

The Christian Marriage & Family

Part 2

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[00:00:00] St. Paul, Thy Word. 1, 8, 6.

O glorious God, most high, and near thy people we listen in.

Always, like God, we hear today.

[00:01:01] Still far and nigh, and onward we'll go.

Blessed can come and snatch away the sin that led the life of man.

Who rest in quiet, and slowly rise, but once to spring, yet by and by.

[00:02:01] Who rest in quiet, and sleep to win them, and to die.

Born from this love, thou art set free.

This gracious death, and pleasures way.

Where to exult, they prove to be.

[00:03:02] In our exultant joy, their gracious reign.

All to thy wise, and gracious ways.

Patient and meek, they would be found.

Thy spirit swift, thy lawful reign.

Made meek and good, and fruitful ground.

[00:04:06] When shall thy word, their hearing see?

And of this land, for which it reigns.

Grail of a hundred fold in thee.

A harvest worthy of thy name.

Amen. [00:05:14] Good afternoon, everybody. Nice to see you again, or for the first time. The topic of this afternoon, of this first lecture, is, as we were told, the Christian marriage. And I would like to start rereading the verse we had yesterday, right at the beginning, from Psalm 127.

Psalm 127, verse 1.

Unless Jehovah build the house, in vain do the builders labor in it.

[00:06:04] In order to help us to understand the good teaching of God concerning our marriages, we started to use a picture that we all know very well. The picture of a house that is being built. And we have seen that our personal life can be compared with a house that we build on the ground. The ground is the Lord Jesus Christ. And also our families and our marriages can be compared with a house. The architect is God. And the foundation is the same foundation as the foundation of our lives. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have been considering yesterday several basics, cornerstones. And we have started to think of some bricks, important bricks, elements of marriage according to God's thoughts. [00:07:05] This afternoon, we will first of all consider a little bit the roof of our house of marriage. We will then think about the doors and the windows. And afterwards, we will have a look into different rooms of our house. First of all, then, the roof of our house. And I would like to read one short verse in the Song of Songs, chapter 2.

The context, of course, is a different one. But I just want to use it as an illustration of what the roof means. Song of Songs, chapter 2, verse 4, in the middle.

[00:08:02] And his banner over me is love.

I would like to compare the roof of our house with love. A banner or a standard is a flag that shows the soldier in the warfare for whom they fight. They have to look up in order to see that banner or standard. And if we look up and see above, we see the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, which is over our house of marriage. Can you imagine a house without a roof?

That would be impossible. A house without a roof is a cold house, is an unsupportable house. It will soon become wet and you can no longer live in a house without a roof. [00:09:04] We need a roof.

The roof is love.

Love is ever so important when we are married or when we are going to be married. Without love, marriage is nothing, although love is not all. It is not enough to love each other. In order to be happily married, more is needed than love. But without love, it doesn't make sense really to be married. And when love is cooling down, when the roof is gone, the breakdown of our marriage will soon be there. So, love really is something very, very important. Otherwise, our house of marriage will soon be a ruin and no longer a house where we like to live in.

[00:10:12] Now, maybe there is hardly a word in our modern languages, be it English, be it German, be it French, that has so much been misused and abused than this word love.

We use it for everything and for nothing. We fall in love. We are in love. We read a love song or a love story.

We love a cup of tea.

We love nice food.

And we love each other.

Even in a negative way, the word love is used. Somebody has a love affair. Somebody makes love.

[00:11:02] He goes to bed with somebody with whom he should not go to bed. We call it, let's make love. Or people call it, let's make love. So, this word is really misused. It is really abused.

It has been perverted. But nevertheless, love, divine love, is something absolutely needed to be happily married.

Now, if we look to the Holy Scriptures, we will find this word love in three different expressions or aspects or view angles. If you look to the Old Testament, you will find a love that we might call the erotic love. If we read the story of Samson, he loved Deliah, and that was nothing else but an erotic love. [00:12:04] He loved her body, nothing else. If we consider the story of Amnon and Tamar, we have exactly the same thing. It is told that Amnon loved her.

He wanted to sleep with her. And the end of the story was that he hated her.

Dear friends, dear young friends, erotic love is never ever a foundation to get married to somebody. Never ever.

You don't love the body of someone, of a nice girl maybe. If you do, it's just erotic love. And that is not enough, by far not enough. Let us be beware of erotic love.

[00:13:02] That has nothing to do with sexuality within our marriages. This is a gift of God, we will see that afterwards. But it is not a basis on which we can build our house of marriage. The second expression is called affection.

Affection is also a kind of love.

And it is also used for the love of God to us.

Affection.

Affection means that there is something in the object of my love that makes me love him.

Certain characters which attract me, positive characters that attract me, and I start to feel affection, to feel love for someone. [00:14:02] And normally, many, many marriages start by affection.

And as couples, we should be linked together with connection, with affection.

I could tell you a lot of things that attract my affection when I think of my wife. I won't do that now because she is present, but I could tell you a lot of things. Affection is necessary when we are married. But again, I say, it is not enough. It is not enough to have affection. There must be more. And there is a third expression that is used in the New Testament, and that is really love. That is the word that is usually used for the love of God. [00:15:03] Not always, but it is usually used for the love of God. You may surely have heard the Greek word. It is agape.

This is a love that loves without finding a reason in the object that I love.

When God loved us, we were sinners. We were His enemies. This is what Romans 5 tells us. There was no reason in us to love us. Not at all. It was the contrary, but still God loved us. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God loved us without any reason on our side.

It was only God's love that loved us because God is love.

And when we look into the New Testament and read about marriage in the New Testament, [00:16:07] we, as husbands, are exactly exhorted to love our wives with this divine love. We should love our wives.

For sure, the wives should love their husbands.

Now, what does it mean to love the partner with whom you are married? It is not easy to give a definition of what divine love is because God is love and we cannot explain God. So, it is difficult to give a definition of what love is. But, dear friends, it is very easy to see what this love is.

The effects of this love can be seen easily. [00:17:03] We only have to consider God's love towards us and immediately we will understand what love means. I just quoted John 3.16, this well-known verse. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. So, love equals to give.

If somebody loves, he is willing to give. He is not expecting something. God didn't expect anything from us. But He has given everything to us, His only begotten Son. So, to love your wife, to love your husband, means to be ready to give everything for him. Not to expect, but to give.

To love your partner means to do everything that is for his benefit. [00:18:04] Not to be selfish, but to be unselfish.

To be prepared to give a sacrifice.

To give a helpful hand whenever needed.

To give your partner the needed time.

We live in a very busy time and we have no time. But to love our partner means to share time with him. So, to love our partner means really to give him.

Not to be selfish, but unselfish.

Not to see our own profit, our own benefit, but to see the benefit of the partner. And be sure, the one who sows love, he will automatically reap love.

[00:19:08] Love will always come back. There are many things in this world that we can waste. But for sure, one thing we can never waste, that's love. It's never in vain. If you love, you can be sure that love will come back.

Now, maybe somebody asks, who shall start to love the other? The husband or the wife? To the husbands, I say we, the husbands. To the wives, I say you, the wives. I have to start. You have to start. Don't wait for the other. Start. Waste? No. Start giving love. Start sowing love. It will surely come back.

[00:20:05] When we open the New Testament, we will find a threefold exhortation for us, husbands, to love our wives.

And the Apostle Paul sets a very, very high standard. He says, love your wives as Christ loved the church.

That is the highest standard possible. But God is not giving us a lower standard. He gives us this standard. Like Christ loved the church. Well, how did Christ love the church? He loved the church and gave himself for the church. Again, you see, love and give, that goes together. That is closely linked together. [00:21:02] If we love, we give.

Love cannot be demanded.

Love cannot be required.

Love must always be acquired.

That is the difference. Don't require love. Acquire love. We can compare love to a very delicate plant.

We have to look after this plant day by day.

We have to cultivate it really with care.

This is what is needed in order that love is really the controlling element in our marriages.

Now, let us consider, husbands, let us consider for a brief moment this exhortation, love your wives. [00:22:08] And I would like to do it in a threefold way. First of all, I would like to emphasize the word, love your wives. What is the opposite of love?

Last year, when we were in Africa, I had a lecture on the same subject.

And I could ask those who were listening, and they gave answers. And I asked them, what do you think, what is the contrary of love? And everybody says, hatred. And I said, yes, you are right. But that's not all.

Is there anybody here who would say, I hate my wife? Of course not. But there is another counterpart

to love, and that is indifference. [00:23:02] Love versus hatred, but also love versus indifference.

Maybe we don't really care about our wives any longer. We live our life. She lives her life. Indifference. No, no indifference.

Love your wife.

Be interested in her well-being. That is the exhortation, the encouragement that the Word of God has given us. That is a challenge to see that she feels well.

Love your wives.

The second way we can stress this little exhortation is, love your wife.

Not another wife. Love your wife.

[00:24:02] Don't start a relationship with somebody else, with another wife. Not necessarily a sexual affair, but don't start an emotional relationship to another wife. Maybe you find somebody, a woman, which is more intelligent than your wife, and you start an intellectual relationship with her. No. The Word of God says, love your wife, not other wives. Be friendly to everybody, of course. Talk to everybody, of course. Don't get me wrong.

But love your wife, and don't show too much interest to other wives.

And there is a third way to read this verse, to stress it, to emphasize it, and we can read, love your wives.

[00:25:06] Maybe somebody says, oh, I know my computer better than my wife. I know my car better than my wife. No. The Word of God says, love your wife.

Try to know her, how she works.

Yesterday we made this comparison, software-hardware. And we said the software of a woman is different from the software of a male being, a man. So try to learn the software, how the software of your wife is working.

It's something very, very interesting.

So love your wives.

[00:26:01] Our wives are our number one in this world. Of course, generally speaking, number one is the Lord Jesus. Number two, our wives.

And number three, our children. You remember that Hebrew servant, what did he say? I love my master, my Lord. I love my wife. I love my children. This is the right order. Number one, generally speaking, is God, is the Lord. Number two, our wives. But on the earth, number one, our wives, and then our children.

Our wives are once exalted, encouraged to have affection for her husbands. That is Titus 2. That is part of the teaching of the elder sisters to the younger ones, [00:27:03] that they should be attached, emotionally attached to her husbands. That is love, but that is affection. And in Titus 2, you will also find a certain order. Maybe we read that verse, Titus 2.

Verse 4.

There you have the teaching of the older sisters, that they may admonish the young women to be attached to their husbands. That is the word affection, love. To be attached to their children.

And then it is said, diligent in homework. There is also an order, isn't it? First, the husband. Secondly, the children. [00:28:01] And thirdly, the household.

Dear sisters, your number one is not your household. Your number one is your husband. Your number one are not your kids. They are precious, and we will think about that later on. They are extremely precious. But your number one is not your children. Your number one is your husband. This is the order given in Titus 2.

Now let me have a word, a short word, on the doors and on the windows.

Considering the doors, I would like to make the following application. In Colossians, we have the expression, an open door of the word. [00:29:01] And I would like to apply this to our picture of the house of marriage. It is not the sense, it is an application that I would like to make. The door speaks of the word of God that comes in and that goes out. It is ever so important that the word of God plays an important role in our lives as being married.

We should read the word of God together. We should talk over it.

We should meditate it together. We should go together to the meetings where the word of God is preached. Of course, we read the Bible personally. This is ever so important to do so every morning, every evening. But we should also do it together. [00:30:02] Read the word of God together.

When we are thinking of the windows, I have in mind the windows that Daniel had. The open windows towards Jerusalem. And these open windows of Daniel talk about his prayer life. And also prayer is a very important element of being married happily. Without praying together, it is very difficult to really live a married life according to the good thoughts of our God. We need prayer.

Of course, we need the personal prayer. And in our personal prayer, we pray also for our partner. And we give thanks for our partner. Not only to pray, but also to give thanks for the partner God has given me. [00:31:03] But we should also pray together.

Unfortunately, there are many Christian couples who never pray together. That is a big mistake.

You shouldn't do it. We should pray together.

I recently talked to somebody who was not happily married. And we talked about the reasons. And I was told that they never prayed together. So the reason why they had big problems was easily found. At least it was one of the reasons for their breakdown that they didn't pray together. So prayer is an

important element as the Word of God is a very important element.

[00:32:06] Now, I would like to make a little house tour now. And we shall have a look at some of the rooms. And first of all, I would like to turn to Colossians. I would like to read one verse. Colossians chapter 3.

Let me first of all say that I would like to consider four rooms. The first room we would like to have a look at is the sitting room or the living room where we talk together. Where we have mutual exchange of opinions and of thoughts.

The second room is the bedroom. [00:33:03] And we would like to have some words on sexuality. The third room is the bathroom.

And the fourth room is the kitchen. I will tell you later why this is important. Now, considering the living room or the sitting room, I would like to read from Colossians chapter 3, verse 16. Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

The living room, the sitting room is the room where we have mutual exchange. [00:34:03] Communication in our marriages is of the utmost importance. We need to talk together. And that is not a one-way road.

It is not one who always talks and the other who always listens. Communication is always like this. It is talking and listening at the same time. Now, yesterday we have been considering the differences between the males and the females. And of course, one of the differences is that many females like to talk a lot and many males don't like to talk at all. So, dear sisters, if you talk a lot, don't talk too much. And dear brothers, if you don't like to talk, try to talk a little more. It is important to have a mutual exchange. [00:35:05] The Apostle John says, from mouth to ear, from ear to mouth. So, vice versa.

Communication.

And if you look to marriages that are really at risk, one of the reasons is, not always, but very often, that they don't talk enough. They don't have time to talk. It is very important that we have this exchange with our partner. And there is an exchange on at least three levels. There is a spiritual exchange, exchanging thoughts, opinions, ideas, or facts.

There is also a mental communication and emotional communications to exchange our feelings.

[00:36:11] Sometimes without words. Sometimes I just need to look at my wife and I know exactly what she is feeling. Sometimes I don't, unfortunately, but sometimes I do. Because I know her very well. But this exchange of feelings, of emotions, is very, very important. Yesterday we have seen that marriage is a unity. And this unity comprises also our soul. A soul unity.

If you are married, you have to open your hearts. You have to open the door of your hearts 100%, not only 50%. You are like an open book for your partner with whom you are married. You have to show your feelings, your emotions. [00:37:02] This is part of communication. And again, a lot of marriages suffer from the fact that one of the partners or both of the partners do not open their souls. That the

wife doesn't know the feelings of her husband. And the other way around. Communication of emotions is a very, very important thing. And a very practical thing. And of course, there is also the physical communication. Not necessarily that what takes place in the bedroom. But physical communication. Holding hands, for example. A kiss.

An embracement.

That is communication without words. And that is also very, very important.

[00:38:05] There are several stages or steps of communication. Now I refer to oral communication, to our talks. We can exchange empty phrases.

Like good morning, how are you, was the meal fine? So just empty phrases.

We all use them and that's okay. But that's of course not enough. The second step, the second level is the exchange of facts.

We talk about the facts of life. The husband comes home in the evening and we exchange what happened during the day. Exchange of facts.

It is important to exchange facts in order to know what happened to the other one during a day, a week or whatever. [00:39:13] A third level or a third step of communication is to exchange thoughts and evaluations. Not only the facts, but to see what does the partner think about this fact. How does he evaluate it?

And the fourth level is the highest one. That is again the exchange of feelings.

Not only to see what he thinks or she, but to see what he or she feels. So when we are really traveling in the first class, you remember what we had yesterday, in the first class of that marriage train, we really have this exchange of feelings and we open our souls.

[00:40:11] Missing communication is the creeping death of our marriages.

So let us talk to each other.

Teaching and admonishing one another.

The second room I would like to consider is the bedroom.

Sexuality.

Let me say first of all that sexuality is a gift of God. There is nothing bad in it principally.

It is a gift of God.

But every gift of God is linked with our responsibility.

[00:41:12] We can use the gifts of God in a way that God is glorified, but we can also misuse the gifts of

God.

Take an example.

A good glass of wine is a gift of God. We can drink it and we can give thanks for it.

But we can abuse this gift of God and drink too much. The same is with the food. We can use it to glorify God. We can overeat ourselves. And it is exactly the same with sexuality. Within the frame given by God, and the frame is marriage. [00:42:07] That is the protecting fence that God has given us for the use of sexuality. Within this fence we can glorify God.

But going outside that fence, we abuse, we misuse this wonderful gift of God.

And we should never do this.

God has given us this wonderful gift.

And he has given us the gift of sexuality for two reasons. One is reproduction.

Multiply and fill the earth. This is what God told right in the beginning. And this is repeated at least three times, if not four times. [00:43:03] Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth. Reproduction. But dear friends, this is not the only reason. God wants us to have pleasure when we are married.

Not before. Not outside this fence. But within the frame that God has given us, sexuality is a gift of God that we can enjoy and that we should enjoy. The Israelite who was married was told to gladden his wife. To have pleasure. And let us very briefly read one verse from the Proverbs, chapter 5. That makes it very clear that God has no problem at all with sexuality. We sometimes have a problem, but God has not. [00:44:03] He does speak about it in an astonishing open way.

Proverbs, chapter 5, it says, verse 15, Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running water out of thine own well. Thy fountains shall be poured forth as water brooks in the broad ways. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed, and have joy in the wife of thy youth. As a lovely hind and a graceful roe. Let her breast satisfy thee at all times. Be thou ravished continually with her love. Dear friends, that is sexuality within the frame of marriage. It is emphasized, thy own cistern, thine own well, thy fountains, thine own, thy fountain, wife of thy youth. [00:45:07] Not with somebody else, but with the partner with whom you are married. And let us have a word in the New Testament, 1 Corinthians, chapter 7.

This is a very important chapter when it comes to sexuality within the border of marriage. 1 Corinthians 7, verse 2. On account of fornication, let each one have his own wife, and each woman have her own husband. That makes it very clear that God does not want the use of sexuality before we are married. Dear young people, God has given us the gift of sexuality. But please, please wait until you are married. [00:46:01] Not before you are married. This is a gift you can use only when you are married, and not before. And those who are married, this gift is exclusively given for you and your partner with whom you are married. No escapades.

No love affairs. No, with your own partner. This is the clear instruction the Word of God has given us as to this very important subject. Unfortunately, we won't have time enough to be more in detail on

this important topic. But the Word of God, the New Testament, has different verses, different passages, where it speaks very clearly about this subject. We have 1 Corinthians 7. We have 1 Thessalonians 4, where we are exhorted to be together with our wives, not in a passionate desire, not just fulfilling fleshly lusts. [00:47:10] We have Hebrews 13, where it is said that the bed should be undefiled. We have 1 Peter 3, where we have the weaker vessels, and we should take care not to demand too much from our wives, we as husbands. And never forget, never forget, marriage is a unity of soul, of spirit, and of body.

The three always belong together. You can't separate that. Sexuality, if I may express myself like this, is the icing on the cake. [00:48:04] It's the fulfillment. It's not the main thing. The main thing is the cake, not the icing on the cake. But the icing makes the cake even nicer. But the important thing is the cake. So let us not exaggerate. And let us never separate sexuality from the spiritual, emotional unity that we have with our wives.

And you remember the example, the picture we had yesterday. This is for us, husbands, much more difficult than for our wives. You remember the chest of drawers compared with the wardrobe. We have the one drawer sexuality. We can open it and we can close it. So the danger that we separate, we men separate, sexuality from the unity of spirit and soul is much bigger than it is for our dear wives. Very briefly, the third room is the bathroom. [00:49:04] The bathroom speaks of being clean.

It speaks of washing.

And I would like to compare it with the resolution of conflicts. Or we may use a modern word, conflict management. That is very important. There is no marriage without conflicts, without guilt, without the need of forgiveness. I never saw a couple that never failed.

That is impossible. So conflict management is something very important. And I would like to read one verse from Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 32.

And be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you. [00:50:11] There are some basic principles. I can just briefly mention them because I don't want to be too long this afternoon in this first reading. There are some basic principles. The basic principle is forgive how and like Christ did. He forgave us heartily, completely, and forever. This is the way we should forgive. Do you know what forgiveness out of the microwave is? You forgive it for one day, one week, one month, one year, but the day comes when you warm it up again. That is forgiveness from the microwave. Don't do that.

Christ has forgiven us completely different, and we should do the same. [00:51:02] The basic elements, of course, of forgiveness is first a confession. We should name the problem. And then a real forgiveness, the final stroke.

There is a motivation to do that. Why should we forgive? The motivation comes back to the first point we had this afternoon. The motivation is love. If I love my wife, no, if my wife loves me, she will forgive me. And also the other way around, of course. Christ has forgiven us because he loves us. Let us never forget. The last room is the kitchen.

What are we doing in the kitchen? In the kitchen, we are working. I hope that there are not only the wives working in the kitchen. It's good for us husbands to help them also in the kitchen, but that's not

my point. [00:52:05] The kitchen of our marriage house speaks of working together. It is something great, really great, to be able to work together for the Lord. And there is one great example in the New Testament, of course. This wonderful couple Aquila and Priscilla, who are mentioned six times. They were really working together for the Lord, a wonderful challenge. And if we read the verses where they are mentioned, we won't do that now. But if we read these words, we will find them together. Ministry. Hospitality.

Spiritual help.

Love for the local assembly. Flexibility as to the place where they were living. We find them in different places. [00:53:01] So, dear friends, let us look for opportunities to serve the Lord together. Let us take over tasks together. Not only resolutions of the heart, but let us really take over and let us finish our tasks together. Things that we can do together. Examples are, for example, hospitality. Home groups.

Working with children. Working with old people. Distributing tracts.

Visiting old people, sick people. There are lots of things that we can do together. Of course, serving the Lord is a, first of all, a personal responsibility, but we can also do that together. My last point is just one verse. [00:54:04] Maintenance.

Maintenance for a house is a very important thing. If you don't do it, after some years it will be an old house. You will see the cracks and maybe one day it will break down. So, maintenance is important. And it is also important for our married lives. I would just like to read one verse. Colossians chapter 3 again. Verse 12.

Of course, again, the context is a different one, but let us apply this verse to our marriages. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved. Don't forget, your partner is elect of God. He has a high value. Election speaks of value. Holy, he belongs to God, and he is beloved of God. As elect of God, be holy and beloved. [00:55:03] Now, we should have bowels of compassion, first. Kindness, second. Lowliness, third. Meekness, fourth. Long-suffering, fifth. Forbearing one another, sixth. And forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any. Even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye. And to all these add love.

Again, there is love. To all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts. And I may add, in your marriages, to which also ye have been called in one body. And be thankful. And be thankful. We have seen marriage is a wonderful gift of God. Gift of God, that means we should be grateful. We should thank the Lord Jesus Christ for this wonderful gift. [00:56:01] In general, but also very, very precisely. Give thanks for the wife God has given to you. Give thanks, God, to the husband he has given to you. And let us take heed that in our marriages, God, our Father, is glorified. The great, great mystery, Christ and the assembly, should be seen in our marriages. The earthly and temporary relationship between husband and wife, they reflect the heavenly and eternal relationship of Christ and his church. And that is the great end, the end in itself, of our marriages. [00:57:40] With love and patience, Lord, we cry.

As present from the very door.

We hope that the hour, Lord, will come.

[00:58:08] Lord, we are high.

Thy praise we owe.

Ourselves to Thee, we lowly yield.

Rain down within, upon us alone.

And let us to Thy glory live.

Here let us be, by my display.

In all my gracious, heavenly shine.

[00:59:02] And hasten, Lord, expected day.

When Thou shalt own that we are Thine.