

The Graces of Gospel Marriage
Final G6 Session 14

Remember our Pyramid?

1. Grace of Gospel Unity
2. Grace of Sanctifying Partnership
3. Grace Abounding Marriage
4. These work toward the top>>>Glorifying God
>>>***This is the HEART of G6.***

The Goal of Christian marriage is to glorify God by actively applying the Gospel to our marriages, partnering in our progress of sanctification, and reaching a maturity that will abound outward to those around us, in ministry to the community of Christ and in adorning the Gospel to the world.

This calls for a complete **worldview** change when it comes to marriage. That means we must shed prevailing ideas of marriage that control us, such as romance, soul-mate-ism, “healthy marriage”...***What does it mean to have a “healthy marriage”?***

The most popular, highest selling Christian marriage books answer the question this way:

“He sends you flowers when what you really want is time to talk. She gives you a hug when what you really need is a home-cooked meal. The problem isn’t your love--it’s your love language. What speaks volumes to you may be meaningless to your spouse. But here, at last, is the key to understanding each other’s unique needs. Applying the right principles, learn the right language, and soon you’ll know the profound satisfaction and joy of being able to express your love—and feeling truly loved in return.”

Another popular book says this:

A Revolutionary Message: A wife has one driving need, to feel loved. When that need is met, she is happy. A husband has one driving need, to feel respected. When that need is met, he is happy. When either of these needs isn’t met, things get crazy.

The answer is for both spouses to be actively, continually meeting each others perceived marital needs, whatever shape they may take.

1. We all have different love languages, so learn the love language of your spouse and begin to speak it so they understand that you love them, and stop using the love language that they don't understand. If you do that your marriage will be great.
2. Women have certain needs and men have certain needs. Learn these needs and fulfill them. If you do your marriage will be great.
3. Marital love is like a bank. You make deposits and withdrawals. If your withdrawals exceed your deposits you will have problems.

The problem with these marriage solutions is:

1. They are overly simplistic.
2. They misdiagnose the symptom as the problem.
3. The problem is not addressed.

These books raise some basic questions:

1. If God made men and women, created the relationship of marriage, and holds marriage in high regard, why didn't he tell us about the 5 love languages? Why doesn't he say anything about making sure your deposits exceed your withdrawals in the love bank?
2. How is it that for centuries the divorce rate among Christians who didn't have these books was a fraction of the divorce rate among people who do have these books?

When we began G6 we tried to get a picture of the current state of Christian marriage.

1. The Christian divorce rate is at best equal to the non-Christian divorce rate. (higher in the Bible belt)
2. There is a high percentage of unhappy Christian marriages. Flourishing Christian marriages are a rarity.
3. Since the 1960's we have seen a massive explosion of marriage resources and teaching to become the number one Christian consumption product category, outdistancing any other subject.

There is a problem in how we understand Christian marriage.

4 Reasons Christian Marriages Fail or Persist in Stages of Crisis

1. Christian marriages fail because the church has abandoned God's Word when it comes to marriage.

-- We practically believe the Bible is insufficient to answer our toughest marriage issues.
 -- This causes us to both misdiagnose the problem, and consequently, miss the solutions we so desperately need.

2. Christian marriages fail because we treat them practically as a natural institution and not a supernatural institution.

- The vast majority of the literature and resources have very little to say about the spiritual realities that are crucial for change. Sure, they are peppered with spiritual and Biblical terminology, but the core elements of what is said is very often non-spiritual and non-Biblical.
- Christians are *new creations*. We have **spiritual life**, a spiritual resurrection. We have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. Old things are passed away, behold all things are new.
- Yet, we are **often guilty of treating a marriage of two spiritually alive people as if they were spiritually dead**.
- They are *new wine*, and we pour them into *old wineskins*—and it bursts. They end up divorced.

3. Christian marriages fail because we often have a superficial attachment to God's Word or God's ways.

- This causes ones Christian faith to be **superstitious, culturally defined, and pagan-like.**
- **Richard Dawkins**, the atheist, calls himself a **Christian atheist**. He sees most Christians as Christian atheists. The only impact Jesus has on his life is his good moral and ethical teachings. He denies the existence of God, the deity of Christ and the reality of the Gospel. The only difference between him and many Christians is what they *say* they believe.
- A couple goes to a marriage counselor – after two sessions he dies of heart attack.

Ephesians 5:17

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

4. Christian marriages fail because we have adopted and idolized marriage.

An idol is ***taking a good thing and making it a god thing***. When your relationship with your spouse is the thing that defines your attitude, your joy, your anger, your bitterness – when that consumes you emotionally, then you may have an idolatry problem.

Jesus Christ is to be your source of joy and fulfillment ABOVE ALL THINGS, including your marriage relationship, and however you define that as being healthy.

Anger, frustration, bitterness, anything that emotionally consumes you, points to a possible idol. You walk around the house in a huff because your spouse isn't doing this or that, or did this or that-- and Jesus is standing there saying, “What about me? Am I chopped liver?”

Jesus should be our main source of joy, contentment and fulfillment, and when we get angry because our husband or wife is failing to fulfill us, our joy runs low. And when our joy runs low, we get irritable and angry. Why? Because we have no substantial joy or fulfillment in Christ.

How often do people come to marriage seminars ***wanting to learn how they can better forgive, or live peaceably with unmet needs, or learn how to love their spouse as Christ loved them, or learn how to submit to one another?*** No, we rather come to fix a problem, or come to find that **magic pill** that will bring satisfaction.

All these things we strive for are cheap imitations of what God designed marriage to be. When you embrace anything less than what God has designed to be true of marriage, your marriage, you have traded it for a worldly inferiority.

THREE GRACES OF A GOD GLORIFYING, PARTNER-FULFILLING MARRIAGE

Grace of Gospel Marriage
 Grace of Sanctifying Partnership
 Grace Abounding Marriage

Grace 1: Gospel Marriage

Marriage is a prevalent metaphor for God's relationship to his people. This relationship informs how our marriages should be.

- In the OT, Israel is often referred to as the wife, and God is her husband.
- Marriage is often a ***Redemption picture***.
 - The book of **Ruth**
 - is the story of a marriage that is a metaphor for a ***kinsman Redeemer***. Boaz the Redeemer of Ruth who is redeemed. ***God pictures himself*** as a glorious redeemer of his bride Israel.
 - Marriage is a picture of **God's Redemption of Man**. The Husband the Redeemer, and the bride the Redeemed.
 - God and Israel.

The book of **Hosea** (400 years later)

- God is still the husband, ***the wife, Israel, has become the whore***.
- Pictured by Hosea marrying Gomer the prostitute.

Hosea 1:2

...the Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord."

- Gomer returns to her prostitution and ends up being sold as a slave.
- Hosea goes to auction and buys her back.
- ***God is still the Redeemer*** of his wife, though she is a whore. And he calls for her to repent. But she does not.

Jeremiah 3: 6-10

⁶ The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore?" ⁷ And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸ She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. ⁹ Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree. ¹⁰ Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD."

Marriage provides us with one of the clearest understandings of God's relationship to his people. For God's people to turn away from him is a horrific violation. It's to be a whore before God.

Why does this metaphor work so well? Because we bear God's image in our covenant marriages.

--*Genesis begins* with the pinnacle of the **creation** of human marriage.

--*Revelation ends* with the **consummation** of a divine marriage.

God has invested a great deal of weight in marriage. Marriage carries with it heavy theological constructs.

IDOLATRY CORRESPONDS TO ADULTERY

One **construct** appears to be a **direct correlation between faithfulness in marriage to faithfulness to God.**

- Idolatry almost always goes hand in hand with adultery.

Last book of the OT – God is about to go silent for 400 years. He lays out the 2 primary accusations he has against his people.

Malachi 2: 11

Judah has been faithless, and abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD, which he loves, and has married the daughter of a foreign god.

Malachi 2:13-15

And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was that one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.

At the end of the day, and the end of the OT, God condemns Israel for two things.

1. **Idolatry** – Faithlessness in relationship to God.
2. **Adultery** – Faithlessness in their marriage relationships.

It seems to be a very close connection between **ones relationship with a spouse and ones relationship with God.**

- We do not often see a person with a vibrant relationship with God who has a terrible relationship with their spouse. (Hosea would be an exception).
- We will never see a **God glorifying marriage** by people who do not have a good relationship with God.

Israel and Judah are **historical examples** of entire people groups who model this correlation.

Which brings me to this point: ***The health of your marriage relationship (at least as far as it depends upon you being faithful in your role) is often a clear indicator of the health of your relationship with God.***

- You've heard the phrase "What a man is on his knees before God is what he is and nothing more."
- It's equally as true: "What a man's relationship is to his wife, is what he is in relation to God and nothing more."

If you think you can have a **good** relationship with God and a **bad** relationship with your spouse, you're probably kidding yourself.

→ The **fruit of faithfulness** to God is **faithfulness in your marriage**. To have a healthy relationship with God will have a tremendous impact with your relationship to your spouse.

So, how do we guard against failure?

Malachi 2:15

So guard yourselves in your spirit,

Fast forward to Ephesians 5:1. Paul begins his great Eph 5 exhortation with...

Ephesians 5:1

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

You are an image bearer. Your marriage is an **image bearing union**. Since the advent of sin this image bearing has been tarnished, and we must now be instructed to **imitate God – to bear his image in our conduct**.

...which means what?

Ephesians 5:3

*But sexual immorality and all impurity or **covetousness** must not even be named among you.*

Ephesians 5:5

*For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is **covetous** (that is an idolator) had no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ.*

Notice the correlation: **Sexual sin is closely associated with idolatry**. Adultery is associated with idolatry. Paul is looking at this from the back end. If you are **sexual immoral** then you are also probably **idolatrous**. Unfaithfulness to your husband or wife indicates unfaithfulness to God. If your marriage is in trouble, your relationship to God might also be in trouble.

I think this is an **uncanny correlation**.

God is concerned for the integrity of the marriage, because in it is **bound up the image bearing of God and his covenant relation to his people**.

To guard ourselves from this is to...

Ephesians 5:18

...be filled (intoxicating control) with the Spirit.

Which is what Malachi said, under the OT mystery:

Malachi 2:15

So guard yourselves in your spirit,

Being faithful to God is to be faithful to your marriage. We do that only by the power of the Holy Spirit residing within us—***and only when the Spirit has control of our will and affections.*** In our marriages this control, this fruit of the light, ***shows itself*** as husband and wife are obedient to the roles and responsibilities that God has designed for us.

- *Wives will submit to their husbands, as unto the Lord.*
- *Husbands will love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.*

And in that we reflect and image Christ and the glorious marriage of Christ to his bride.

Your marriage is where your Christian character is most clearly visible and exercised.

- That's why the primary requirement for spiritual leaders is their conduct in the family. If they can't lead their family as godly men, how can they possibly be able to lead the church as godly men? **This isn't just a pragmatic skill set issue – it's a spiritual fitness issue.** A ***spiritually unhealthy man*** will produce a spiritually unhealthy church. God draws a clear connection between marriage and a healthy, mature relationship to him.

And the commands and instructions about marriage in the NT are almost always implied as being part of ***sound doctrine***. (Titus)

Q. What does this all have to do with the Gospel in our marriage?

- Yes, there is a connection between our marriage relationship and our God relationship.
- Yes, there is a connection between faithlessness in both of those relationships.
- >>> How does the Gospel work into this?

A. The Gospel affects relationships, it redefines relationships, and produces faithfulness in our relationships.

BEARING GOD'S IMAGE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

All of our relationships are changed by the Gospel, in our New Life. ***The Gospel allows us to bear God's image in our relationships:***

Toward our enemies, we are to pray for them. We must turn the other cheek.

Matthew 5:44-46

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends the rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

God extends love toward his enemies by giving them sun and rain. He shows them patience and kindness while they rebel. Look at Jesus. ***That is to be our posture as well.***

Toward society & world systems—employers/employees, government/citizens.
Submit. Treat fairly.

Toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to treat as we treat ourselves, submit, encourage and bear one another's burdens, to forgive one another as Christ forgave us.

Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Toward our families we are to lead, provide for, and not exasperate

Toward our marriages,

In reality, marriage tends to be one place where all Christian graces and virtues are tossed out the window. We read verses like Eph. 4:31 and think it doesn't apply to our marriages.

Our marriage is our most significant human relationship.

We must treat our spouse better than we treat our enemies, or our brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Gospel defines for us how we are to relate to our spouse.

But there is something more...

- Marriage is invested with divine significance --
 - Picture of God and his people
 - That picture clarifies with Jesus – God's relationship with his people gets more specific.
 - >>>God's love for his people is revealed by Jesus Christ's work on the cross.
- Marriage is invested with Gospel significance --
 - Jesus loved us by choice.
 - Jesus loved us in the face of our active sin and rebellion.
 - Jesus loved us in spite of our unloveliness, our value, or our ability to reciprocate.
 - Only by Jesus love for us are we able to return a fraction of love.
- Marriage of the image bearers, in an image bearing Union, bear God's image by exercising this very same Gospel kind of love in ***one special relationship***.

>>>Marriage is the one uniquely set apart relationship where we are given opportunity to love God, and image his character, by loving our spouse with a Gospel love.

- It is far greater than romantic love that is mutually reciprocating. It is a **romantic Gospel love** that operates apart from ones value, ones reciprocation, ones loveliness.
- Marriage breeds **intimacy**, which breed intimate knowledge and experience of sin, rebellion, offense, failure, and unloveliness.

>>>AND IT IS THROUGH THIS – THROUGH BEARING UP UNDER FAULTS,
OFFENSES, SIN *that we image Christ.*

-- And that produces glory

Proverbs 19:11

And it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

To overlook offense is to produce glory. Why? Because that's what Christ did. Christ overlooks the offense of man to His GLORY. The Gospel is the most glorifying act God has ever done.

Psalm 24 – Messianic song describing Christ returning to his throne in heaven after his crucifixion and resurrection.

Psalm 24:7-10

*Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!
Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory!*

The Gospel is a demonstration of the glory of God, and we get to image that in our marriages.

Philippians 2:8

*...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Therefore God has highly exalted him...*

We must have a GOSPEL SUPERSTRUCTURE holding your marriage together. Your mind must be **operating with a Gospel-integrity toward your spouse**. When the bumps and frustrations and irritations come, *you respond to them with a Gospel mind and will*.

OBJECTION:

But we're human. **We can only take so much offense**. We can only bear up under so much sin and negligence and mistreatment. **YOU'RE RIGHT**.

That's why you have been made a NEW CREATION, old things have passed away, behold all things are new. You are a NEW CREATION now INDWELT with the SPIRIT OF GOD. Your UNION with God and ALLEGIENCE to him is GREATER than your union with your spouse. And he provides you with the POWER to be the husband or wife you are called to.

He is your motivation. His love is the love that should fulfill you so that the love of your **spouse is not a NEED that will derail you if you don't get it**. Rather it's the icing on the cake. *Christ is our fulfillment. Christ is our lover. Christ is our companion above all others*.

We show GOSPEL LOVE to our spouses because the ULTIMATE GOSPEL LOVER showed love to us, and asks of **us to love our covenant marriage** partners in this way.

- At the worst we bear the effects of our spouses sin.
- Christ bore the worst by taking the wrath of Divine punishment for our sins and our spouses sins.
- ANY TIME you feel sinned against, just remember, that sin you feel the effect of, Jesus felt the punishment for. If you respond sinfully, your sin is heaped on him on top of your spouses sin.

A Gospel marriage is a marriage where both partners are ready to **absorb the others sin and offenses and respond with mercy, grace, love and joy**.

This is the greatest need of your marriage. We all are sinners and we all need this kind of love, not just from God, but from our spouse.

An operational outworking of the Gospel in our marriages.

<p>Without the Gospel our marriages will be just as hopeless as the sinner without the Gospel.</p>

Grace 2: A Sanctifying Partnership

The irony is, that this covenant of marriage that you enter, as a Gospel marriage, also has the potential to produce the most exponential growth of your faith.

1. The Exercise of your Faith

Marriage is the one place where your Christian faith has its most direct, frequent and consistent application. Your obedience in marriage is a lifestyle. It defines who you are. It defines how you make decisions, how you use your time, how you arrange priorities, how you exercise leadership, how you demonstrate Gospel love, how you raise godly children...marriage is the most immediate exercise of your faith.

2. **The Exposure of your Sinfulness.**

You cannot hide your sin from your spouse. They see your true character that is so easily missed or hidden from others.

The very act of marriage will naturally **chip away** at our rough spots. When we get married very soon we begin to realize that we have sin that we've never seen before. Marriage brings out the worst in us sometimes.

And this is a **purging** of sin. This is a **grace** of God at work in your life, through your spouse, to reveal **comfortable sins** that you would not otherwise be faced with.

Because our greatest problem is a sin problem that hinders our ability to rightly relate to God, this becomes the primary purpose of our lives together. **Our spiritual growth in holiness, in battling sin and obeying God should be a major occupation.**

This SANCTIFYING PARTNERSHIP unearths the sins buried in our hearts.

3. **Unique relationship for mutual discipleship**

- Confession of sin
- Demonstrating thankfulness to God
- Bearing one another's burdens, in prayer and in life..
- Encouraging one another.
- Teaching and admonishing one another.
- Praying for one another

The union of your marriage gives you a unique privilege and even responsibility in these things.

4. **The Love of God shown from one spouse to another**

- God shows his love to us through people around us.
- Key to that is Marriage.

5. **Marriage confines you to a covenant commitment.**

On top of human sinfulness in relationships, men and women are at odds with each other as a result of the curse. Conflict is inevitable. And this is one relationship that God binds you to a covenant. When problems rise you cannot run from them easily. You are forced to deal with those problems. To overcome them you deny yourself, serve another who is undeserving--where to survive you must, as a Christian, move from depending on your natural self, and depend upon the Spirit who will transform you.

Grace 3: A Grace Abounding Marriage

That is, to overflow.

To overflow in Testimony
To overflow in Ministry

TESTIMONY

Paul tells Titus to teach men and women to be Biblical in how they conduct themselves so that...

Titus 2:5

...that the Word of God may not be reviled.

Titus 2:8

...so that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

And in everything...

Titus 2:10

...adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

Marriage is to testify to the honor and integrity of God's Word
Marriage is to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

MINISTRY

Marriage is not an end in and of itself. Marriage isn't to be a **selfish microcosmic Universe**. It works itself out into the church and society. Grace and service should overflow from marriage.

A large part of that is producing godly offspring.

Malachi 2:15

And what was that one God seeking? Godly offspring.

Israel's faithlessness in divorcing was sabotaging the godly offspring. The faith was not being perpetuated.

Marriage should be a conduit of God's work in church and society. It should enable and train men and women for service to the church.

Men will **gain practical experience** in leadership by spiritually leading their homes, by living a Christian example, and instructing their family in Scripture. This is an application of the talents. God gave you the members of your family, and if you are faithful in handling that responsibility, you might be given more responsibility in the church.

God gave both husband and wife **certain giftedness**. And he has a use and purpose for those gifts to **the benefit of** the body of Christ.

Marriage should reveal those gifts, nurture those gifts, and exercise them when God provides the opportunities.

Conclusion: Christ our Joy

This might seem on the surface to be an exile to a joyless, unhappy life of marriage. Why would we engage in marriage like this?

Every marriage is unique, but it's still a union of sinners. No matter what your marriage looks like, **Christ should be your primary source of joy**. Your marriage is the place where Christ wants to work in you, to mature you, to make you more like him. Your marriage is the place where you can experience the greatest joy you will ever know. You will not find joy outside of your marriage. Your marriage will always be the option of less pain.

One man told me he was thinking of leaving his wife, because she was driving him crazy. And I told him, if you leave your marriage, God will chasten you. You will be jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire. Because the joy you think you will find outside of your marriage is only an illusion. Once you get there the bitterness will set in, and you could very well bear unpleasant, heartbreaking consequences for the rest of your life.

Your marriage is your best opportunity for joy. The road out is filled with more sorrow than you can imagine.

Pour every fiber of your being into being the marriage partner God calls you to be, because **God's purposes are the only source of true joy**. Being bitter or begrudging toward God reveals that you would **rather have something far inferior** – a cheap imitation. You have your heart set on yourself or the world.

<p>God is most glorified in us When we are most satisfied in Him. --Jonathan Edwards</p>
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Obedience is a Gospel reality that Jesus modeled.

Philippians 2:8

...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him...

Joy is also a Gospel reality. It's part of living a Gospel-driven life. Jesus modeled joy.

Hebrews 12:1, 2

...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Gospel was a source of joy to Jesus, even when he was enduring the cross, and experiencing the shame.

This is the model for our marriages. **Obedient** to the point of death, if called for. **Joyfully enduring the difficulties** and shame if they come your way. Because you have a higher picture of the purpose of marriage. It is a tremendous honor and privilege not only to bear God's image to the world and Universe, but to picture the story of Redemption, and to point to our great hope, the marriage of God and man in a perfect union that even mystifies angels.

And the best part, not only are we saved by Christ, **we are empowered by him to live out what he commands** regarding our marriages.

2 Peter 1:1-4

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.