

# THE ONE THING

## PART EIGHT – THE MERRY MARRIAGE

### REVIEW

Church, I cannot begin to convey to you fully just how important it is that we be “doers” of this “one thing.” The reason being is because we have learned that personal relationship with the Lord is the primary purpose and calling of each and every one of us. Therefore, it is the foundation to fulfilling all God has called us unto.

And as I have made the point of already, our personal time with Him and the fellowship with Christ that is available to us is the most vital part of our Christian walks. It is what will cause us to be fruitful, for as Jesus Himself said, “apart from Him we can do nothing” (John 15:5). Yes, this fellowship with Him is what will strengthen, stabilize and empower us to be and to do all that Christ has created us to be and do. Therefore, we should understand this because everything is aimed at and derived from our personal relationship/fellowship with the Lord.

For a couple of weeks now, we have been looking at the two particular relationships that the Lord used to describe this new covenant that we live in.

In review, we saw that in studying the New Testament, we see two predominant relationships that are meant to exemplify our covenant with God: the relationship between a husband and a wife (us playing the role of the bride of Christ) and the relationship between a father and his children (God being our Father and us being His children). These two kinds of relationships are the two most often used analogies meant to describe our union with God under this new and better covenant.

So why do you suppose God used these two examples to illustrate our union with Him? It is because God believes in the family and in relationships! He is a family-oriented Creator and desires the relationship and fellowship of His creation!

Now here is a good question: Since these two kinds of relationships are used to describe our relationship with God, do you suppose we could look at these two kinds of natural relationships and learn something more about what God desires out of us in our relationship with Him? Absolutely! There is no doubt that we can look into what makes a good and healthy relationship between a parent and a child and between a husband and a wife and, therefore, see what would improve the quality of our relationship with God.

So a few weeks ago, we looked at what makes the relationship between a parent and their children successful. We saw that in the Word of God there are three primary ways in which our Father desires for us to relate to Him:

1. **Fear:** No, we are not talking about a dread, terror or paranoia of Him, but in a reverential and respectful way. We saw that it is imperative, if we are going to have a healthy relationship with our parents, that we need to show them the appropriate honor as our elders. Likewise, we need to honor the Lord and be respectful of His position as Lord and God.
2. **Faith:** Secondly, we saw that faith is an important part in our relationship with Him. Just as it would be hard for us to have a good relationship with our parents if we don't trust them or believe a word they say, likewise our relationship with our Heavenly Father must be enveloped in faith, hope and trust.
3. **Love:** And last, but not least, our Heavenly Father desires the love of His children with all of their heart, soul, mind and strength. In short, that Great Commandment was a call to the most vibrant love relationship that is possible with our God. Amen!

Finally, we saw that all that we do is to be aimed at "blessing the Lord." Our call is to minister to Him and please Him. And the only way to do this, my friends, is through growing in our relationship with Him – a relationship that is enveloped in faith, honor and love. This is God's greatest desire! Amen!

Then last week, we moved into looking at the other relationship the LORD used to describe our new & better covenant – the husband & wife relationship.

We spent our time last week talking about what a wonderful Heavenly Husband that we have in Jesus. We learned that He loves His bride as we are told to love our wives. We saw how this was not as common in the culture of that day as it is nowadays because women were treated more like possessions & servants than as equals. This illustrates to us how the LORD loves us even though it would seem like He might relate to us differently as our Creator.

So we saw how He loved us by giving Himself for us – in everything from coming from heaven to earth to going to the Cross for us. Yes, He gave us His blood, His Spirit, His Word – all of these things and so much more because He so loves His bride and desires to give us everything necessary to sanctify & cleanse us and present us before Himself as holy and without blemish!

We also learned from the things that the Holy Spirit told husbands about how to treat their wives, that the Lord is not offended with or embittered by us. No, His nature is that of a sweet, kind, and gentle husband who knows how to honor His bride.

We also learned from the apostle Peter's exhortations to husbands that the Lord even made the effort to dwell with us with understanding – meaning, He became a man and was tempted in all points as we are. So now our merciful & faithful Husband can sympathize with us in our weaknesses.

And finally, we learned that because of what our Heavenly Husband has done for us we are now heirs together with Him in this grace of life – meaning, we are now joint heirs with Christ Jesus and more than conquerors through Him!

Church, this is the Husband that we have in Christ Jesus! He isn't a controlling Husband who treats His wife like dirt. No, He is a loving leader who has laid His life down for His bride and given her all things that pertain to life & godliness. This is who we are called to spend time with – a Husband who loves us and honors us! Thank You, Jesus!

So now that we have talked about our Heavenly Husband's role, let's get into what makes for a healthy relationship between a husband and a wife in order to learn how to develop a better relationship with our Lord & Husband.

### **QUALITY TIME VS. QUANTITY OF TIME**

Now undoubtedly, the greatest element to developing any healthy relationship is time – the time two individuals spend together. This is true especially in a marriage ...

You see, it is impossible to build a good relationship with your spouse if you never spend any time with them. And, likewise, our relationship with God will never reach its full potential if we never spend time with Him.

But what you might hear a husband and wife say who might be having problems in their marriage is that they do spend plenty of time with each other, yet their relationship is still not prospering. But it is not just having someone physically present (or, in God's case, spiritually present) that makes for a healthy relationship. Both parties need to be engaged – acknowledging each other and being there mentally and emotionally, not just physically.

Now there are two types of time that need to be practiced in a marriage in order to make it a successful relationship: Number one, there is the day in and day out time we spend with our spouse that is important. This is the time that we spend with each other on a daily basis where other people and things might be involved such as children, friends, and household responsibilities. Number two, there is what I call the "special" times with our spouse where we have concentrated one on one time spent with them. We would call these special times – "dates or intimate moments." Both of these types of time that we spend with our spouse are important – neither being any less significant than the other.

Now the first type of time I want us to focus on are those special times: These dates or intimate occasions that we occasionally have with our loved ones are vital because, even though we spend hours every day with them, we are not always able to give them our undivided attention. This occurs because of the other responsibilities that come with our day-in and day-out activities and these prohibit us from being able to completely focus on one another. In other words, these special times are not always convenient because of the things that are involved in our daily life. Therefore, it is necessary that, whether it is done

weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly, we have special times where we get alone with our spouse and escape the cares of life in order to focus 100% on them.

Likewise, we need to do the same thing with our Divine Husband: We need to set aside “special” times where we get alone with God to give Him 100% of our focus and attention just like Jesus did with His Father.

Have you ever noticed how many times we are told that Jesus would withdraw from everyone and go be with His Father? Let me give you a few:

- ✓ **Luke 6:12** says, *"In those days, Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and He spent the night in prayer to God."* Notice how Jesus spent all night in prayer. If the Lord can miss an entire night's sleep to spend time with His Father, I think we can miss an hour or two sometimes to fellowship with God. Amen?
- ✓ **Mark 1:35** says, *"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."* I'll tell you – some of the best times you can have in God's presence is before the sun even rises. One of the reasons is because the distractions of life are less present early in the morning before our minds have started racing.
- ✓ **Matthew 14:23** says, *"After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone."* This verse emphasizes and then reemphasizes Jesus being “alone” with His Father. We obviously need this vital one on one time with Him too as Jesus exemplified for us. Amen?
- ✓ And let me give you one from after Jesus ascended to heaven: **Acts 16:25** says, *"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."* Oftentimes, we focus only on the fact that Paul and Silas were praying & praising while in prison. But I'm not sure we always see *when* they were doing this – “at about midnight.” I'm here to tell you today that the opening of prison doors don't just happen when we praise God; they open “when” we praise God too (re: the timing).

### **DATES WITH DIETY**

Now these “special times” can be anything from the time we give Him every day, such as in the mornings or the times we get away for a weekend to spend a couple of days with Him. There is not just one way to do this either; the important thing is that we find the best way for ourselves to do it.

I encourage both of these examples: Make at least a small amount of time every day for Him – preferably in the morning to get your day started right or at night if that works best for your schedule. Also, make plans periodically to get away with God for a day, weekend, etc. Although we need the daily time we give to Him, we also need these other times of getting away with Him to strengthen our relationship with Him.

I like to call both of these special times we set aside for God our “dates with deity.” And what a glorious opportunity this is – to get one on one with our Creator in order to get to know Him better!

But there is something very important we must realize regarding spending one on one time with God – a relationship cannot be dictated; it has to be developed. In other words, you cannot make a relationship prosper just by rigid scheduling and self-discipline. While that might be necessary from time to time because of the weakness of our flesh, it is not the best way for a relationship to be maintained and developed. We cannot try and dictate a close relationship by determining that we are going to spend such and such time together because we have to. And in regard to our relationship with God, it is not healthy to always try and make those special times of fellowship with Him. Like I said, it is good when it comes to disciplining ourselves, but in terms of building a relationship, it will not be as profitable. Actually making plans to spend a certain night with Him every week can become very legalistic, and if it becomes a “law” to us, we will become condemned if we fail to live up to it.

You see, God wants our time with Him to be spontaneous and Spirit-prompted! In other words, He would rather us have a free-flowing relationship with Him, where we do not need to make ourselves spend time with Him. He wants us to enjoy our time spent with Him and not something we just feel like we have to do.

Think about it for a moment: Would you prefer your spouse having to discipline themselves to spend time with you or would you rather him or her just spontaneously spending plenty of time with you just because they wanted to? I guarantee that every one of us would choose the latter option. Why? It is because we want to be in their hearts!

You see, we all want to be desired by our spouses. So if they only spend time with us when they make themselves or they make plans to, we can feel somewhat dissatisfied and devalued. Why? Because we want them to want to be with us and not to feel like it’s a chore.

God is not no different: While He definitely appreciates someone who makes the effort to develop a relationship with Him, He too would rather have one who loves Him with all their heart to where their time with Him is not dictated by a clock or a calendar. He wants a people who spend time with Him, not because they feel they have to, or because of what it will do for them, but because they just love to be with Him. In short, “God wants us to want to” just as any husband or wife wants their spouse to want to be with them!

The bottom line is that God wants to capture our hearts. And when He has our heart, those one-on-one times with Him are so sweet and non-laborious! They are spontaneous and Spirit-filled! When our heart is inclined towards the Lord and our time with God is spontaneous and Spirit empowered, an hour with God might feel like 15 minutes instead of 15 minutes feeling like an hour. This is what those special times with God are supposed to be like – rich and not rushed, peaceful and not pushed, free flowing and not frustrating.

## CONSTANT COMMUNICATION

Now although it is good to have these special times with our spouse, the vast majority of the time involved in a relationship is not going on dates. This is only a fraction of the time that a husband and wife will spend together. You see, although these date times are wonderful and necessary, relationships are not all about intimate contact and romance. We cannot have intimate moments with our spouse all of the time, can we? The majority of our time spent in one another's presence is in the other type of time that I described earlier – the times involving other necessary things such as our children, jobs, hobbies, etc.

You see, the downfall of many married couples is that although they go on the occasional “date” and have the occasional “intimate” moments, they do not make the effort to strengthen their relationship with their spouse during the daily affairs of their life. They do not really communicate. They do not touch. They only practice these things when they go on dates and when they have special moments. But learning to “practice their presence” during these times where distractions are present is what takes a relationship from being just normal to becoming great!

Most experts say that the first and foremost key to a healthy marriage relationship is constant communication! They say that a marriage relationship is maintained, not by special occasions or date times alone, but through learning to consistently communicate throughout the day in and day out activities of life.

You see, after we begin our new life with our significant other, things tend to become busy and cluttered. Usually, during the time we are married, life begins coming at us real fast. Usually, we are beginning our careers – which take much of our attention and some of our energy. Then we have children – who demand all of our attention and take all of our energy. And these distractions of life never stop. So if we are not careful, the time we spent successfully communicating with our spouse either before we were married or soon after we got married, can begin to suffer. This is when we must learn to cultivate a lifestyle of communication with our spouse even when other things are vying for our attention. This is when we must learn to keep those lines of communication open throughout the day for all seven days of the week.

So how does this apply to our covenant relationship with Jesus – the Lover of our Soul? Well, God's Word instructs us to pray without ceasing, does it not (**First Thessalonians 5:18**)? Paul also said in **Ephesians 6:18** we are to be *“pray(ing) always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”* So when you view these commands to never stop praying from the perspective of everything revolving around a personal relationship with God, what the Holy Spirit is saying is that God desires for us to remain in a place of constant communication with Him! Therefore, we can see that just as constant communication is important in any natural relationship, God apparently thinks that it is just as important in our relationship with Him as well.

You see, so many Christians who are actually successful in practicing communicating with God on a regular basis just talk to God during the special times they set aside for Him like, for instance, first thing in the morning. This is a good practice; do not get me wrong. But the problem is that after that time they spent communicating with Him in the morning, they hang up the phone with Him and do not talk to Him the rest of the day. This is, of course, unless they have an emergency. But, you see, what “praying without ceasing” means is that we do not ever hang up the phone! We need to stay on the line with Him all day long and keep those lines of communication open continuously!

And this constant communication is needful in all relationships. It is not just limited to the marriage relationship, but should be practiced in all aspects of a family. As a matter of fact, all of these things that we have shared today that make up a good relationship between both a parent & child and a husband & wife are applicable to making any relationship prosper.

But while many of the things I have said this week apply to the natural relationships of our family, I truly speak concerning a Husband and a Father who passionately loves us. So let’s become that bride that is passionately in love with our Groom – Jesus Christ! Let’s become that child that ministers to our Heavenly Father!

### **DOING WHAT DOESN’T COME NATURAL**

So let’s end today by looking at **Ephesians chapter 5**, where we see one of the most in-depth teachings on the subject of marriage in the Word of God. In this chapter, the apostle Paul delves into the responsibilities of both the husband and wife in **verses 22-33**, but as he later said, he was really referring to Christ’s relationship with His church.

So in these verses, we essentially see the apostle Paul telling the husbands to love their wives and the wives to submit themselves to their husbands. Now, of course, we know that we are all supposed to love each other, right? Well, not only that, but Paul said in this same Book (in fact, in the verse just before he started referring to these roles & responsibilities of marriage) that we are all to submit to one another (**Ephesians 5:21**).

Therefore, what these husbands and wives were supposed to do was what everyone is supposed to do. So why did Paul say this to the husbands and wives? It was because he was telling each to do what they don’t have the natural tendency to do.

You see, as a general rule, women know about love. It comes natural to most ladies – that motherly love. And men tend to know about respect. It’s built into most men to understand the idea of submitting to authorities and showing respect. So it was as if Paul was telling each party to work on the things that might not come natural to them. Amen?

So what does this have to do with cultivating a good relationship with God? It’s that, just as our Lord did what might not have seemed “natural” in how He loved us and gave Himself for us as our God and Creator, we might have to do what comes unnatural to us – namely, humbling ourselves and submitting to Him.

You know, I don't think I need to tell you that humility does not come natural. We like to be our own gods and have control over our own lives. But, in order to have the right relationship with the LORD, we have to recognize that He is God and we are not.

But do you know what else comes unnatural for us? Just simply spending time with a God we cannot see. Yes, doing things by faith is not easy on the flesh because our flesh wants to feel something! It wants to see with its eyes, touch with its hands, etc. But learning to fellowship with God is a spiritual experience, not a physical one.

So, although learning to spend time with Him will grate on your carnal nature, I can assure you, you will greatly benefit. You'll have to do it "believing" that you're accomplishing something. And your carnal mind and fleshly body will tell you all the reasons why it's a waste of time, why you ought to be spending your time doing something else, etc. This is when you must "submit" to and "respect" His Word above everything else and do it because you have faith in Him that you are fulfilling the highest calling of every believer – to fellowship with God. Amen?

Church, what a grand opportunity we have, for how can it be that our God desires to have a relationship with you and I!?! I tell you the truth, He desires this from you more than anything else you could do for Him! He, first of all, desires a personal relationship with you and then He wants for you to introduce others to Him for the same purpose. This is Christianity in its simplest terms – relationship with God! Amen!