,599, That is phenomenal, and the result of trying to solve a problem which we keep on creating ourselves. They may be unique cases of severe brain damage, or chemical imbalance, but the need to medicate over 7 million of your children has much to do with a perpetual problem that is going on, and not having the right solution.

There is immeasurable power in a loving community – you will find mental anxieties and so-called illnesses decrease or go away – there was a boy who started coming to a loving church I know, fellowshiped with the families, went home and told his parents he didn't need to take pills anymore, he was at peace, in my own life I suffered from depression for many years, to the point of experiencing complete emptiness, and ceasing to be able to even taste my food – chocolate tasted like cardboard -- that indescribable depression disappeared for good when I spent time in an open, warm, kind environment for an extended period of time, A family does the same thing -- there is mental stability in a loving mother and father together for life, and great anxiety and depression and anger in unstable homes, the love and discipline of a godly Christian home saves lives down through the generations, it creates fertile ground for good, and is an adversary of the devil, defeating him – as Paul teaches in Romans 12 we must do – the family overcomes evil with good

The Law: An important point here, but not unique to the holiness of marriage: God's law is good, there may have been unique national or ritual aspects of the law which ceased being mandates 2,000 years ago, but we have the divine law in our spirit, we have the moral law, we have Christ's commands, and the law still brings life, Paul noted that honor father and mother is the commandment in the Torah which promises long life (Ephesians 6:2), but remember the Torah

says something similar about the WHOLE of the law – it is life-giving, if you follow the commandments – Deut 8 says to keep the commandments – **that you shall live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which I swore to your forefathers** – Deut 6:2 – **that your days may be prolonged** – Josh 1:8 -- **you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

You might think of the example of instructions for operating a machine – follow the rules in using an excavator at work – your days will be prolonged, don't follow them, they'll be shortened – there are about 1,000 ways to get injured or die using machines, we respect the way they should be used

Police can stop you if you don't tie down your machine on your trailer well, or if the chains are loose, that thing could come loose from the trailer and kill someone – are they mean, legalistic Pharisees who only care about having lots of little rules – or are the ministers of love, ministers of God, these men who will inspect your truck, and check those chains – if you believe in the God of the Bible, and if you love your fellow man, you know they are ministers of God, because they are doing His work – they enforce a law which protects mankind

Likewise, we see the goodness of God's order for us in our marriages, and in our Christian lives. If God says the man is the authority in the home, then he is. Operate families differently and you will bring harm, misery, and death in the long run. If God says we are bound together for life, we do not loosen those chains and divorce, even if we feel like it. That's God's order for relationships. If God teaches the wife to care for the home, that is her rightful place. She nourishes our family that way and blesses our seed. If we would not operate a machine wrongly, why would we operate our families wrongly? If we would not risk causing injury and death by ignoring the instructions on a semi-truck, why would we ignore them for our families? God wrote the rules. To follow them is to love life.

Conclusion

Since marriage has sanctity, there needs to be a warning not to draw out ideas about marriage from unholy sources. Take off your sandals, for this is holy ground. We cannot hope to grow into the role we have as man and wife if we are absorbing ungodly and secular teachings about who men and women are, and how we relate, and what marriage is for, or should be like.

Secular literature, writing, television, movies, will present something which, at its best, is romanticism, with some virtues thrown in, but as we can see in the Bible, and through nature, marriage is much more than this. It is much more than a romantic attraction, some kind deeds, and meaningful shared experiences. And that's the best society has to offer. At its worst, society views marriage as nearly anything you want to make it, and long before there was sodomite marriage, there was Las Vegas marriages, now they have McDonald's marriages, we have had no-fault divorce throughout this country for decades now, and you can be sure the societal model of male-female relationship, as I mentioned earlier, will be boiling over with war-of-the-sexes

expectations, weak men, smarter-than-thou women, and a home life entirely devoid of God. The Church as a whole needs to know we cannot learn holy marriage and powerful marriage through the models of the culture.

Likewise the children of God cannot learn marriage in the latest ministry manual either, or from what this or that Christian is saying, because this or that Christian is often wrong. I attended a men's group for a while, in which the leader said that Christians weren't reading enough about marriage, and didn't take the time to read valuable books like *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* – and by the way, I almost got kicked out of this men's group twice – but why is a Christian telling men to learn from books like this, which are rooted not at all in Holy Scripture and natural law, and of course, the author of this book has since divorced his wife, BOTH of them have had multiple marriage partners, but many brethren feel it's okay to soak in this kind of literature, similarly, when I worked in a ministry for several years, the woman in the office next to me, had a conversation one day with a client who was married, the client had heard her husband talking to another woman on the phone, and suspected him of cheating, one of the first things out of my colleague's mouth were these exact words: now is your chance to leave him. I kid you not. I wish I were joking. But these really are what Christians think and say and do, so I emphasize the importance in being rooted in God's words, and not in man's

If we value the holy ground of marriage, we find its meaning in Scripture, and we turn for examples to godly brothers in Christ who live as the Lord commands. That is how we learn, and grow into the husband and wife God will make us. When I was teaching in a school in the U.S. – and I taught overseas many years which is why I qualify it as the U.S. – I gave a young man who wanted to propose to his girlfriend, a copy of a book by John Chrysostom, the early Christian father and revered saint – on marriage. Chrysostom wrote much on this subject. Even in presenting him with this writing by a revered ancient Christian, I told him: if anything in there disagrees with the Bible, do not hear it. I also gave away to several of the female students books on homemaking written by Bible-believing Christian women. That kind of thing is rare these days, and some find it distasteful – they've either been fed from the culture, or they've read very watered down, or terrible aberrant ministry books. Truths from the Bible would be counter-cultural to them, even if they are Christian. It can shock them.

We need to live by the Word of God, and we must teach this to others, and teach the next generation to do the same. We must communicate these truths to our friends, to brothers in Christ, to pastors, and to the degree it is possible, to nonbelievers as well, for if we care about their lives, we want them to benefit from the life-giving nature of marriage, and of God's law, just as anyone else. We can pass this along to the coming generations in the teachings themselves, and also in providing our children with an environment in which biblical marriage is respected, and the roles of men and women are respected. We naturally come in contact with all kinds of people in this world, through our job or through ministry, but our community and our home should be pure. Our home should be fertile ground to learn the ways of God in marriage, through the

examples and relationships that are there. They reflect a holy God, and are His tool in sanctification.

Thank you. Amen