

*"Sir, we wish to see Jesus" — John 12:21*

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## The Joy Of Marriage

Scott Gardner

Joy in marriage is not limited to experiencing perfect moments but it is the result of building a relationship on spiritual principles. It is no accident that the apostle Paul uses the role of husband and wife as an example to help us understand the relationship of Christ and the church. It should be the determination of every married couple to imitate that relationship. (Ephesians 5:22-33)

Think for a moment about how many godly principles are expressed in the marriage relationship. Let's begin with humble service. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..." (Eph 5:25). The husband, the one Paul refers to as the head of the home, is the one who must willingly give his life that his wife might live. There is little joy in marriage when a husband treats his wife like a servant that must cater to his every wish and need. That man has abandoned Christ and the opportunity to demonstrate to his family, in this case his sons, what a godly leader of the home should look like. If we want to be godly husbands and we desire that our children one day build their own godly homes then we must imitate Jesus.

Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22). Society has turned this into a controversial phrase, but God's plan is perfect, and His commands are not burdensome. When this scripture is taken alone it can look burdensome. However, context, context, context shows that this is part of the big picture of marriage and cannot stand alone. We submit to Christ because of his love, commitment, faithfulness, and humility. Wives willingly submit to their husbands when they lead like Christ. This is the picture of a joyful marriage.

Maintaining a joyful marriage can be challenging when you add children to the recipe. They can be demanding of your time and always need help with something. When they are hurt they want to crawl in your lap when you need to fix the plumbing. They want to stay there until the pain goes away. Mom's and dad's need reprieves to keep the focus on the joy of their marriage even when the children are young. This can be coffee in the morning, date nights out, praying together at night... It allows parents to reset and keep their focus on the priorities. Parenting is about selfless love, but it can be easy to set the marriage on the shelf while the kids are so needy. You have the opportunity to show your children that they are so very important, but God and your spouse are more important. Maintaining a joyful marriage while raising children is possible and rewarding.

What makes a marriage joyful is knowing that the love between a husband and wife is more than a beautiful wedding ceremony, more than cards and flowers on special occasions, more than weekends in a cottage in the woods, or anything else this world has to offer. It's knowing that two people who have dedicated their lives to Christ and trust their savior's love are going to do their very best to show that same love and dedication to each other. They both know that when there is pain there will be comfort, when there is hurt there will be forgiveness, when there are trials there will be long-suffering.

But what can bring the most joy in marriage is the peace in knowing that when our lives are complete here on earth we will rest for eternity in the arms of our savior.

### **Wear Masks**

**Today's**

### **Schedule**

### **The Lord's Day**

**8:30 - Assembly**  
Building

**9:30 - Assembly**  
Building

**10:30 - Assembly**  
Building

# Dealing With Differences in a Way That Glorifies God

Gary Henry

One of the marvels of God's creation is the variety that exists among human beings. We're all equally created by God in His image, and yet no two individuals are exactly alike. Each of us is a unique package of strengths, abilities, personalities, etc. — and each of us deals with life in a different way. Whenever two or more people have the opportunity to work together, it is possible to view their individual differences as a part of the group's strength. Each person in the group brings something to the work that would be missing if that person were absent. A group can have more wisdom and power than an individual could ever have. Any yet, the challenge is for the members of a group to truly work together, making sure that their differences help the work rather than hinder it. The strongest groups are those powered by a common goal or shared vision that is so important to the group that they subordinate their differences to the pursuit of the collective mission. If people care enough about what they are doing together, they won't be hindered by their differences. Their different perspectives will be a part of their strength.

When the work that people are doing is the Lord's work, then the goal being pursued is nothing less than the glorification of God. Everything that happens is to be viewed within the context of this mission. Whatever difficulties and differences may threaten to disrupt the work are to be subordinated to the more important goal of bringing glory to God. Paul wrote, "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling . . . that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:11,12). Differences among Christians should be dealt with in a way that glorifies God. As the Lord's people, we have a goal that is greater than our differences. What we're doing is too important to let the devil separate us.

This certainly does not mean that the truth is to be compromised or that peace is to be pursued "at any price." It means that even when matters of great importance to the faith are being debated, the controversy will be conducted in a mature way, one that (1) preserves the Lord's honor and (2) is most conducive to a unified resolution of the disagreement based on truth. What this requires is learning how to balance courage and consideration. And most of us could use some help with this. Too often, the only two responses we know about are "fight" (unbalanced, immature "courage") or "flight" (unbalanced, immature

"consideration"). How much better if we learned (however difficult that may be) to show both mature courage and mature consideration.

There are at least three good reasons for us to deal with our differences in a way that glorifies God. First, if we don't do this, it's not likely that we'll make much progress removing our differences. If the ideal is for all to come to a more unified understanding and practice of the truth, the best thing we can do is conduct ourselves with godly maturity. When carnal-minded people are debating differences, no one seriously listens to anyone else. Each accuses the other of not listening, and what takes place is simply a "dialogue of the deaf." But among Christians, those whose concern above all else is for the Lord's glory, truth ought to have a much better chance of surfacing and being recognized by all parties.

Second, if we fail to behave ourselves in a way that balances courage and consideration we will give the devil unnecessary ammunition. Do we need to be reminded of our responsibility to protect the gospel's reputation? Have we forgotten the passage that commands us to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Tit. 2:10)? We are warned not to give any "opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (1 Tim. 5:14), and passages dealing with this aspect of our discipleship can be multiplied many times over (Rom. 2:23,24; 12:17; 2 Cor. 8:21; 1 Tim. 3:7; 6:1; Tit. 2:5,8; Heb. 13:18; 1 Pt. 2:12; etc.). The Lord would say no less to spiritual Israel than He said to physical Israel: "The nations shall know that I am the Lord . . . when I am hallowed in you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:23).

But third, if we don't disagree in a way that protects the Lord's honor we'll lose our souls. It's just that simple. There are few sins condemned any more clearly in the New Testament than those of divisiveness and factionalism. Paul wrote, "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned" (Tit. 3:10,11). Again, the passages can be multiplied (Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14,23; Jd. 19; etc.). And mark it well: the question of whether one's teaching is true or false is not the only thing that defines divisiveness. The man or woman who defends the truth in a way that dishonors the truth will have no cooler quarters in eternity than those who taught false doctrine to begin with.

Paul asked the quarreling Corinthians, "Where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3). In Christ, we are called to do more than what comes "naturally." It doesn't take much character or competence to

“strive” (people in the world do it all the time), but Christians are to exemplify a higher standard. When we “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27), that’s when we demonstrate that our goal is greater than our differences. Jesus commanded, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Mt. 5:16). We’re not released from this obligation when controversy breaks out. Indeed, there is never a more important time for us to be careful about our “light” than when disagreements arise. Controversial situations provide a quite special opportunity for the Lord’s light to shine. By handling disagreements in a more honorable way than is known in the world we set an example that is both powerful and distinctive. We show in a very practical way that the gospel really has made a difference in our own lives — and that the Lord’s people have the maturity to work through any difficulty that obscures the glory of the Lord Himself.

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## A Plan For The Week Ahead

by Dee Bowman

Plans are part of life. We begin most projects—at least any worthwhile ones—with a plan in mind. It’s wise to plan. Vision makes progress. Plans make reality. Thoughts about tomorrow make tomorrow flourish. Plans don’t always work out, but that’s no excuse for not having them. No one knows what a day will bring, but being ready helps to endure or enjoy whatever comes. Following are some suggestions for the week ahead, plans that can make it a rewarding week, no matter what happens.

Practice your religion. Someone has said, “practice makes perfect.” We understand that exaggeration, because nobody every actually reaches perfection. But practice sends us in that direction and gets us as close as possible. Practicing your religion makes you more like the Master. He is emphatic about that. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:17). Have you a plan for practicing your religion next week? You won’t get completely there, but you’ll come as close as your talent, circumstances, and opportunities will allow.

Tell somebody who you are. Your name is important. It identifies who you are. The name you wear religiously is

the same. It identifies who you are. Too many of us are timid about telling people about Jesus. Somebody has said that there are two things you should never discuss—religion and politics. I don’t know much about politics, but religion is absolutely the most important thing you can discuss. Sure, most folks won’t listen; but that doesn’t excuse anyone. We may be able to teach the very next one. Remember the value of a soul (Matt. 16:26) then go out and find one for Jesus this week.

Help someone who is hurting. The world is filled with people who are looking for something they can’t identify. That something is satisfaction, peace. It can only come when they find the Lord and submit to Him. You can help that. People are hurting. Rather than just sympathizing with them, tell them what they need to hear about their hurt. Even physical hurt is made easier to bear when you know you’re right with the Lord. “As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good to all men. . . .” (Gal. 6:10).

Try to improve. There is no room in the life of the true Christian for sluggishness, inactivity, and procrastination. You can’t coast to heaven. Rest is reserved for those who have finished the job, worked the work, done their duty. Rest is not here, but there. We should keep trying all the time, never giving in to the tendency to put it off or wait for another week. “Today is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 1:6). Improvement takes planning. Where am I? What can I do to be better? Where can I improve my weak areas? Who can I get to help me? All these questions are pertinent to our needs and should be frequently asked.

Work at it this week. Let’s all try to practice what we preach, let somebody know about the Savior, help some hurting soul, and have a plan for improving. We’ll all be considerably better next week if we will.



Read your Bible daily