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For the Life of the World

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We were made for one another. Adam was created from the dust of the earth and Eve from Adam's side. In God's wonderful math, one and one made one, and then multiplied into sons and daughters. Is there any greater blessing than family? When it all comes together, a house becomes a home, teeming with life. It's a social network of the best kind.

10 Singleness in the Body of Christ

By Andrea L. Schultz

The Body of Christ is made up of many members, and those brothers and sisters in Christ whom we call family (though we may share little to no blood) come from a variety of backgrounds. Even the singles have many different stories: widowed, divorced, never married, never interested, or desperately interested. Sometimes these stories are shaped by personal choice, but oftentimes we live a role that has been given against our desires rather than welcomed.

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Marriage as Christ and

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’
This mystery is profound....” Ephesians 5:31-32

It turns out, then, that marriage does not teach us about Christ and the Church as much as Christ and the Church picture for us and inform us about marriage. We might say that marriage *reflects* the love that Christ has for His Church.

Paul continues, “... and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Wait, it refers to Christ and the Church, not to a husband and wife?! Paul’s statement still surprises us, no matter how many times we have read or heard this passage. Imagine the shock of the Ephesians hearing it for the first time, or of anyone hearing it for the first time. “A man shall...hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” What seems so plain, so straightforward between a husband and wife, we are abruptly told truly refers to Christ and His Church.

Yet there it is for us in various places in the New Testament, if we are willing to see it. Just a few verses earlier (25 and 27): “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.” Christ “nourishes and cherishes” the Church, His very own flesh, “because we are members of His body” (vv. 29-30).

We are *members* of His body, comparable to limbs and organs, finding our sustenance in Him. We exist now alive as members of His body, apart from which we would have no true life but would wither and die. By His Spirit we are united to Him—in a mysterious way, to be sure, but truly and intimately,

so close that we are considered His own body. Put another way, we cannot be united more closely to Him than we are through faith by His grace of Baptism, promise, and His Body and Blood.

We are united to Him so that we may be made clean and holy, prepared for eternal life in His kingdom. So the angel in Revelation 21:9 exults, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb,” a bride “having the glory of God” (v. 11)! You are of the Church, the definitive Bride, the eternal Bride, the Bride who fulfills everything hoped for in a bride, all due to the love of her Bridegroom, the Lord Himself. Solomon, also, prophesies of the Church in his Song: “You are altogether beautiful, my love; there is no flaw in you” (Song of Songs 4:7). There is no flaw in the

His Church

Gifford A. Grobien



Church; there is no flaw in you because our Lord has covered us, purified us, and sanctified us with His blood.

It turns out, then, that marriage does not teach us about Christ and the Church as much as Christ and the Church picture for us and inform us about marriage. We might say that marriage *reflects* the love that Christ has for His Church.

Notice the grace-filled language of Christ the Bridegroom and His love for

His Church. Neither Paul nor Christ says to husbands, “Live up to this standard, or else!” Nor do they say, “Does your spouse disappoint you? Time to move on!” Paul does call wives to submit and husbands to love, but as a description of the sanctifying work of the Spirit in their lives. There is no “or else” in Paul’s explanation. There is no bar to be met. He simply says, “Here is how Christ has lived for you. As members of His body, so walk this way.”

Above: *Rev. Douglas Christian leads the marriage vows for Rev. Brian Thorson and Deaconess Jennifer (Phillips) Thorson in Kramer Chapel.*

So husbands are given a wife to love, to serve in every way—even unto death—in order to serve, first of all, her sanctification. This is the husband’s first calling, to present the Word of God in his life and his love for his wife, that it overflows daily as an abundant, life-giving word; so that she hears the call away from sin, pride, and death to holiness, spiritual fruits, and love. So that she hears the confession of God made flesh in Christ, taking on our sin, putting it to death on the cross, and rising again for our new life and justification. With this Word she is comforted in sorrow and strengthened with faith, thanksgiving, and joy in all things.


Whatever else we want to say about being a husband (about provision, protection, or what it means to be a man) is second to and follows on this first call to love one’s wife with the Word of God for her sanctification.

As Christ has done for us, the husband does for his wife; as the Church responds to Christ, alive in submission, so the wife responds with life, joy, and submission to her husband. “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” (Eph. 5:22-24). The Church gladly hears, receives, and walks in the way set before her by her Lord Christ, trusting that all He does and says is for her eternal good and salvation. In our imperfect, natural lives, a wife nevertheless trusts her loving husband—who has taken and is taking into account her eternal good—that his love and direction is for her good.

In our imperfect, natural lives, husbands will fail. If their leadership and direction threatens to carry a wife into evil and wickedness, she yet finds refuge in the Church and her eternal bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Through His care and the love of the Church, the couple still works through misunderstandings, forgives each other’s

transgressions, and reconciles in the Spirit. In our imperfect, natural lives, wives too will fail, struggling to trust their husbands, or even turning away in rebellion. Again, the couple finds refuge in the Church and the eternal Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, in whom fear is dispelled, rebellion is forgiven and forgotten through love, brokenness is healed, and love restored.

Marriage is a reflection of Christ’s love for His church, and by the fellowship of the Spirit and grace, it is. Such a reflection is not a burden; it is not a task which has been set upon us, wherein failure would lead to brokenness, separation from the Church, or a fall from grace. The reflection is not a task: it is a gift given. Marriage simply is a reflection of Christ’s love for His Church. The love of a husband for his wife, the union of husband and wife, and the submission of a wife to her husband reflects the self-sacrificing lordship of Jesus, our unity with Him, and our joyful, receptive submission to Him in all things.

Where our marriages fall short, there is no fear, for Christ is our Bridegroom! He loves and reconciles us. He sanctifies us and makes us pure and spotless. Where our marriages are but dim reflections, there is no fear, for the perfect, enduring marriage feast of the Lamb is already at hand for us in the Church. So we can embrace, without fear, without worry of falling short, with great confidence in forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration, time and time again, the marriages God has granted us in this life, till death do us part. We have this joy in natural marriage for a time, until we are perfected in the eternal marriage feast as the Church with her eternal Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. 

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