

“Love and Marriage” Part 3 Jerry Arnold, December 3, 2005

Father in Heaven, some right here are in the valley. It’s a hard journey they are on. Lord, we pray that You would draw close to them and strengthen them and give them courage. Some have come out of the valley. We pray that the lessons learned will be applied to life. Others are looking at the valley with fear and they need encouragement and strength as well. Lord, we are all in different places and we pray that you will miraculously speak to each one of us where we are at, and that there will be such a mighty demonstration of Your Spirit here today that every single person in the auditorium will be affected and changed for eternity. We ask and we pray this in Jesus name, Amen.

It was Christmas. Family was together. It was exciting to be there. We had Hannah, Jeremy and Josh. Hanna was 8, Jeremy was 6, and Josh was 2 at the time. We were exchanging gifts. This year my sister from California, Aunt Patty, was very much involved in nature worship. We used to have some interesting discussions. Do you worship the Creator of nature or do you worship nature itself? And we had some good times talking about that.

Well, this year, reflective of her position theologically and where she was at, she gave gifts accordingly—little boxes beautifully wrapped with a bow on it. Hannah opened hers first. It was a rock. Now it was a pretty rock, mind you, but it was a rock none the less. Hannah, being 8 years old and well trained by her mother smiled and said, “Thank you, Aunt Patty. Thank you, thank you. I love it.” Jeremy was 6. He opened his box, and it was a rock, again the same thing. It was a beautiful rock, mind you, but it was a rock. And he, also, under his mother’s tutelage, knew what to say. When somebody gives you a gift, you smile, you thank them, you’re just fallen over it. What you do with it later when they are gone, that is different. “Thank you, Aunt Patty. Thank you, thank you.”

Joshua was 2 years old, and he didn’t listen to anybody. Josh didn’t talk much either. He started doing a lot of talking until his sister jumped on him once, and then he didn’t talk for several years. We didn’t know if that was just coincidence or if that was the way it was. I remember watching him open his gift. He had one of those little pacifiers and while he’s opening it he’s excited. I could hear him sucking the pacifier while he’s opening the gift. He opens it up, and there’s a rock. He’s not saying a word, but he’s staring at that rock. And I’m just wondering what is going on inside there, because he’s really thinking about something. Well, he put two and two together. He took his rock, and he walked over to the door. He opened the door, and he set it outside. That’s what you do with rocks.

Now, you’ve all seen people who were dating. You’ve seen them in the throes of romantic love. They are obnoxious. People who have been married a while just say “Yeah, yeah, just wait a while.” You’ll hear expressions. They are cooing and gooing like love birds. They’ll talk about being a gift to each other. That even appears in many

weddings quoting James 1:17 that every good and perfect gift comes from God, and here is a gift to him, and here is a gift to her, and here they are. Unfortunately, if it's a first marriage, 50% of them will take that rock and set it outside, take that gift and set it outside. If it's a second marriage, 60% of them will take that gift and set it outside.

Today we are continuing our series in "Love and Marriage," and we want to demon proof you home if you will. We want to give you the type of home God wants you to have. If you are not married, then this is especially for you because you want to marry somebody who will share these same concepts with you. Let's begin by looking first at the passage in James 1:17. Here in the New King James Version it says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variance or shadow of turning." If you are married, the person you are married to is a gift from God. It is very, very true.

Now I want to give you a principle. This is extremely important to understand. The way that you treat the gift is a direct reflection upon the attitude you have towards the giver. Let me give you an illustration. Suppose I am a wealthy man and I have one sister who is a widow and she has one child. I have no other family. So I'm very interested in my nephew. I am wealthy. There's much I could do for him. He is 17 years old. So I buy him a car. It's not a real fancy car, but it's a safe car, and it's a nice car, and it's an adequate car, and certainly much more than what his mother could provide for him or that he could get on his own. So it's a gift, and I give it to him. I have plans for this guy. But I'm watching the way he takes care of this gift. Suppose that when I see him driving, he seems to be obeying the laws, he keeps the car up, he appreciates it, he thanks me for it, he keeps the oil changed and keeps the things fixed on it. What am I thinking? He appreciates the gift. I have other plans. It will get bigger gifts and better gifts down the road.

Let's look conversely. Let's say that every time I see him, he's just squealing the tires and driving crazy. The car looks like it's been through a dozen wrecks. It's a disheveled mess. He never keeps it up. He doesn't care about it apparently. What am I thinking? That's a reflection on his attitude towards me. He's not likely to get much after that.

It's the same with God. When God gives us the gift of a spouse, the way we treat that person is a direct reflection on our attitude towards God. It is a religious experience to be married. It is a holy institution that we enter into. It is in the confines of that relationship that we really tell God who we are and what we are all about. It becomes extremely important that we understand the holy character of marriage. Let's go back to the first wedding in Genesis 2.

In Genesis chapter 2 we will begin with verse 18. Man has already been made. God is going to make a statement. "And the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a helper to' "serve" him." Well, I guess it actually doesn't say that. I will make him a helper comparable to him. Key word—comparable. What does comparable mean? Like him. Equal to him. Comparable to him. I'm going to make someone like that for him.

So Adam is told to name the animals (verse 20). Adam names all the cattle, the birds of the air and every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him or for him. There wasn't an equal there for him. Then in verse 21 the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam. He slept, and he took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man he made into a woman, and he brought her to the man, and Adam said, "Whoa!" Actually it's not in there, but that's what it means in the Hebrew. "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh." One flesh—bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, comparable to me. Adam and Eve—the first wedding.

Now you come to the very next chapter and trouble sets in. Adam and Eve both sin. As a result of sin their heart is changed. Their heart becomes sinful. They have a sinful nature. They are filled with self-love. They have no interest in anything but themselves and pleasing themselves. When God comes looking for them God says, "Adam, who told you you were naked?" "Hey, hey, it was all the woman's fault, you know how women are." The Lord says, "Well, Eve, what happened? Well it was the serpent. You created the serpent. You know how serpents are." They would not accept responsibility. They began to blame. And those two comparable individuals who were one become divided because of sin.

Unfortunately, they are our parents. We've been born in their likeness. We are born sinful people in love with ourselves. We are born into a broken world and we enter into brokenness. This broken woman married this broken man. This selfish woman married this selfish man. It's in the institution of marriage that God is going to teach them how to become one together. But it can only be done in the context of holiness. Without holiness it will not work.

Let's go to Ephesians chapter 5—a familiar passage. We'll begin in verse 22. Most of you have heard this read at weddings. By the way, have you ever noticed how many times when someone announces they are getting married that the women are all excited and the men are not? Have you ever wondered why? It's an interesting thing. Unfortunately, marriage is not what it should be. Men should be just as excited as women about marriage.

Ladies, I'm not going to preach to you again like I did last week, but there's a lot to be said about being honest and holy in the relationship. Next week, in fact if you had to choose between this week and next week, you should have been here next week. Next week I want to teach you how to get through difficulties and how to get God to change your spouses heart. Okay? So you'll have to come then. Verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord; for the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands love you wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might

sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives (How?) as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it just as the Lord does the church, for we are members of His body and his flesh and his bones.”

Now let's go back to Genesis. Here's a quote from Genesis. “ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” He goes on to say, “Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” It's love for woman and respect for the man. Now notice this. It is God's plan in marriage to go back to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were one flesh. It is God's plan in the home today through Jesus Christ that those two individuals who are married will be one flesh.

Now, I want to show you how that is demonstrated in scripture. This being together is powerfully demonstrated in a passage that we generally don't even see what is here. Let me explain what I mean. In the Bible, the Bible writers will make a point, and then they will use an illustration to demonstrate the point they are making. Oftentimes the illustration is what Christians will fight over and they miss the point. Example, in Romans chapter 14 the apostle Paul writes “One man esteems one day above another and another esteems another day.” Then he says, “Some will only eat vegetables while others will eat meat.” Okay? Now that's his illustration. The point of the chapter is don't judge one another in what they are doing. We'll all stand before God individually and have to give an account for our lives. That's the point. The illustration is one day more important than another or what you are supposed to eat. But what do most Christians talk about? The illustration.

Thus it is true with the passage we are going to read now. We are going to read seven verses and most of the conversation from these seven verses has been on the illustration, and consequently we've missed the point, and as a result our homes have been weakened. Now let's read I Peter 3:1-7. “Likewise you wives be submissive to your own husbands that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold or putting on fine apparel, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner in former times the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves being submissive to their own husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham calling him Lord whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” What is the illustration Peter uses? Hair, gold, and fine apparel. What's the point he's making? We've missed it. And we're going to find it.

The first thing we have to do when we read the Bible is we have to ask a question. The question is this. What did it mean to the people back then? If we can understand that question, if we can answer that question, then we can make application to ourselves. Unfortunately, many people in December 2005 read this and say, “Yep, it’s for us, right now, just in tack, just the way I see it, just the way I understand it.” But we’ve got to go back and see what it meant to the people back then. Let’s give some background to what it was like to be a woman when Peter wrote this. By the way, did you ever wonder why there were 6 verses for you and one for the man? You’ll find out here. It was six times harder to be a woman than to be a man. It was a horrible time to live as a woman.

If you were a Jewish woman, you would be a thing. You would be owned by your husband like the sheep or the goats. You could never leave him, but he could dismiss you at any time. To change religions when the husband didn’t was absolutely unthinkable. In the culture in which Peter is writing, the Hebrews, the Greeks and the Romans all had the same culture regarding men and women. Women did not have a choice. They did what the husbands said to do. They believed what the husband said to believe. The husband’s god was their god, his methods were her methods. She was a non-thinking thing. If you were married to a Greek, the woman was to remain indoors, out of sight, hardly heard and only around when called upon. She was to be completely and totally obedient to her husband, had no independent existence and no mind of her own. The husband could divorce her for any reason as long as he returned the dowry to her.

If you were raised in a Roman environment and were a Roman, the woman had no rights. According to the law she remained a child all her life and was either under the authority of her father or a husband. And that father or that husband could beat her to death with no repercussions. There was absolutely no law to protect a woman. None. In that environment, in that culture where a woman would not dare to make any decision by herself, where a woman had to do what the husband said, where a woman’s life depended on that, Jesus Christ exploded upon that scene through the Holy Spirit and the apostles through the church and all of a sudden women were coming to Jesus Christ.

Now in that environment they are having to maneuver and serve God and not pagan idols anymore. Are you beginning to see how difficult it would be? Ladies, it was a matter of life or death in some situations. These women could be beaten to death with no repercussions whatsoever.

And so Peter gives a formula—the best that they can do in that environment in which they’re in. The formula is three-fold. We’ll see it repeated in the writings of Peter. It is this. Be subject to the one in authority. Seek to please God. And now let me show you a precedent of others who have done it. Let’s go back to I Peter 3 now. Verses 1 & 2 are about being subject to the one in authority. “Likewise, you wives be submissive to your own husbands that even if some do not obey the word, they without a word may be won by the conduct of their wives when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear.” Be subject to them, don’t argue with them, don’t debate about it, you just live the most godly way you can in hopes that you can save your husband.

Number 2, seek to please God. Verses 3 & 4. “Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold or of putting on fine apparel, but let it be that hidden person of the heart with the incorruptible ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit which is very precious in the sight of God.”

Do you ladies realize if you were raised back in those days, if you were a Roman citizen at 14, men would start calling you a woman. Your only hope in their culture was to be attractive to a man. And so a great amount of energy on hair and externals to attract the affections of a suitor so that he would want to be physically involved with you and take you under his wings. At least you’d have something. It’s almost like a song of old, “City girls just seemed to find out early how to open doors with just a smile. A rich old man and she won’t have to worry.” Right?

That’s the environment that these ladies were in. You can read it. We have it in history. We have the writings of men from that day. Some wrote about the decadence of the extravagance and wealth lavished upon the woman. They had wigs, they had it all. And they were all involved. Some philosophers said it just corrupted culture. They shouldn’t do that. Then, on the other hand you had men saying “What else are they going to do? They can’t own land, they can’t vote, they have no voice, they have absolutely nothing except the external appearance of their bodies. Let them have something.” The principle is this, if all you’ve got is sexual appeal then go for it. But I’m telling you, in Christ you’ve got a lot more than that.

Now here is the precedent. Verses 5 & 6. It’s going to refer to the past. “For in this manner in former times the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves being submissive to their own husbands as Sarah obeyed Abraham.” There is your precedent. So you see the three-fold formula Peter has for the hope that they will be successful. Be subject to the one in authority, seek to please God and here is your precedent, Sarah serving her husband and calling him Lord.

Now he’s going to repeat this in chapter 2. But this is where it gets very interesting. Look at chapter 2 verse 18. “Slaves, or servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and the gentle but also the harsh.” In other words, be subjective to the one in authority. If you are a slave, do what? Be subjective to the one in authority. Now the second thing is seek to please God. Verses 19 & 20. “For this is commendable if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully, for what credit is it if when you are beaten for your fault you take it patiently, but when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God.” Are you noticing a pattern here? Be subject to the one in authority; seek to please God and here comes the precedent in verse 21. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example.” So Jesus is the example or Jesus is the precedent and the rest of the chapter is about Him.

Now, we see this three-fold formula applied by Peter. Be subject to the one in authority; seek to please God and here’s the precedent. Now let me ask the ladies here today, the ones that are married. Are you a slave to your husband? If you are, he is not a Christian

man. All this in chapter 3 verses 1-6 is to build us up to verse 7 which is the point. You ladies are not servants to your husband nor should you consider yourself a servant to your husband. Man does not rule over woman. Key word—comparable.

Now let me teach you a Christian principle. This is extremely powerful and will make all the difference in our homes. Christianity with the Christian ethic is reciprocal. Reciprocal means shared, felt, equal privileges. All the responsibility of duties are not on one side. In the Hebrew, in the Greek and in the Roman culture in Jesus day and in Peter's day it was not reciprocal. All duty and responsibility was on one side. But Peter comes along and he busts that thing wide open. He hits culture in the mouth. I tell you, he hits it so hard that it's just unbelievable what he is saying back then, and to this day it's still not applied even in our culture.

Here's what he's saying. Christianity is reciprocal. It is shared, it is felt, with equal privileges. Let me demonstrate this. The Bible will talk in Colossians 3:22 about the duties of slaves. In Colossians 4:1 it will talk about the duties of the masters of the slaves—reciprocal. Colossians 3:20 talks about the duties of children. In Colossians 3:21 it talks about the duty of the father not to provoke the child—reciprocal. There is equal responsibility and also privileges shared.

Marriage, if it is a Christian marriage, is reciprocal. It is two individuals comparable to one another. Man does not rule over his wife. They together walk with God. Let me prove that to you. I Peter 3:7. Peter says this, "Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them with understanding." Dwell with who? Wives.

Now how come there aren't six verses here of how the man's suppose to win his wife? You know why? Because in that culture, if the man goes to the Christian church, where is the woman going? She's going with him. The hopes are that there she'll catch Jesus. Just coming to church doesn't get you converted, but it takes you down the road a long way. The woman's going to go where the man goes so it's not an issue. So he cuts right to the chase.

"Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them with understanding." Now what does it mean, understanding? NIV uses the word "considerate." King James says, "according to knowledge." The Amplified Version says "live considerately with wives with an intelligent recognition of the marriage relation." An intelligent recognition of the marriage relation takes us right back to the book of Genesis where it all began where two individuals were one, comparable to each other. That's an understanding of marriage. Understanding—giving honor to wife as a weaker vessel. Let's deal with weaker vessel first.

Fellows, it is not saying crack the pot. Weaker vessel. You are a vessel as well. This woman in this particular passage in this particular day in which it was written was a weak vessel compared to the man. She had no rights at all in culture. She is weaker that way. And she is weaker physically. Most of the men in here could whip their wives if it came to it. I know that there are women who could take me. But I'm not married to them.

Guys, don't marry a woman that can beat you up. Most women are physically weaker than men—just the way it is. We use to joke around where I lived up in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Some of the women there were so big and strong that the saying was “Good old Manistique, where men are men and so are half the women.” They are weaker socially, culturally, they are weaker physically. Emotionally they have greater needs than men.

Now notice this. Does it say anything in here about being a lesser vessel? No, it's a different vessel, not a lesser vessel. Man is to treat woman as a comparable helpmate, a different vessel than they are. Let's go back to verse 7. “Giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel.” To give honor means to treat that woman with dignity and respect—old fashioned courtesy. Women have a right for their husband to open the door. They have a right to be taken care of. You are designed that way and it makes us better men if we do that. I mentioned a couple years ago my son drove with his girlfriend and another girl up to West Virginia. I was excited to see what was going on. Because as he was packing, he packed extra jackets because he knew the girls were going to get cold. He knew it. And that's good. It's good for a man to look at a woman as someone he can protect and take care of. It puts their testosterone to good use. Right? That's right?

Giving honor. Let's go back to verse 7. “Likewise, ye husbands dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together.” This means equal spiritual rights. Can you imagine the upheaval to the culture in Peter's day? Do you realize we're still not there in our day? Ladies, do you really feel like you have a voice and a place? Do you really feel like you are an equal when it comes to the spiritual journey? God says you are. You are a comparable helpmate to the man. And the man that learns this and acknowledges that and works with the woman will be the type of man God can bless.

I'm going to show you some things here in a minute that are just going to blow your mind. It says, “heirs together of the grace of life,” and if a man doesn't understand that, if a man doesn't acknowledge that, it says his prayers won't even be heard by God. Notice, “that your prayers may not be hindered.” Man is to look at the woman as a comparable helpmate. And her counsel from God is just as good as your counsel from God and you need to work together. And you are joint heirs of the grace of God. That's why in Galatians 3 Paul would write there's no slave, there's no master, there's no man, there's no woman, there's no Jew, there's no Greek. We are all one in Christ.

Now let me share with you what causes the devil to tremble. That is this. There are some men who are figuring this out. And they and their wives are having an experience that God is blessing so profoundly that prayers are being answered. Now let me explain to you how it happens. Here's the dynamic. It's important to realize.

Two people begin to court. They start looking at each other. Opposites attract. It's true. There's a reason for it. God desired it and designed it that way. Here's how it happens. You have somebody, they are just as happy go lucky, “Wow, wind's blowing this way,



that's the way I want to go. Wow, life's fun. It's great! " They are spontaneous. They just do whatever they want.

They are attracted to the steady as she goes, knows every step, how things are going to line up. This person has never had spontaneity before. "Wow, this is new and refreshing, exciting," and they are drawn to that excitement and the thrill. This person needs order and regimen in their life and they are attracted to that because things can finally make sense. And those two just have an exciting whirlwind romance, and so they get married. And all of a sudden they hate each other. Just look at their drawers. One is a mound and the other is neatly put there. What attracted them initially becomes a tremendous irritant later.

They each have strengths. They each have weaknesses. And it is at that point the devil is going to attack. He's going to say to the woman, "Why can't they be more like you. Why are they so hung up on where their socks are? After all, life is bigger than that." And this one over here the devil's going to say, "Why they can't be more like you. I mean, there are socks on top of the curtain rods around here. What is going on? This person is like" whatever. It becomes irritating.

God has a plan for those people. That is this, that humbly before him each would recognize the other's strengths and would learn from it and would grow in that direction, and over time—25, 35 45 years, the one who is so rigid is going to loosen up and the one that is loose will tighten up. They are going to become responsible. The other one is actually going to know what joy is. Together they've strengthened each other and become something they could not become alone.

Now this works in other areas of marriage as well. Let's just say finances. You take people in finances. Oh man, that's just a lit dynamite once a month when the checks are done. You can see the fuse going. "Oh no, we got to do bills" You can hear it sizzling, because an explosion is going to take place. Boom! Because no two people on earth totally agree on how to spend money. They don't, and the devil knows that. So he's going to work that and work that so that by the time it's over, no one is talking to each other in that home.

Here's what you do. You say, "Okay God, it's a weakness. We know it. We're going to make fun out of it." One of you will be stronger than the other in finances. And fellows, listen to me. Listen to me closely. If the lady is better at finances than you, what moron would not allow her to take over? Hey, if she's going to do more with that money than you can, it's a team. Hello, right? Let her. "Go for it girl! Make us millions! Manage the stuff. I'll look for the socks on the curtains." Don't be a moron and be like you got to be in control of everything. Ladies, if the man's better at that, then let him go with it. And there are other areas in your life where each has different strengths. Work together on it and together be successful. And you are more than what you'd ever be by yourself.

When I do pre-marriage counseling, I tell a couple, "Look, finances are going to be an issue. One of you is going to be more organized than the other, one's going to ask

questions, and if the one is more organized than the other one, every time the organized one asks the disorganized a question that's going to be a threat to them. So I told them how to do it. And if you'll plug your children's ears I'll tell you. Actually, you don't have to. I'll do it in a generic way you'll understand.

Make it into a date. If you do bills once a month, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, it's bill day! We love bill day. Why? Because we have a special breakfast. First thing we get cleaned up and we have a special breakfast. We have a little worship together, and we do our bills. And when that's over we head to the b\_\_\_\_\_, you fill in the blank. It's bill day, whew! Can't wait! Turn it into a strength. God will bless that. And you'll say, "I can't wait for bill day!" Two people working together.

The foundation of culture is the home. And a home according to God is two people who recognize their comparable helpmates and that together they can do what they couldn't do alone. Let me tell you the most powerful thing you are going to learn today. It might not even be news, but I'm just going to remind you of this. Jesus says, here's the holiness of marriage, that He will be wherever two people are who have gathered how? in His name.

If you are married in the name of Jesus and conducting yourself in the presence of Jesus, "Here's the gift He's given me, Lord I'm doing the best I can. I love you and I love them and it's a sanctification thing for me. I want to do what's right, I want to be right and I want You to be with us." Two people seeking to serve God will have the presence of Jesus and angels in their home. And that home will then come to the church, and that church can go out into the community, and the work will be finished. But that's not the best part. Look at Matthew 18:19. This is why the devil is seeking to destroy your marriage and why he's seeking to destroy my marriage. He knows what I'm going to read to you. He knows what will happen if two people finally get it.

Matthew 18:19. Jesus, in His own words He says again, "I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven." Do you realize, married couples, what a carte blanche check is given to you in this verse? If you are walking together, you agree together on earth, it will be bound in heaven. What happens to two people who are humble and kind and loving to one another, and they recognize the strength and the beauty of the other, and they've called Jesus to be in their home, and those two kneel down to pray for their children to be saved. I'm telling you God will act powerfully on behalf of those two people. It says it right there. And the devil knows it. He doesn't want you praying together. He wants you "preying" on each other. When you pray together for your finances, when you pray together for your children, when you pray together for your health, when you pray together to love one another, when you pray together, those prayers are heard, those prayers are answered, miracles take place, the devil knows it, and he doesn't want you to have it in your home.

Now if you're single, you need Jesus in your heart before you get married. And you need to marry somebody who has Jesus in their heart, or don't marry them. Don't enslave

yourself, it's not worth it. And if you're married and I have not just described your home to you, then it's time to repent. If God were to call you to account for the way you are treating your spouse, would you be red in the face or would you say, "Lord, you know it all. I love them. I just love them, and I love you for giving them to me. And you see it by the way I'm trying." If you're married, are you able to say, "Man the two of us, there's a spirit of Christ between us, and we get on our knees to pray and we claim God's promises and prayers are being answered?" If you can't say that, then it's time we all become Christians.

So today, if you are single and would like to be married, I want you to have Jesus in your heart. If you're married, I want you to have Jesus in your heart so you can have the type of home Adam and Eve had before sin came in. If you'd like to accept Jesus as your Savior either for the first time or again, I'm going to ask you to stand right where you're at.

Father in Heaven, we need Jesus, and we ask that You would come into our hearts. Lord, teach us to find Your will for our lives. I pray for those who are single that You would lead them to the companion You have chosen for them, and for those who are married that they would work through whatever difficulties they have, and that they would become a holy institution and all that you would have them to be. Amen