

The Measure of a Man

#2 “The Husband of One Wife”

Introduction

This phrase always gets chuckles and inspires jokes. The Greek text literally reads, “a one-woman man.” It does not really refer to marital status; the issue is moral behavior with regards to sexuality.

It’s important to realize Paul is not discussing marital status:

1. This does **not** forbid remarriage after the death of a spouse.
2. This does **not** forbid remarriage after a biblical divorce.
3. This does **not** forbid divorced men from holding positions of leadership in the church.
4. This does **not** forbid single men from holding positions of ministry.

The basic idea is this: A one-woman man is devoted in his heart and in his mind to the woman who is his wife; he loves, desires, and thinks only of her; he maintains sexual purity in both his thought life and his conduct.

It was not uncommon in Roman times to be a “three-woman man.”

1. One woman might be a slave girl who lived in the household who was always available for sexual gratification.
2. A second woman might be the temple prostitute.
3. The third woman would be the wife who would give birth to the legitimate children.

We’re not too far from that today! With the proliferation of pornography, men have fantasy-women everywhere they are.

Here’s some encouragement. Turn to First Thessalonians chapter four.

1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

1 Thessalonians 4:5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

"Your own vessel" is a reference to your **own body** - the vessel by which you enjoy the sexual relationship. Paul tells you that, as a Christian, you **can** exercise restraint and self-control over your sexual drives. You need not surrender to the passion of lust. Remember: God's commands are His enablings!

1 Thessalonians 4:6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

Your sexual sin doesn't just affect only you, or even only you and the person you were with. Sexual immorality brings terrible social complications far beyond the passion of a moment between two people. It defrauds everyone you know! It has the potential to destroy marriages and families; it has the potential to destroy churches; it has the potential, when condoned, to destroy whole nations.

"The Lord is the avenger of all such" is a difficult phrase to catch the meaning of. How is God an "avenger" when it comes to believers? Perhaps Paul explains what he means in the next two verses:

1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

God has called you to practice sexual purity, and He has given you His Holy Spirit to enable you to practice sexual purity. He has set the standards that define sexual immorality. Therefore, when you practice sexual immorality, **it affects the character of your fellowship with God**. Instead of being a son or a soldier, you have become a prodigal son or a deserter. God becomes a judge! Better confess your sin so your Advocate in heaven, Jesus, can clear you of all charges against you!

We live in a sexually-oriented culture. A fine line exists in what to recommend for every person. Men are sexually tempted, but to different degrees. Far better to be too careful than slightly careless.

Some basic recommendations would include:

1. Develop good and open communication with your wife.
2. Avoid sexually stimulating situations.

3. Stay on track with God in the Word, prayer, fellowship, and evangelism.

The best recommendation is to have a solid marriage. The key passage is Ephesians 5:25ff.

Ask any Christian about the roles of the wife and the husband and they will usually tell you that the wife is to submit to the authority of the husband because he is the leader of the home. While that may be true in some sense, I want you to notice that the word “authority” is never used in these verses; and the husband is never called the “leader.”

The word that *is* used is “head.” Paul began speaking to the husband in verse twenty-three, then got sidetracked with a few more comments to wives. The husband is “the head of the wife.” The wife is the helper of the head. The husband is to exercise authority and leadership of his wife the same way your head exercises authority and leadership over your physical body – doing what is best for it so it can help you move through life successfully.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Husbands should memorize the words, “Christ... loved the Church and gave Himself for her...” Jesus demonstrated His love by giving Himself for you. I substitute the word *sacrifice* for the word “gave,” because that is what Jesus did. He sacrificed Himself, even to the death on the Cross, to demonstrate His love. Husband – Jesus Christ’s sacrifice of Himself on the Cross is the example of how you are to love your wife. He died for you; you die to yourself for her.

You are given two illustrations in the following verses: the *bride*, and the *body*.

Paul describes the concern for the bride in verses twenty-six and twenty-seven.

Ephesians 5:26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,
Ephesians 5:27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

In the Jewish and Greek cultures of the first century, the bride would take a special bath, then get into her beautiful gown. She would be as clean and as beautiful as possible on her wedding day.

There is a lot of doctrine in these two verses, but they are primarily here as an illustration for us. Jesus looks upon you everyday and sees you bathed and in your wedding gown.

How do you look upon your wife? You should look upon her everyday as your bride – bathed and in her wedding gown. At a wedding, everyone works hard to keep the bride clean and beautiful. She is assisted in everything she does. She is on display for everyone to see. Look upon your wife as you should a bride and she will have no objections to taking her role as your helper.

The second illustration is the care of your body:

Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church.

I think sometimes we make these verses more complicated than they are. Paul is simply saying that you take care of yourself. In fact, you go to great lengths to take care of yourself – to meet your needs and fulfill your desires. **You should apply the principle of caring for yourself to caring for your wife.** Remember, you are her head, *but she is your body!*

At this point Paul is done addressing husbands. The remaining verses are an important exhortation to both husbands and wives. Before we look at them, let's summarize our thoughts regarding husbands.

You are the head of your wife and home. Headship is not what you normally think of in terms of authority and leadership. You are to make *any* and *every* sacrifice for your wife. You are to look upon her everyday as your bride, and live with her everyday as if she were your own body. You will do this if you fear your Lord – being afraid to disappoint Him, being afraid to deviate from His way of living.

If you won't exercise headship as it is presented, then you don't fear the Lord – no matter your arguments to the contrary. Your marriage problems are not with your spouse; they are with your Savior.

There is something else going on in your marriage. The relationship between you as husband and wife is an example to the world of Jesus Christ's love for His Church!

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

People cannot see Jesus; He has ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. They can see **you**; **you** are His "flesh and bones" on the earth!

They especially see Jesus in the relationship between a believing husband and wife:

Ephesians 5:31 *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

Ephesians 5:32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

This is, of course, a quote from the first wedding ceremony, performed by God in the Garden of Eden. God had just removed Adam's side to form Eve. Then God spoke of "two [becoming] one flesh." Paul says that this is in part a "mystery." A Bible mystery is something once *concealed* that is now being *revealed*.

What is here being revealed? Marriage is a picture of salvation in Jesus Christ, and of His great love for the human race.

Adam was put to sleep; Jesus Christ was put to death. Adam awoke from his sleep with a wound in his side. Jesus Christ awoke from death in His resurrection - also with a wound in His side. On the cross at Calvary, Jesus Christ received a wound in His side as the Roman soldier in charge of His crucifixion pierced Him with a spear to make sure He was truly dead.

From the wound in Adam's side, God formed a bride. From the wound in Jesus' side a bride is formed. The New Testament calls Jesus the heavenly **Bridegroom**; those who trust Him for eternal life are called His **Bride**. They are all those who believe on Him for salvation - His Bride, taken out of His wounded side. Every wedding,

and every marriage, should be an illustration of Jesus Christ's love for whosoever will believe in Him.

Your marriage **is** an illustration. What do you think people see being illustrated in your relationship?

Conclusion