

EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH
"Part XIII: Finding Blessing In 'Politically Incorrect' Marital Roles"
(Ephesians 5:18, 21-33)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Maintaining wholesomeness in marital roles and going the distance in marriage in **today's** "politically correct" world is a real challenge. Consider the following:

(1) In June, 1998 of this year, a statement by the Southern Baptists urging their member women to "submit graciously" to their husbands elicited a huge uproar across the nation!

(a) So confident that he would gain national political support, the President of the United States, himself a Southern Baptist, **publicly** stated his **disagreement** with the stand! He guessed right -- the "politically correct" establishment and media came bounding to his support, grandly critiquing the Southern Baptist position!

(b) Others in Christendom jumped on the band wagon. Gerald Renner, the Hartford Courant Religion Writer on 6/11/98 quoted David L. Balch, a New Testament scholar at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. He contradicted the use of Ephesians 5:22 behind the Southern Baptists' stand. Balch feels that though the verse says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord", the text is allegedly **not** what *Jesus* had in mind! Balch says "first-generation Christians held a radical view that assumed a measure of equality between men and women . . . But when Jesus did not return, as was expected, the second-generation Christians were under pressure to modify their position regarding the equality of both women and slaves."

(d) One of the few columnists defending the Southern Baptist Convention position, William Pape in the 6/14/98 Waterbury Republican-American wrote: "If the Pilgrims had landed at Plymouth Rock last week and heard the upheaval arising from the Southern Baptist Convention, they would have concluded America is a hateful, intolerant place, leaving them no choice but to reboard the Mayflower and set sail for more understanding shores."

Well, in view of evidences in our CULTURE and in even Christendom on the difficulty people find in agreeing on proper marital roles, HOW can TODAY'S marriages ever work out?!"

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Keeping one's marriage intact in today's society is hard! Even Christians are confused and debate over basic spousal roles! How do we stay whole and make marriage function well TODAY?!"

- I. **The Apostle Paul laid out roles for men and women in marriage that are incredibly "politically incorrect" in TODAY'S world:**
 - A. On the one hand, Paul urged wives to "submit" to their own husbands as unto God, a move at great odds with today's feminists, Eph. 5:22.
 - B. On the other hand, he urged husbands to love their wives with a self-sacrificing love patterned after the self-sacrificing love of Christ for His Church, Ephesians 5:25! Such self-sacrifice is at odds with our culture's "me-first" and "protect-your-own-rights" mentality!
- II. **However, such "politically incorrect" roles WILL WORK if spouses align properly to to the "politically INcorrect" Holy Spirit:**
 - A. Paul's address on marriage roles starting in Eph. 5:22 flows from his v. 21 order for "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."
 - B. To see **how** such "submitting" is **possible today**, note that the word, "submitting" is a participle, modifying the verb "be filled" in Eph. 5:18.
 - C. Now, **what** we are to "be filled" with is **God, the Holy Spirit, 5:18!**
 - D. Thus, a wife is **able** to submit to her husband & he is **able** sacrificially to love his wife by their **both** being "filled" or **controlled** by **God's Spirit** (v. 18). A **sinless God**, separate from the world's "politically correct" orientations can **control** spouses to make them **cooperate!**
 - E. Now, one becomes indwelt and controlled by this Holy Spirit through (1) faith on Christ as Savior from sin (Jn. 7:38-39) and then in (2) leaning on the indwelling Spirit for **behavior control**, Gal. 5:16!
- III. **Hence, though "politically INcorrect", a WONDERFUL marriage is possible by spouses taking the following steps in their lives:**

- A. Step One - **Both** a husband and wife must believe on Christ to be saved from sin to become indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, Jn. 7:38-39.
- B. Step Two - Then, **both** that man and his wife must fellowship with God who indwells them: that happens by one's (1) confessing any sin that blocks the Spirit's behavior control (1 Jn. 1:9 with Gal. 5:17) and (2) his following up that act by leaning on the Spirit. God in turn produces a desire in **both** to be loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, gentle, good, faithful, meek and self-controlled, compare Gal. 5:16, 22-23.
- C. Step Three - **In** this spiritual *condition*, the **wife** is to yield to the Holy Spirit's promptings for **her** to be loving and self-controlled so she will be **able** to **submit** to her husband's lead as a conscious obedience to **GOD**, Eph. 5:22. This **makes** her *respect* her husband, Eph. 5:33.
- D. Step Four - **In** this spiritual state, also the **husband** is to yield to the Holy Spirit's promptings for **him** to be loving, self-controlled, patient, gentle, good and meek so he will *sacrificially nurture* and **protect** her. He is to use the self-sacrificing example of Christ's death on the cross to save man from sin as the *model* for this love, Eph. 5:25-32!
- E. Step Five - When *through God's Spirit* the wife **submits** to her husband as he **sacrificially loves** his wife, they can meet with others of like faith in the Local Church for **more** edification, Eph. 4:11-16!

Application: (1) In **IDEAL** marital structures where a man is married to a woman each in their first marriage, to keep the marriage **WHOLE**, they should follow the guidelines in section "III" of the sermon above. (2) In situations where one is single, widowed or divorced, (a) follow steps **ONE** and **TWO** to be encouraged by the Lord. (b) Then, find mutual encouragement with other singles **AND** complete family units through fellowship in the Local Church where the spiritual gifts of fellow believers used of God can **FURTHER** nurture. (3) In situations where one has been divorced and remarried, with any kind of unusual family arrangement due to former marital ties, (a) apply the applicable steps **ONE** through **FOUR** with the current partner. (b) Then find encouragement and edification by fellowship with other family units in the Local Church, cf. Eph. 4:12-16. (4) In situations where we are **MARRIED**, but the **OTHER** spouse steadfastly does **NOT** apply any or just **SOME** of the steps in section "III" above, (a) apply steps **ONE** thru **THREE** or **FOUR**, depending on the applicable gender. (b) Then, trust that **GOD** the **HOLY SPIRIT'S** SUPERNATURAL equipping of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control will be sufficient to enable us to function in the **ONE-SIDED** union! (c) Then, fellowship with others in the Local Church for **MORE** edification, Eph. 4:12-16.

Lesson: A wonderful marriage arises from living **ABOVE** a sinful, errant "politically correct" world view, and that happens only as spouses get into proper relationship with the "politically **INCORRECT**" Holy Spirit!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Buck and Mittie Hatch who have been married for over 50 years, had their testimony presented in the article, "Still Holding Hands" in the February, 1993 issue of Moody Monthly.

This couple is strangely at opposite ends of the spectrum as far as personalities go. Buck is tall, Mittie is short. Mittie is full of energy and socially aggressive where Buck likes to stay home and be alone. However, they testify that the reason their marriage has started and stayed healthy is that **both** Buck and Mittie, from the days when they first started dating, kept asking themselves, "Is this what the **LORD** wants?"

They were engaged after a year of dating, but waited another 5 years until they were both convinced that their marriage was in God's will. Then they were married.

Buck states today, "I'm convinced that most struggles between couples should be settled between the individual and God. I don't believe that if [Mittie] does something that angers me that I ought to tell her to shape up. It's my problem, and I ought to take it to the Lord and get rid of my irritation."

Buck and Mittie, two DIFFERENT people, have stayed married for 51 years because of the FOUNDATION of a mutually right relationship with the LORD. That is how men and women may stay married, and stay WHOLE in marriage in today's culture!