

WRITTEN TEACHING · TWO PARTS

The Order of Function in Marriage

A two-part teaching on Ephesians 5: marriage as the book of oneness, and the signs of a downfall that come after real growth has been achieved.

Ephesians 5 · Ezekiel 16 · 28 • Revelation 5 • 1 Corinthians 5 • 1 Samuel 2-3

A woman is the pages of a book; a man is its hardcover. The cover is hard because it must be — anything that strikes the book strikes the cover first, protecting the softer, more fragile pages within. And what the book actually says, who its author truly is, becomes visible only when the pages are read. What a man is, and who he is, becomes visible through his wife.

PART ONE · THE BOOK OF ONENESS

Fixing Yourself Fixes Her

This gives us a striking principle: when a man fixes himself, he is automatically fixing his wife. Not because she is passive or secondary, but because oneness means her weaknesses are showing him where *he* needs to grow, and his growth flows down to her the way anointing oil poured on the head must eventually reach the rest of the body — and beyond the body, to "the hem of the garment," representing the generations that follow. This is why so many touched the hem of Christ's robe and were healed: they were touching the place where the richness of His anointing had settled most abundantly, generationally.

Marriage Is Inheriting Back What Was Once Yours

Marriage is not the joining of two separate, complete people. It is the recovery of a wholeness that existed before the separation described in Genesis — *bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh*. What was once one was divided into two, and marriage is the process of inheriting that lost completeness back. This is why, in a very real sense, a husband's

struggle is his wife's struggle, and a wife's struggle is her husband's — not merely in principle, but in a oneness we constantly try to divide back into two, because embracing it fully is hard.

Submission Is About Order of Function, Not Value

Ephesians 5 tells wives to submit to their husbands "as unto the Lord" — and the key phrase is *as unto the Lord*. A wife does not submit to her husband because of what she can see about him (his performance, his provision, his mood on any given day). She submits by seeing past the flesh entirely, to the Spirit her husband is himself submitted to.

Submission means knowing your place in the order God has established — and that order is not about who is superior and who is inferior. Roots are not more important than branches; a foundation is not more important than the walls it supports. Each depends on the other functioning rightly in its place. This is the order of function, not an order of worth.

The church submits to Christ though it cannot see Him with physical eyes. What actually saves or destroys a person is never what can be seen — the car, the charm, the achievements — but the unseen spirit someone is truly submitted to underneath all of that. This is a sobering warning as much as a comfort: submission based purely on visible things can just as easily destroy as save, because it was never rooted in discerning the spirit beneath the surface.

The Husband's Love Is the Cross

If wives are called to this kind of submission, husbands are given an equally weighty command: love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. That giving happened at the cross — and the cross was not comfortable, admired, or beautiful. It was suffering, offered as sacrifice for the betterment of another. Revelation 5:12 shows what that sacrifice produced: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing, given to the Lamb who was slain. Everything a wife needs and will ever need is meant to be produced the same way — through a husband's sacrifice. What she lacks often reveals exactly where that sacrifice has not yet been made.

This is not sentimental love. It is costly, painful, and entirely unglamorous in the moment. But it is precisely that costly love, not the version that only "feels good," which builds something lasting. This is the love by which a marriage is ultimately measured: not by whether it was comfortable, but by whether it sacrificed.

The Word That Washes

Ephesians 5:26 speaks of Christ sanctifying the church "with the washing of water by the word." When a husband's life becomes that kind of offering, his very life becomes a truth that washes and cleanses — not empty talk, but a lived truth (John 17:17: *"Thy word is truth"*) that removes what is unclean in his wife over time. This is the hardcover principle again: the husband absorbs what would otherwise strike and damage his wife directly, and it is from that place of absorbed cost that she is gradually presented "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing... holy and without blemish."

True authority in marriage is exercised only through this kind of sacrifice. Without it, what looks like leadership is simply a "boss spirit" — compliance born of fear, not the genuine spiritual authority sacrifice produces.

There is no perfect wife to be found by searching. God's promise is not "perfect," but *"perfect for you"* — a perfection revealed only through the process of the cross, not discovered ready-made at the outset.

No Traces of the Old

Holiness, in this picture, means total separation from what came before — no lingering traces of old patterns, old wounds, or old family dysfunction repeating themselves in a new marriage. This applies equally to husbands: leaving father and mother (Ephesians 5:31) means exactly that — leaving, not merely relocating while still carrying the same inherited patterns. This is likened to becoming, in effect, a spiritual Melchizedek — "without father, without mother, without genealogy" (Hebrews 7:3) — a new man with no predictable, recognizable pattern for old habits or old spirits to latch onto.

Members of One Body

Ephesians 5:29–30 explains why a husband must love his wife as his own body: no one hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, exactly as Christ does the church. A wife is described as a member of her husband's body, his flesh and his bones — meaning she becomes the means by which he reaches what he could not reach alone, accomplishes what he could not accomplish alone. This is not diminishment; it is function.

A Great Mystery

Paul calls all of this "a great mystery... concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). What is seen outwardly — two people, a marriage certificate, a shared home — is only the visible shadow of something unseen: Christ and His church, the New Jerusalem, "the mother of us all," a woman of freedom rather than bondage (Galatians 4:26). A wife is called to carry that spirit of Jerusalem within her, and to revere her husband the way Sarah revered Abraham, calling him "lord" — not out of subservience, but because she was recognizing the Spirit her husband himself walked under.

PART TWO · SIGNS OF A DOWNFALL

The Danger Comes *After* the Growth

You will never find a person — a spouse, a church, yourself — already in the state you desire them to be in. What you find instead is a project: marriage is not an event, it is a process, one that lasts a lifetime. But there is another side to this story — what happens once real progress has actually been made. Once a marriage or ministry has genuinely grown into something beautiful, envied by others, a new danger appears exactly at that point of success.

Ezekiel 16:15 names it directly: *"Thou didst trust in thine own beauty."* Not that the beauty itself was wrong — it was given, cultivated through real, hard-won growth. The danger is trusting in it, resting in it, rather than continuing to focus on the One who produced it. This is exactly how many churches, and many marriages, decline without anyone noticing at first — when a church becomes complacent about its attendance, its income, its reputation, confident it "can do this with its eyes closed," the downfall has already begun, even if nothing visibly changes for years.

A Fall That No One Can See

A fall like this doesn't happen all at once, because it wasn't built in a day either. People keep assuming you are still where you once were, because the outward signs are still present. This was exactly the case with the priest Eli. He continued as high priest, his sons continued ministering in the tabernacle, and by every outward appearance the household still stood in God's favor. But God had already rejected him and his house long before any of that outward collapse became visible (1 Samuel 2-3). The position remained; the reality behind it had already changed.

This is where real deception takes hold — not in failure, but in the quiet complacency that follows success. Treat every victory the same way you would treat a defeat: without resting in it.

Even God Does Not Rest on What He's Already Built

God Himself models the opposite of complacency. *“In my Father's house are many mansions”* — not one, finished, and done. His kingdom has no end, meaning it never stops building. In Acts 2 and 3, having already added thousands to the church in a single day, God didn't close up shop and call it finished; He kept adding more, eventually raising up Paul to carry the message to the ends of the earth, because He refused to rest on the glory already gained in Jerusalem.

The Root of Satan's Corruption

Ezekiel 28:17 traces this same pattern in the fall of Satan: *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.”* His own splendor, once genuinely given, became something he needed to *maintain* — and it was that need to maintain an appearance that corrupted his wisdom. This is precisely how many people end up defrauding others: not because they set out with dishonest intent, but because they became trapped in maintaining a lifestyle, a reputation, a status quo — and once maintaining that appearance becomes the goal, dishonesty becomes the means.

Queen Vashti is another picture of this. She grew complacent in her position, no longer growing in honor or obedience, and was publicly shamed and removed — a fall made visible to everyone, precisely because she had stopped improving from the position she once occupied.

A Broader Definition of Harlotry

Ezekiel 16:16-19 describes the woman taking the very garments, jewelry, oil, incense, and food that had been given to adorn and sustain her, and using them instead for her own self-glorification — whoring after her own image with the very gifts meant to reflect the giver's glory. This gives us a much broader definition of harlotry than mere sexual sin: it is using anointing, gifting, revelation, or resources — anything given for a purpose beyond yourself — for your own self-promotion and personal gain instead.

This is why 1 Corinthians 5 records a sin in the Corinthian church *“not so much as named among the Gentiles”* — the church, of all places, generating a corruption the world itself wouldn't tolerate. The very things meant to build up a community can, when hijacked for self-interest, become the site of its worst decay.

"It's About Me Now"

This shows up constantly in marriages and partnerships: two people build something together through years of shared sacrifice, and then one of them reaches a certain level of success and quietly makes the whole thing about themselves. What was "our achievement" becomes "my achievement," forgetting entirely the process and the people that carried them there.

The same pattern shows up anywhere someone forgets who helped them rise: the politician who abandons the very people who elevated them once they've gained power; the employee who coasts, using the position for personal convenience rather than the purpose they were hired for; the person who insists "I got here by my own effort alone," when in reality, no one succeeds without being helped, resourced, or carried by someone else along the way.

Conclusion

At its root, this broader harlotry is simply pleasing yourself at the expense of whoever helped make your success possible — whether that is God, a spouse, a congregation, a mentor, or a community. The remedy is not shame over how someone once was, but a forward-looking accountability: once a person, a marriage, or a ministry has genuinely been built up, the only legitimate concern from that point on is whether they continue to use what they've been given for the purpose it was given — or whether they quietly begin using it only for themselves.

May God deliver us from the spirit of the harlot: from taking what has been given to adorn us, and making it all about ourselves.

In the name of Jesus.

✦ Branch of Righteousness

“I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.” — John 17:23

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