

Marriage by Grace

Jesus asked him, "What do you think, Peter? Do kings tax their own people or the people they have conquered?" "They tax the people they have conquered," Peter replied. "Well, then," Jesus said, "the citizens are free! However, we don't want to offend them, so go down to the lake and throw in a line. Open the mouth of the first fish you catch, and you will find a large silver coin. Take it and pay the tax for both of us." —Mat 17:25-28

This is a great marriage passage, because if you can't believe this miracle you'll come undone in your marriage. Out of the millions of fish, Jesus sent the exact fish, to the exact line, to the exact man, to meet an exact need. They say, "There's plenty of fish in the sea." But if you're married, out of all the people in the world, God sent the exact person, at the exact time, to meet an exact need in you. Whatever is going on in your marriage today, it's the exact thing, at the exact time, to meet your exact need. God is working in it all. He permits what He could prevent, and He's not fighting your spouse or problems; He's using them, directing them for your good.

Proverbs 18:22—*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.* Husband, how has God done you a favor donating your wife to you? Start by thinking of marriage like a car. The primary purpose is to get you from point A to B. The secondary purpose is to get you there in comfort. God's design in marriage is that first it would make you miserable so that later you can be happy. How does it happen? Well, attached to the terms "husband" or "wife" are other issues such as sex, money, the house, the kids, life goals, the relatives and in-laws, etc. As soon as you call someone wife, you bring in all those other problems. And so often we dive right into trying to sort out the messes. We say we're working to "keep God first" in it all, but we miss the lesson He has for us. The reason is we often don't have our beginnings right, so we eventually go sideways and crumble. Our relationship with Jesus has to be built on the foundation that He is the glory (Heb. 1:3) and that you, sir, are weak...you, ma'am, are weak. And He will be your strength in marriage if you'll admit "I'm weak" and exchange your image for His image in you. Thus the goal is that each spouse knows Christ first, discovering Him through marriage as you learn to be married to the cross before you live married to your spouse (Luke 9:23-25). The cross crosses you out and paves way to reveal the mystery of Christ in you, the hope of glory. God's glory is at the top of His priority list (Isa 42:8; 43:7).

Now, we know God's power is perfected in your weakness (2 Cor. 12:9), so why do you cover up your weakness? Because you want glory, and as long as you want glory, you're not a safe person to channel His glory. God's glory is like electricity. It has to pass through you and reach its goal, which

is back to Him. So along comes your spouse. In God's hand, your mate's first purpose is to reveal how weak you are. He/she is an obstruction, a handicap, a gift to keep you in constant touch with your limitations. God brought your spouse, not to change or frustrate you, but to make you shift gears, to quit running on "your" energy.

The Bible tells us *woman is the glory of man* (1 Cor. 11:7) meaning that, as husbands, we see in our wives the flaws that are in us. The problem is, I like me, but I don't like me in my wife. So, when I see me in her, I judge her. But when you judge your spouse, you judge yourself per Romans 2:4. We slay the people we love when we judge them, and we don't have a clue what's really going on with them (1 Sam. 16:7). Do you think Haman would've built the gallows for Mordecai if he knew the king would hang Haman on it instead (Esther 7)? Your judgments will never be right. Whenever you throw dirt you lose ground. If you're living with someone who's very difficult today, tell me why you're not difficult? Go ahead and boast! Let's hear the glory! Marriage doesn't create problems it reveals the ones you already had. But we decide that our mate is our problem. Whatever happens, God wants to talk to me about my response first.

So what did you think marriage would be like? Can you thank God for exactly where you are today in your marriage because He's in it? If you can see God in everything around you, everything around you changes. He's not undone by the problems. You're the perfect mate for your spouse because you're the one who is here, married to them, and everything in your life is perfect for where God has placed you. God's goal is that Christ be formed in you (Gal 4:17), and everything is geared to bring about that end. So, God is not fighting your spouse. He's using them. God is destroying your will for your wife and family, sir. "Thy will be done" is the only prayer left—laying your wife and kids and career at the feet of a 999 trillion IQ. To pray, "Father I'm not a good husband & I don't have in myself what I need to be a husband" is music to His ears. Before you react toward your mate: Withdraw and admit you're empty and weak, and tell the Lord you don't have a clue what to do. Tap into the wisdom of God, and He will give you answers that are genius! The hardest work you'll ever do is to have an argument with your spouse and rest in the Lord. Every time your spouse offends you, step back when you feel your flesh well up, admit you're weak, and ask Christ to flow through you. Then step back into love and do what's good for the other person. "Lord, I don't know what to do. I'm out of ideas. Would you show me?" When you're offended it's only because your own glory is threatened. Only pride can be offended. The miracle of Christianity is not walking on water but walking across the room and kissing your mate who offended you. Real miracles are loving your enemy, praying for those who persecute you and laying down your life.