

Christian Marriage with Questions

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We are concerned with just one thing and that is love. You remember it came out clearly when Jesus visited Mary and Martha's home. Martha was busy getting things ready for him. She had her sleeves up to the elbows and was washing the dishes, preparing the meal and was doing everything for her Lord.

You remember what Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful and Mary has chosen that good part. It shall not be taken away from her." Then you read that Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

Love ones, we are not here to preach or to sing or to play music or to run shops or do leatherwork. We are here first and foremost to do the one thing that we alone can do to God and that is to love him. It's love that the Father wants. That's why when you put someone alongside of God as far as love is concerned you end up doing nothing for God at all.

You remember Jesus emphasized it through John in Revelation 2:1-4. And really it was Jesus speaking to a church that was doing many, many things for God.

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you that you have abandoned the love you had at first."

So really the one thing that we can give to God that is unique and inimitable is the full love of our hearts. That's why Jesus impressed upon us that you cannot afford to love any human being alongside of God. Every human being must be loved on a different level to God himself. And if it comes to a choice between two loves it must be your love of God that triumphs.

That's why Jesus impresses upon us that if we love father and mother more than him we are not worthy of him. If we love boyfriend or girlfriend more than him we are not worthy of him. If we love brother or sister more than him we are not worthy of him. If we end up trying to impress another because they are a woman or a man we are loving them more than we are loving God. We are loving them to a place where we begin to be dishonest as far as the father is concerned.

Jesus impressed upon us that we are to love nobody as much as we love him. If you let an affection go astray it is worse than hatred itself. Excessive love of an ordinary human being is worse even than hatred. It contorts your relationship with them so much that it really opens the way for Satan to move in upon their hearts and their lives. And it utterly desecrates God himself as your God.

Inerrant affection is the most destructive thing that you could experience at all. It's an affection that is running a little loose from God. Now it's in the light of that all-encompassing love of God that the Father made us men and women. Do you see that it's in the light of that love that we owe to him alone that he made us men and women?

We've shared it before why he made us men and women. Some of them are plainly stated in Genesis 1:27. I know some of you have heard them before but maybe it is good just to see it and see how far

our world has declined from this. Genesis 1:27 • "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." So God made us male and female because that would be a way of making us in his image. He had to make us male and female in order to make us in his image.

The only way we could reveal God to the world is if we were men and women together. If we were working to reveal his image the men would reveal the courage and the strength of Jesus while the women would reveal the sweetness, the fragrance, and the patience of Jesus. They would act upon one another so that Jesus in all his completeness and many sidedness would be seen in each of us.

That's why he made us male and female, to reveal his image and that's the first purpose. Then you remember in Genesis 2:18 is a second purpose. "Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

The secondary reason God made us is that we would have fellowship with each other. God meant for us to be real ministers to each other. He meant for the sisters in the body to really minister to the brothers and the brothers to minister to the sisters. He didn't mean us to be caught in the world's way of jockeying for position with each other and being afraid and suspicious with each other. He really wanted for us to live as men and women together so that we could minister to each other and be a blessing to each other.

And that's what happened when Jesus had his friends Mary and Martha and the other women in the band. It was a group of women who ministered love and sweetness and peace and joy to the men. The men were their protectors and that was not simply when they were married. That took place in the group of Jesus' followers at that time. And that's one of the purposes for making us men and women.

So you can see that a Christian body believes more in women's lib than women's lib. Because the Christian body really does believe that we are invaluable to each other. We have real purpose for being here. One is not here to just carry about things for the other person. But there is something that we can give each other that one sex could not give itself. So he made us for fellowship. Then you see the second half of that verse. "I will make him a helper fit for him." God made women to be helpers for men to fulfill the commitment that he had gave to them. That commitment is plainly outlined in Genesis 1:28. "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'"

Sisters, there are things that only you can do in helping us to subdue the world. It is just a travesty of God's word to read you only in the first part of that command. It's an insult to you and a mockery of God's word to say that the sisters can only be useful in the propagation of the species -- being fruitful and multiplying. It's God's plan that you should be taking part in the bigger part of that commission -- the subduing of the world, having dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.

Loved ones if you read the New York Times today you'll see that Venezuela is on the brink of rebellion and anxious to get their dictator back from Spain to take over because of the tremendous laziness and inability of the people to do anything to better help the lot of the poor in that land. Do you see that it's the Father's will that a group of people should go into Venezuela as brothers and sisters and begin to subdue that chaos to God's will and his order?

It's the Father's will that sisters should be helpers together with the brothers -- not helpers in that you run around and carry our books or make our meals. But you should be helpers together with us because you can do things that we cannot do. And that's the Father's will that we should be helpers together.

And then Genesis 1:28 -- "And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'" We are to prolong and propagate the race.

Could we look at the world's misconception of that whole set up that God had arranged? First of all, the world saw only one reason for marriage and that was to propagate the race. Therefore the world comes into real difficulty when it finds itself in an overpopulated nation. It found the only purpose of marriage was to jump into bed and have children and now if we have children we are almost looked upon as second class citizens. Now what do we do?

The world is at a chaotic point especially in nations like our own. What do you do if the chief purpose of marriage is to propagate children? I honestly do believe that the bafflement of the world at that point is the reason for much of the broken marriages and much of the difficulty that we have in marriages today. What is marriage for if you can't have children? What is marriage for if you can't do the one thing for which you used to marry in the old days -- especially in the old days when you had to people this nation with children that had to begin to subdue the land and to bring it under control? Now suddenly you are being discouraged from propagating the race.

The world had some attitude to the other things in marriage. It said first of all the purpose of marriage was to have children but it recognized there were some natural incidentals involved in having children that were worthwhile in themselves and they deified those into one of the primary purposes of marriage after having children.

For instance, God arranged that one of the things you would enjoy in having children was just coming together and having two bodies coming together and being part of one another. And God arranged it that way so that propagating the race would be something that we wanted to do and would come naturally to us. The world took that sheer exhilaration that comes from sexual intercourse and made that the be all and end all of marriage especially today when many of us have stepped back from having children as the primary purpose of marriage.

Many people in our society say the real reason for marriage is so that we would not burn in lust and can have relief from your physical desires. And so the world has taken the incidental part of marriage. It is not concerned with the image of God or fellowship. It's not concerned with helping or any of those things but concerned primarily with the propagation of the race and after that the sheer enjoyment of physical intercourse.

That's why we get these pitiful stories in the newspapers of sex clinics springing up all over the nation. They are now discovering that few men and women really enjoy each other in bed. And so now we have sex clinics to teach them how to enjoy each other.

There's a misunderstanding that if the marriage is alright in bed then it's all right. That isn't true at all. There are many marriages that are not great in bed but their marriage is real, deep, and lasting. Only the other hand if the marriage is right in the heart then it will be right physically.

The world has taken this and gotten all tied up over the sheer exhilaration of sexual intercourse. They say it is one of the big reasons for marriage. And more people now marry for that than possibly any other purpose. That's certainly the reason for all marriages that are forced upon people.

Some people run an engagement too fast and they decide the only way to keep out of sin is to marry. We'll see that that is disobeying a command that is the basic guideline for marriage in a moment or two.

Some of the other things that marriage had built into it by God in order that children should be brought up to know him and should be looked after was security. God built in a need for the woman to feel secure when she had children. But now that has become the reason for many girls marrying. They marry for security. And so many of our dear moms in society today urge their daughters to marry. Who will look after you in your old age if you don't get married? Even though we laugh at that and think it's ridiculous, yet many of us have suffered under that and failed to get to sleep at night because of the thought, "Am I going to be alone in this world without any security and without anyone to take care of me?"

One of the other reasons for men and women to marry is to have company. They don't want to be lonely. They don't want to have a lonely old age. Now it is part of marriage to have company but that isn't the primary purpose of marriage.

The world has turned marriage upside down. It has forgotten all about the image of God, all about fellowship, and all about helping people to fulfill God's commission. Now it's concerned with the propagation of children and if not that then with the sheer exhilaration you have with each other in bed. Then after that is the security of having somebody else besides you.

Dear ones it's a travesty of God's plan. On the other hand the Christian body has had its misconceptions too. For instance many Christians today believe that you can only reveal God's image as male and female if you are married. But that is not so. It is God's plan for the body of Christ to reveal the beauty of Jesus' righteousness and the beauty of Jesus' gentle patience through a body that consists of men and women.

It's the Father's will that we here in our body should show the world a perfectly balanced and integrated picture of Jesus through the brothers and sisters and their interrelationships with each other. And it's the Father's will that there should be absolute openness between you brothers and sisters.

Thank goodness we have overcome this business of dating. We no longer feel we have to date someone to get to know them. We are beginning to get to know each other without dating. So that's good. But it seems in a way we have still to come into the beauty of men-women relationships in purity together. In other words it's not enough that we should abstain from lust with each other in our hearts. The world needs to see not only a freedom from lust but it needs to see loving – fine, understanding, patient, gentle love between brothers and sisters.

So loved ones it's vital for the Holy Spirit to teach us to be men and women with each other in the body. The Christian church has so often thought that the image of Jesus can only be reveal in a man and a woman marrying each other. It isn't so. It wasn't so in Jesus' time and it isn't so today. In other words it's God's will that in a real way we should be husbands and wives to each other in

every way that the Holy Spirit allows us.

Many of you feel that you can't have the fellowship unless you get into a marriage relationship with a woman. You can't have a deep fellowship. But loved ones you know that many of us know each other more closely and intimately than most husbands and wives. Many of you dear sisters have a gentleness with us brothers and have an understanding of us that many husbands and wives do not share. Do you see that is God's will?

Do you see the way I am pointing? It is the Father's will that we should experience here in the body all the things that an ordinary married couple can experience that God allows. Obviously it is not the physical side of marriage but it is a lot more than we realize. I know that God is maturing us and so it is still tricky for us to greet each other with a holy kiss. So the Holy Spirit has to mature us.

But you can see the bent of Jesus' way. You can see the direction to which he is pointing. Loved ones, he's pointing away from being a miserable spinster because you're not married or being a miserable, lonely bachelor because you're not married. Do you see that? He's pointing us to a way of freedom in which you can have in a body all the dear and close relationships that a married couple have -- all the relationships that really last. Those of us who are married here tonight would agree that the physical side of marriage goes very soon. It disappears into the background and fades.

But it's the lasting things that remain. It's knowing that the person really loves you. They will not forsake you. They'll stick with you through thick and thin. Those are the things that we can begin to share together.

Many of us think that if we don't get married we won't have a helper fit for me. Dear ones don't you see the way the Holy Spirit is leading the body? Already you sisters are beginning to come into places that we can't come into as brothers. And we brothers can do things that you sisters can't do. You can sense some of the beauty of the relationships over in London between Jim and Myron, Nina and Chris and Paul, Dave and the other ones. There's a beauty in their relationships and a sense in which they are having a full family relationship with each other because they are men and women, brothers and sisters.

Many of us in the Christian church have really not seen that. You can experience the image of God and you can experience fellowship in God. You can experience help from each other in the body as much as you can in marriage. Many of us unfortunately have not seen that and have just followed the world's deification of marriage. And so there are many brothers and sisters today think that marriage is it. If you don't get married you're a failure.

That is utterly opposed to God's whole teaching of marriage. It is utterly opposed to the whole guidance he gives us in first Thessalonians. This is really the guideline for Christian marriages. 1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 ---? "...that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God." And that's really the guideline for Christian marriage.

It's that each one of you would know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor and not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God. There is only one reason for marrying another person. And that is because God has chosen you for each other. It is not that you love each other more than you love everybody else. Do you see that?

Many of us say that you shouldn't marry because you are forced into it. You shouldn't marry because

of lust. But many of us still feel that you should marry because you love each other more than anybody else in the world. That isn't the reason a couple should marry in Jesus. In Jesus you choose each other in holiness and honor because God has told you that you are live with each other. His will is the ground of a Christian marriage.

It's not that the husband loves the wife more than anyone else in the world. It's not that the wife loves the husband more than she loves anyone else in the world. It is a different kind of love that they have for one another but it's a different love because God has chosen them for each other.

I share this because of a thing I had to work out in my own life. Remember the KTIS radio show that we had late at night? We had a series on marriage. My wife didn't hear it but one of our brothers quoted it to her. I knew this was the right thing to say in the Spirit but what is the explanation?

I don't love my wife more than I love my brothers and sisters in Jesus. I knew that that was right. I couldn't explain it all but I knew that that was true. We love each other as much in Jesus as we love our husbands and wives. So my wife asked me what is different about us being together. And it took a little bit of praying and thinking before I saw that I liked free dental treatment! (My wife is a dentist.)

It was because God intended us to be together. She was sure of me not just because I loved her more than I loved anybody else. She was sure of me and I was sure of her because God had written it into his plan that we should be man and wife together. And that was the real basis of the covenant relationship. It was God's will.

Why do I make a point of sharing that? I think there is a great danger of us coming into misunderstanding in the body. Do you see that many of us already love each other more than many husbands and wives that I have met? There is no question that there is a generosity of love among us and a self-surrender of love that doesn't exist in many marriages.

What you have to be careful of is misunderstanding that for guidance into marriage. You have to be careful that you don't misunderstand the intense

What you have to be careful of is misunderstanding that for guidance into marriage. You have to be careful that you don't misunderstand the intense love that God has given us for each other as a reason for marrying. It isn't.

If we are really on the cross then Helen (my secretary) should be able to marry and enjoy a life together just because we are in Jesus. There should be no question that many of us should not be able to marry many others and live in peace and harmony with them. But do you see that is not the guidance for marriage. That is not why you marry another person. I press this because some of you will be praying with each other a lot and draw very close to each other because you live in the same church house and therefore you think that the harmony you experience must mean that you are to marry.

Love is not guidance to marriage even if it is agape love. You marry another person not because you love them a great deal. You only marry because you know that you are right people for each other. So it's not only lust that doesn't guide to marriage but even agape love doesn't guide to marriage. I say that because it's easy for us to misunderstand in the body. And as you brothers and sisters come closer and closer to each other it's very easy to think that because this is a closer relationship than with anyone else of the opposite sex it must mean you are to marry. Loved ones don't.

It is God's glory when you do his will – not when you marry one of the many people that you could possibly live at peace with. It's God's glory when you marry the right person that God has for you.

That brings us into God's very plain teaching about marriage. Not all of us are meant to marry. Do you see that we have utterly misunderstood Paul's teaching? We have been too quick to call him some miserable, pharisaical bachelor. And we have not seen that it is God's will for many of us brothers and sisters to remain single.

God gives many good reasons in the New Testament which I'll read to you in a moment. But really it is not God's will for all of us to marry. We should not take that attitude that we should get married and it's just a matter of whom I get married to. Therefore we are constantly on the lookout to find that person.

Rather, we should say, "Father, if you want me to marry will you show me that and make it plain to me whom I am to marry. Will you reveal that over a period of time so that I am in no doubt?" Unless we take that attitude we are going to cut apart God's plan for the body.

Great numbers of you are going to marry the wrong people just because they are Christians. Great numbers of you are going to rush into children and burden yourselves with all kinds of financial commitments. That will kill God's vision for the body right here before it gets off the ground. So it's vital that you bring marriage under the will of the father and that you begin to really seek the father.

Have children because God has guided you. Don't have children because you don't know how to avoid having children. Don't have children because of lack of self-discipline or lack of real love for your partner. Really begin to bring this and the plan for your own marriage under God's will.

Let me just finish this so that I can give you an opportunity for questions. 1 Corinthians 7:25-35. I think all of us that are married here tonight will realize the truth and reality of what Paul is saying. "Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. "I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."

Why I share this is not to discourage marriage but to ask all of us to come into a sensible, Godly attitude to marriage. Above all brothers and sisters to get away from this pagan ceremony whereby a woman thinks that the height of life has been reached if she walks up the central aisle here and joins herself to a man.

Marriage is beautiful. I am 11 years married and I am just as much in love with my dear one as I ever was. But do you see that marriage is not the pinnacle of life for a man or woman in Jesus? It cannot be simply because Jesus said that you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind.

I want to stop so you can press me on some of the out workings of those principles. I suppose I'd love a family of brothers and sisters who were free from fear and lived so far above the law that they could be really free with each other and be pure and holy. I'd love it that the sisters would be no longer afraid to suggest to a brother that they might go somewhere and enjoy a concert or whatever they were going to.

I know there is an order in God's plan but so many of us are bound by the fears. And the brothers also need to have the freedom to say, "No, I don't want to go!"

The father wants us to live in freedom. If you don't socialize with each other in honesty and love then you will be driven towards a puritanical, ascetic Christian life that will actually drive some of you into marriage with ones you shouldn't be married to.

It is important that we have real and free social relationships with each other that are gentle, loving, and free for that brings liberty. It takes away the fear not only from men and women about who they are going to go out with but it can take away the fear from men and women who fear that they won't get married. It's so beautiful to be part of a body where you can live happily as a single person for life.

Many of the brothers and sisters that have been married would say that they know many women for longer than they know their wives. I know many sisters who have had much closer and longer relationships with the body of Christ than with their husbands because their husbands died at an early age.

It is the father's will that we should not be tied to only one person as regards affection and love. Please do press me because I don't want to be understood. I am not advocating free love.

Q: Is there only one man for one girl? Is there only one person that is right for you to marry?

A: I'm sure it is an academic question. I think you'll agree with that because who can tell? But it does seem to me that God is a God of order and has everything carefully planned – especially for the redemption of the world through the Holy Spirit. It seems that God does not leave anything to chance. If we walk according to his Spirit then everything is planned for us and falls into the outline that he has for us. I believe that it's like everything else in a Christian's life. There is one way that is right. There are many other ways that are secondary and second best but there is one way that is right. There is really one person that is right for each of us to marry.

Q: Is it possible that two people could think this is true and still make a mistake?

A: That's good because I wanted to share that this is part of the value of the body. When a brother and sister believe God wants them to be together I honestly feel that it's up to them. But it's a safety factor that they would share at least with me if not with one of the elders so that there might be confirmation.

It is possible for a brother and sister to get carried away with what they think is real love or to hear voices in their head that come from Satan and not from God. They enter into a place where they commit themselves to each other and it isn't the Father's will. I suppose that's one of the reasons I felt the need to speak of this early on in the winter. It's vital that you see that any of us can be deceived, especially in a place where such strong physical and emotional factors are involved.

It seems to me one of the beauties of having a body like this. You can share that this is the way you feel and could you pray about it and see if it witnesses in your spirit. Brothers and sisters can still do what they want but I think that's part of the value of the body. I've been put into a tricky place myself. I have to answer the question as to whether I should marry someone who I really don't think should marry. That's very tricky and I'm still working that one out. Since I'm an Irishman and love a fight I think I know the way that I'll decide.

Q: How does marriage influence my ministry and my relationship with God?

A: I think every older brother and sister here tonight that have walked for a time with Jesus would answer the same way that I do. Unquestionably Paul is right that it does mean that you are concerned with other things. I had difficulty in my own life because I wanted still to behave as if I was a single person and I don't think any son or daughter in God can do that without destroying their marriage. So undoubtedly your home has to come in after your love of God. It does bring other responsibility that you have to carry and are a joy to carry.

On the other side every one of us here tonight who have experienced each other closely in Jesus would say the other person has been a constant blessing to us in that they have often been the word and voice of God to us. So I just would not think my ministry was the same without my wife. When I go home she counts all the "you knows" in the sermon. She is a blessing in that she is honest with me. She is honest about any tendency in me towards hypocrisy or unreality. So I can only say my wife has been a blessing in the ministry.

It's two-fold Scott. It's a responsibility. It is also a great blessing. What is vital is to marry the person God has for you. If you don't do that then it shows up in the ministry. It's vital to marry someone committed to the same thing you are. Otherwise you are lost and finished.

Q: If God is showing you to marry someone but you aren't sure about the time how can you pray without waiting for twenty years' time?
years' time?

A: It seems to me that the father can only give an answer when there is absolute peace and quietness of spirit -- when we have come free from the earthquake of the passion and the fire of the devotion to each other and into the place of neutrality where we are ready to wait God's time. It's vital to die to the pressure of other people both for and against an early marriage.

Q: What about parents that don't want you to be married?

A: It seems your first responsibility is to Jesus and to his commandment to honor your father and mother and to be a witness to them. So it seems to me especially until 21 you must honor and obey your parents. After 21 it seems to be connected to your witness to them. Now there does come finally a time when you have to obey God rather than men. But it seems that is at least proven by a number of years of patient waiting and a readiness to give God a chance to work in their hearts and to change the heart of the king as one of the Old Testament people prayed.

If I could speak a little further to that --- it doesn't witness with me the fast marriage. I know you can accuse me of being "old country" and old fashioned but I do believe I'm saying this in God's spirit – it doesn't witness to me the fast marriage. However well you know each other in the body I don't think it's right to fall in love and get married 3 or 4 months later. It just seems to be opening the way to the possibility of deception. It just seems the way to ensure that this is God's will for you is to be prepared to ...

We couldn't afford a ring. We thought engagement was silly anyways but we couldn't afford a ring so we weren't engaged. But we fell in love one March and we knew we would be married. We kissed outside of the cemetery—very romantic! I think God did it that way with me because I was very logical about marriage. I knew what a Methodist minister's wife should be like. She should be able to play the piano, speak, like going to women's meetings and like children. My wife likes none of those things.

But God really had to pull a fast one to get me to marry. But we fell in love and I knew we would marry and could have married that day because we were so sure. But we married four years later. We were prepared to face the other responsibility we had to parents and to education.

If it's really real then you'll have no trouble waiting. It seems to me those who can't wait are those who aren't sure. I press you on it. It is part of your witness to the body and to the world that you keep clear of that immature attitude where you are head over heels in love and therefore must get married. That is dangerous to marry in that kind of state. You are just open to deception. So I do press you about the whole thing of giving enough time for God to confirm this person for you.

Q: God works differently with different people. It may be his will in certain circumstances to get together so they can minister together.

A: I know what you are speaking to but I stand my ground. The work of God will never fail because you are taking time to give God the chance to confirm. God is always pleased when his people are so anxious to do his will that they are willing to wait. God will not look down on you and condemn you because you are anxious to be sure of his will. It's when you are willful and want to go ahead whatever his will is that God suffers pain and displeasure.

Q: What is the distinction of agape love and being in love?

A: I use the term to describe what we now experience together and I'm glad that it's very different from just being in love. It seems to me that many people say they are in love when they are filled with Eros love, when they are filled with a desire for each other physically, a satisfaction of each other's physical desires or a desire for each other emotionally. And so many people talk about being in love when what they really mean is that they are getting from this person what I ought to get from God alone. I need it and I want it. They are involved with eros love – emotional and physical love.

I think many people talk about being in love because of philia love. They are interested in the same things together. They are interested in the body of Christ together and so they have things in common and they say they are in love with each other.

It seems to me real agape love in a marriage means that you want the best for your partner. You want your partner to get into Heaven. You see your job as preparing your partner for Heaven. You see your

job as building your partner up in Jesus in every way in your power. In no sense is there a desire to get satisfaction from her or love from her. You get the love that you need from God himself and so you're not demanding love from your partner but instead you are giving and unselfishly building her up. It seems to me that's the only love that will last. Soon after you are married you see the weaknesses of just an emotional feeling. You see the foolishness of saying that you no longer love the person. If we went by those kinds of feelings we'd be divorced and remarried 10 or 12 times! It seems to me love is not a feeling. It is a choosing God's person to you and a committing to that person by the will. As you choose and will towards that person the Holy Spirit sheds his love abroad in your heart for them.

You have to face the fact that the Holy Spirit is abroad in the world. Even the closeness that many of us feel between our experience of human love of each other, and then when we fall in love, the similarities between that and being in love with God are very strong and suggest that the Holy Spirit is all the time working to bring about God's relationships among people.

I think many of us would have to admit that God guided us better than he knew he was guiding us. Unquestionably if you said that a person could only find God's partner for him when he is baptized by the Holy Spirit then that wipes out many marriages that are undoubtedly God's will. God leads us according to the light that we have. If we walk in the light that we have even if that is the light of a convicted sinner then he will be leading us more and more to the person of his choice.

Q: Can't hear

A: I remember saying when I was 22 or 23 years old, ("I'm glad my wife isn't here tonight") visiting a friend who had just been married. I remember him saying, "The physical side of marriage isn't as great as we all thought it was before we were married. It isn't important. And I thought, "OK, Sure you can say that....but I know that it's not true." (laughter)

It just is a fact if I can speak bluntly and trust Jesus to soften it to those who may be surprised by it --- there is a real limitation to the permutations of a physical relationship. And that's why I think that the books must be pretty boring that talk about different positions. There is a real limitation to the amount of satisfaction one can get from another human body.

The only meaning it has is the love you have in your heart for the dear one. That's what makes it. It's not the physical relationship at all that produces the real joy of marriage. It is the attitude you have to the other person that this person is completely open and honest and trustworthy towards you and you can have absolute confidence in that person.

It seems to me that joy we can share just sitting opposite of one another during times of strains and stress. We can just walk together. It's an openness, a trustworthiness and a sense that the other person knows you through and through. You can experience all that just walking together. So the physical relationship becomes a very unimportant expression of a love that is there all the time.

I suppose it is right to talk about that because maybe many of you are bewildered about the thing but loved ones I think it's just true that it varies with all of us. Some of us won't have intercourse more than once or twice a month. Many of us will have intercourse every week. But there

are many to whom intercourse is not the be all and end all of marriage.

There are many of us who have turned from the normal means of contraception. So obviously great self-discipline, love, and control is necessary in that situation. So it will vary with all of us.

Brother if that was what our marriages were dependent on it would be pitiful.

The physical body and the emotions are such volatile, changeable fickle things. Love has to be more solid and firm than that. You can press me to a certain point if you want.

the question.

Q: Can't hear the question.

A: It seems that Paul was talking with some who were already engaged. He's saying that God's right time is the time when you are free from a driving impelling passion or lust for each other. God's time is a time when those things are quietened and at peace. It is very dangerous to marry when you are physically or emotionally head over heels in love with each other. Then you can hear nothing. The earthquake is in your ears, the fire is in your blood, and you can hear no still small voice and no sound of gentle stillness. You are just opening yourself to deception when you marry in the heat of some kind of human falling in love with each other.

Brothers and sisters I have to emphasize that I am only giving to you what Jesus seems to be teaching me in my own life. God has to teach each of us what is the right thing for us.

Q: Can you marry outside of the body in which you were involved?

A: It seems to me the body of Jesus is broader than just the local church. And undoubtedly the Father can lead us to people to local churches in other places in the world. It seems to me the heart of it would be if they are really in the body of Jesus. Not simply in an organized church or a mission group that regards itself as Christian. But the vital thing to be sure of is that the person is in the body of Jesus and has Jesus' life flowing through them and is really fully surrendered.

In relationship to that, you have the same obligation to come to the elders and share with them. God was getting at something when he encouraged us to share with our parents and to get their confirmation. It just is a tragedy that many of us have come far out of sympathy with our parents at this present time. So it is good to have somebody that you can love and respect and can act as a confirming factor in your marriage.

Q: Can God's will ever be done if two non-Christians marry?

A: Undoubtedly on Calvary God had a permissive will. The idea was that we would love God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind and that no Calvary would be needed. Undoubtedly Calvary was a permissive will of God. Often in the New Testament God permitted things to happen that were not his ideal will. So it seems to me also in connection with the marriage of non-Christians God can often permit a thing to happen which isn't his ideal will in the situation. You could talk about his permissive will. It would be difficult to talk about his ideal will. His ideal will is that they would marry fully conscious that this was God's plan for them and therefore glorifying him in the doing of it.

Now it's a different thing entirely after we find ourselves married to a non-Christian. We become a Christian and he or she is not a Christian. Then we come under the guidance that Paul clearly gives in 1 Corinthians where he says if they are prepared to stay with you then you should stay with them. You pray and live before them so that they too will come into the kingdom. In that situation you have the beautiful responsibility that all of us who are Christians and married have -- to make sure our partner comes into the kingdom with us.

Q: Can't hear question.

A: Brother that's what I think I was trying to begin to speak to but maybe didn't make it explicit. I think Jesus has said to "be not unequally yoked." It seems that he means not only in business relationships that bind you but also in marriage. There's no question that the things that you share in marriage are so intimate and delicate that the closeness you begin to experience with each other is so intense that if there is a difference of opinion on such an important thing as God and Jesus that almost shatters the marriage there and then. It cuts out a great segment of your lives that you cannot share together. And undoubtedly that's why you shouldn't be unequally yoked.

I think it is madness. I can imagine nothing being more like hell than living day after day with a person who really did not love Jesus and did not have the trust you have in him. It would be a constant torture. In the old days I used to think that law was just a burden. Now I see that it is a sure guide away from living hell.

Q: How does God show people to get married? Is it a supernatural thing? Is it like falling in love?

A: It seems to me once we begin to live in the Spirit the Father does not guide us according to our emotions or according to a great feeling that this is the thing. It seems to me as we mature in him it will be a calmer and calmer, quieter and quieter guidance. I think it will just be an inner knowing and conviction that will grow inside of us and intensify as the months pass. There will be that quiet assurance that this is God's will. That's why I talk about waiting.

It seems to me in people in whom God has really put a spark or love there is just such absolute confidence and peace that they are willing to arrange it anyway that anyone wants because they are so sure that this is God's plan for them. It's a quiet knowing in the Spirit that has upon it the marks of quietness, contentment, and absolute assurance that it doesn't matter what happens because we will be together.

Q: Couldn't hear question.

A: When I think of Jesus' love for his father I think of them receiving from each other and Jesus being strengthened by the love that the Father gave to him. That is one very different significant thing that is different from Jesus' love for us because his love for us was all a one way thing especially at the beginning. He loved us for nothing. He didn't get anything from us at all.

This is the same kind of love that transforms a marriage. It's a loving the other person for no reason other than you love them with all your heart and are willing to put them first and yourself last whether they give you back love or not. And I think many home relationships would be transformed if we were just prepared to love the other person whether they loved us back or not. It would take the sting out of many long and cold wars that destroy fellowships and families if we would be prepared to love the other person whether they love us back or not. That would be the heart

of it.

Q: The question is concerning two Christians called to the mission field. What is the man felt a call to India and the woman a call to Africa. Should she give us her call to Africa if they seemed called to be in partnership?

A: It seems that God will always match the marriage to the call. He won't match the call to the marriage. Sisters, I plead with you to begin to find Jesus' will for YOU independent of us men. That's the only way we are going to come into the right marriage relationships. If you are going to go with us just because of us then we fools are going to lead you into all kinds of ridiculous places where it is not God's will for you to be. So I do plead with you to find Jesus' will for you yourself and then to trust the Father to lead you together with the right man so you can go and fulfill that call. Don't scrap God's voice to you in order to join into some other man's vision.

If you are led to go with that man wherever and that is your first calling and you're called to go with him wherever then that's different. But if you have a definite call to one part of the country or the world then it's vital for you to go there. Jesus has a whole plan laid out for you there. He has a whole series of events lined up when you arrive and step off the boat or the plane. If you miss that way for God then that is a whole field waiting to be sown that will never be sown by Jesus' people. I think it is vital for you sisters to find Jesus' will for you. He will match your marriage to your calling.

Do you see it ties up with the ridiculous position that we have marriage in? That is we make marriage the be all and end all. It becomes the measurement of your life's success. Loved one it is not. It is not. You only have to look at the brothers and sisters that have been used mightily by the father and never been married. Marriage is not the high pinnacle of life. It may be God's will for you or it may not be. But if it isn't I'll tell you that you will not suffer for not being married. Not in a real body of Jesus. I suppose I look forward to 40 years hence when there will be many brother and sisters that will not be married but they will live in such understanding and love together in the body. They will live in such close cooperation with God in the work that they will live with radiant joy on their faces. And they won't have missed anything. I do believe it is the Father's will that we should experience that.

It ties up with the couples. My wife and I have always had trouble here. We have always felt more at home with singles than with couples. We feel more at home with free people who are not burdened down with all kinds of domestic commitments.

It seems to me in the body there should be no distinctions between the couples and the singles. There should be the same openness between brothers and sisters whether you are married or not. I'd feel bad if one of you came up and felt the odd man out when my wife and I were together. There is a right respect to give to couples especially where we have couples that live together with singles in one of our church houses. There is a privacy that couples need to have at times.

But that is a separate issue from singles and couples separating in the body. It seems to me couples and singles should be able to be together, have confidences, and mix with each other. Yet I do agree that married couples will always be special to each other because it is God's will for them and not because they love each other more than anybody else.

Q: Can't hear question.

A: 1 Corinthians 7:2, "But, because of the temptation to immorality each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband." So it seems to me Paul was speaking to the question that was reported to him by Chloe's household and by messages that he received from Corinth.

Verse 1, "Now concerning the matter about which you wrote." So it's important to see that Corinthians was a response to a letter or report that he had received from Corinth. "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." He was speaking to a particular case of immorality. A father was living with his son's wife or something like that. It was an incestuous situation. Now he was speaking specifically to that problem at that time. That's why he said, "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." At that time Corinth was the Paris of today. To be called a Corinthian was to be a part of some of the most licentious people in the world. So he's saying, "If you have come up in that kind of world, with that kind of attitude then certainly it is far better for you to have your own husband or wife so that you may live free of that situation. He's speaking to a particular situation where they are struggling against promiscuity.

We are not as promiscuous as Corinth was. We do not have sacred prostitutes in the temples. We're not in that kind of situation. We do face the wrong kind of advertising barraging us. But most of us would agree that the gallop poles have again and again tried to push us into promiscuity rather than reported actual promiscuity. Now I know it is probably worse now than 30 years ago. But I think it's true that not as many high school kids are in bed with each other than the poles would have us believe. However, it's a case of degree.

It seems that Paul is speaking to a very promiscuous situation and he's saying if this is the only way you can do it then it's better to do it this way than not at all. It would be very hard to say that it's the ideal that he teaches in that chapter.

Q: Can't hear question.

A: I know that is one interpretation of some of the teaching of an imminent parousia(Greek)in the New Testament. But I would challenge the interpretation of verse 26, "I think that in view of the impending distress it is well for a person to remain as he is." Paul foresaw persecutions under Nero and the destruction under Jerusalem. And that is partly what he talks of -- not only the return of Jesus but particularly that kind of distress. Undoubtedly many of us do feel the pressures of the threat and impending disasters that are beginning to come upon the world even now and increase.

So I am with you that Paul's statement is pertinent for today. The primary thing that I'm pleading for is that we back off from this desire to get married at all costs. If we could calm and cool a little so that we could be more balanced and sane there would be more possibility for Jesus to have his way in our lives. Really I think that is the great need.

Q: What kind of intimacy –mental, emotional, spiritual, should we think of in the Christian houses.

A: I'm sure I am very much an Irishman from the old country and unlike Bruce Forney from California. I do still believe that it takes a very holy and mature person to put his arms around a sister with our present kind of background that we've had. It takes a very holy and mature person to put his arms around a sister and maintain real love and balance not only in himself but also in her. I tend to approach the whole question from that angle. It takes great purity and great Christlikeness and dignity to have any kind of physical intimacy or touch that is deliberate. It seems that a man has

to be very sure before he goes up and puts his arms around his sister and says I really love you sister. He has to know what way the sister is going to respond to that.

Now, having said that I think it is the father's will that we should come into that kind of maturity. I have no doubt that part of the problem with many of us is that we are almost afraid of people. Many of us doubt that anybody really does like us or love us. And so a great many of us do need someone to put their arms around us and show that they do love us and like us. So I think it is vital that we do come into that maturity. All I do ask is that we would be led by the inner spirit of Jesus and not be a sense that this is the only way to make a person feel right. Or this is the thing we ought to do after that talk on Sunday night. We need to be carefully led by the spirit of Jesus as to who we do it and when we do it. I think there will be times when we can do it to certain sisters and they'll receive it as a real blessing. Other times it will really cause turmoil inside of them and completely contort your fellowship with them. So I think you have to be led by the spirit of Jesus in regards to those physical expressions.

Now after that, all kinds of things besides physical are possible. Within the restraint that the Holy Spirit places upon you, you should be able to comfort each other. We should be able to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.

There ought to be a sense where you sisters can express love and sweetness and kindness to brothers or to other sisters that no one else can do. Similarly brothers you can treat the sisters like a gentleman in the house. You can protect them, do things for them and bend over backwards to make their lives easier in the way that a husband would do for his wife. So I would think that those are some of the directions that one should go in.

As a general rule if I were to try and feel the pulse of the houses, you could be more open and intimate with each other emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. It would seem to me that many of you are still under a lot of the inhibitions that our society has brought about. This is caused by the fact that some of you are afraid that you might be misunderstood. Some of the brothers think that the sister will feel she wants him to marry her tomorrow. And some of the sisters will think that the brother will think they are being too forward. It seems to me the father's will that all those inhibitions should be cleared away and that we should begin to guide our relationships with each other by the prompting of Jesus' spirit within.

The Holy Spirit will always make us behave as gentleman with each other and as ladies to each other. Where the Holy Spirit has his way he makes men gentleman and women ladies.

Q:

A: I think it is true sisters that we brothers labor under all kinds of fears and inhibitions that hold us back. All of us have to learn all over again. Society has taught us so wrong and the Holy Spirit has to teach us all over again. I think you sisters know that all men whether husbands or not are pretty pitiful at expressing their feelings to anybody – wife or not.

It seems it requires for all to learn again from the Holy Spirit. You sisters need to be patient with us and just let us come on at our speed and we'll gradually make it.

Maybe I should finish dear ones. I think it is vital that you treat each other as ladies and gentleman. It is vital that you do not see each other as cogs in the body of Christ. Where that

distinction goes then we sink into communism, brave new world, and animal farm life where you begin to lose the distinction of brothers and sisters. It seems that is part of Jesus' plan for our enjoyment of each other. You brothers never cease to think of the sisters as sister and you sister never cease to think of us as brothers. And never does it become a "unisex" – that attitude of the world where we are all the same. Loved ones we are not and that is part of the beauty of God's plan that we are different and we need to treat each other in that way. I think it's more than just old fashioned manners. I think there is a real sense in which you can express the beauty of Jesus by holding the doors open or by lifting the heavy box.

I know that Helen can lift the typewriter probably better than I can but I think it's important for me to do that for them. When that goes from our marriage, then what is left? When the person ceases to think of you as a woman or a man then it seems you are beginning to be indifferent to each other altogether. So I pray that God will make us a beautiful body and I think he will if we give him a chance.