



**New Covenant Life**

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**Grace Christian Fellowship**

# The New Covenant

## Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 *“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”* (NASB)



Sea of Galilee (This was very close to where our Lord gave the greatest sermon ever preached on New Covent living)

It has been our experience that there is a great need within the Church (the Body of Christ) to receive a fresh and powerful revelation of the glory, might and promises of the New Covenant. So many believers are trying to live in the New Covenant with Old Covenant thinking, principles and practices. However, it is our prayer that God might use this newsletter to shed light on aspects of New Covent living for believers so that we all might enter into the fullness of what God has for us in this side of eternity.

# What is the Gift of Prophecy in the New Covenant?

*"1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying"* (1 Cor. 14:1-5) (NASB)

There is undoubtedly much confusion today in the Church of Jesus Christ regarding the Ministry of the Holy Spirit. The excesses of Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements and denominations from the late 1960s onwards has left many believers discouraged, confused, and despondent. As a result much of the Church in the West has turned to other extremes such as "cessationism", or even turning to other religions such as Buddhism and the New Age movement in an attempt to find true spirituality. Our attempt in this article will obviously not be to try and answer or address all the questions and confusion surrounding the Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Instead we want to be far more specific in this article and look at the gift of Prophecy, what it is? What is its purpose? And to whom is it given?

## What is Prophecy?

To begin, prophecy is as Paul says not man speaking to God, but "God speaking to man"



## Ancient Corinth

(1 Cor. 14:1-3). In other words, for a prophecy to occur there first needs to be a "revelation" from the Holy Spirit. There are numerous verses in both the Old and New Testament that confirms this point, but let us look at just a couple.

### a) 1 Corinthians 14:24-25

*"24 But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you"* (NASB)

Here Paul is very clear when he contrasts the gift of prophecy with the gift of tongues. He makes the claim that when people prophesy in the Church and a visitor is present in the meeting, the "secrets of his heart are disclosed". This can only happen when the Holy Spirit powerfully speaks through various people within the Church meeting. Who else but God knows the secrets of men's hearts? God knows what we need to hear and when we need to hear it.

## b) 1 Corinthians 14:29-33

*“29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30 But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” (NASB)*

Here again we can observe that a “revelation” is essential for there to be a prophetic utterance. Paul states clearly that the person who has received a revelation is to be given an opportunity to speak in the gathering. The point is clear though, revelation from the Holy Spirit is required if there is to be a prophecy. It is stated at least four times in 1 Corinthians 14 (vs. 1-3, 24-25, 26, 30-31) and this truth appears numerous times elsewhere in the Scriptures (Am. 3:7) (Jer. 23:16) (Ezek. 13:3) (Deut. 18:20) (Eph. 3:5). So we can conclude then that to prophesy is when a person proclaims or testifies of what God has revealed to him or her. It is to share with people revelation that you have received from the Holy Spirit. This kind of sharing, this kind of testifying and these kinds of proclamations are powerful and it produces much fruit in the lives of those who hear it.

### **What is its purpose?**

Here we could really spend a lot of time. However, in this article we will only briefly consider some of the main reasons why the gift of prophecy is so important for the Church today. Firstly, what I want to stress is that the gift of prophecy in the New Covenant is not simply the ability to tell the future or focused around Eschatology (End Times). The gift of prophecy is given for the everyday life of the Church. Sure, God may want to speak to His Church occasionally about the future, but we must not limit this very important ministry to that alone.

Now the three terms that we are briefly going to consider is what Paul mentions in his definition of prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14:3, edification, exhortation and consolation.

#### 1. Edification

The Greek word that is translated “edification” is οἰκοδομή (oikodomé) and it literally means building or refers to the act of building. The gift of prophecy is firstly given to “build up” the Church, that is to spiritually grow and mature the believers individually and corporately into the head, Jesus Christ. The gift of prophecy is absolutely essential if the Church (that is any Church) is to grow in holiness, unity and steadfastness. God reveals sin, the condition of people’s spiritual state, and the great need to rely upon God alone through this gracious gift of the Spirit. Without the gift of prophecy being exercised in the Church we will not be able to build and maintain a pure testimony before God as His Church.

However, how should we understand edification practically? What does it mean? How does it work? I would like to give you just three examples of how this gift of prophecy practically edifies and grows the Church. First, when the word of God is powerfully spoken in the gatherings Jesus washes, cleanses and makes holy His Bride (Eph. 5:26). In Ephesians 5:26 the Greek word for “word” is not “logos” but “rema”. The Greek word “rema” refers to the spoken word where “logos” refers to the written word. Therefore Paul is saying that Jesus washes His bride through the powerful and prophetic words spoken to her.

Secondly, prophesying increases the faith of God’s people, In Romans 10:17 Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing the word (rema) of God. Again here Paul uses the Greek word “rema”. Now it is not to say that preaching and teaching cannot also increase the faith of God’s people, but it must be acknowledged that because prophesying addresses the hearts of believers it is more effective in doing so.

Finally, in John 6 Jesus proclaims that He is the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35). Jesus also goes on to say that His words are spiritual and that His words are to be eaten by those who believe in Him (Jn. 6:25-51). When believers come and prophesy in the meetings (sharing their revelation that they received from Christ with one another) the Church feeds on Jesus (who is the Bread of Life). Because the Lord is speaking straight to our needs and addresses our hearts we receive food for our souls.

When we feed on Christ we are edified and built up (Spiritually mature in Christ).

## 2. Exhortation

The Greek word that is translated “exhortation” is Παράκλησις (paraklēsis) and it can have a broad range of meanings. However, I want you to basically understand this word to mean three things, encouragement, exhortation and appeal/warning. Encourage here is what I like to call the Holy Spirit’s “motivational speaking”. When the Holy Spirit speaks forth encouragement to the Church it always powerfully motivates believers. But here we need to be careful, because there are numerous counterfeits of this particular gifting operating in the Church today. Preachers and Pastors today are virtually secular motivational speakers. So we need to ask what kind of encouragement or motivation does the Holy Spirit bring? Here again a lot can be said, but if you want to narrow down all the things in which the Holy Spirit encourages us as believers it will center on the living hope that Christians have in Christ (1 Th. 4:13-18) (Heb. 10:25). God’s promises (present and future) and faithfulness are all things the Holy Spirit will encourage by.

The next word I want us to briefly consider is the word “exhortation”. This is a stronger form of encouragement. It is when the Holy Spirit would strongly urge believers not to be complacent, lazy or lukewarm. We have examples of such exhortations in the Old Testament. The prophets Haggai and Zachariah exhorted the remnant of Israel after they stopped building the House of God (The Temple) to resume the work and not to neglect what God has asked them to do (Hag. 1; Ezra 5:1,2). Paul also exhorted believers many times throughout his ministry (Ac. 14:22; 16:40; 20:1-2) and would sometimes even send fellow workers in the Gospel to other Churches for this very purpose, to exhort the believers’ hearts (Col. 4:8; Eph. 6:22). However, we must ask what is the Holy Spirit exhorting us to do through the gift of prophecy? Well in the Old Covenant it was to build the Temple, and in the New Covenant it is to build the Temple. The Holy Spirit will exhort us not to be idle or lazy but to “build” his Church. But isn’t Jesus the Builder of the Church (Matt. 16:18)? Yes, He is but we need to present ourselves as living

stones to the Master Builder so that He can build us together into a dwelling place that is pleasing to Him (1 Pet. 2:4-10). How do we present ourselves as living stones to Him? The answer is in Acts 2:42. We continue steadfast in the Apostles’ doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayer (Ac. 2:42). These four things is what we do to build the Church and the Holy Spirit through the gift of prophecy will exhort us to not neglect these four things.



**An Early Church in Corinth**

The last word that we will briefly consider is “appeal”. This is when the Holy Spirit warns believers through the gift of prophecy of Satan’s schemes to bring harm, division or false doctrine into the Church. Again we have a beautiful example of this in the Old Testament where during the days of Elisa the king of Aram was scheming to attack Israel, but every single time he schemed and planned to attack Israel God revealed it to the King of Israel through Elisa the prophet which allowed Israel to place their army where needed to repel the attack (2 Kgs. 6:8-12). In a similar way God through the gift of prophecy exposes the kingdom of darkness’ attempts to harm His people.

However, there is another side to this “appeal” or “warning”. Sometimes it is not the schemes and plans of Satan that needs to be exposed and warned about but rather the spiritual condition of the Church itself. There are no better examples of this than Christ’s letters to the seven Churches in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 2, 3). Here we clearly see Christ’s appeal to the seven churches. Sure there is

encouragement and exhortation and even comfort found in these letters, but overall there is a powerful revelation given by Christ through the Holy Spirit exposing the spiritual state of the churches, appealing to them to repent and warning them of the consequences that would come if His words were ignored.

### 3. Consolation

The Greek word that is translated “consolation” is Παράμυθία (paramythia). This word is used very little in the New Testament and in some ways overlap in meaning with the Greek word (paraklēsis) discussed in the above section. However, here I simply want you to understand the word as it is translated in most English translations and that is consolation or comfort. The Holy Spirit, through the gift of prophecy, brings comfort to believers who are suffering, as the true comforter of God’s people. An example of such comforting is found in Isaiah 40:1,2.

*“1 ‘Comfort, O comfort My people,’ says your God. 2 ‘Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD’S hand Double for all her sins.” (NASB)*

Here we can see God comforting His people, telling them that their iniquity has been removed. Through the gift of prophecy the Holy Spirit will comfort the church by reminding them of God’s forgiveness, mercy, grace, faithfulness, goodness, love etc. Again, the reason why the comforting is so powerful, is because God knows exactly what His people are facing, whether it be circumstantial, physical, mental or spiritual suffering, and He knows what kind of comfort is required.

### **To whom is the Gift of Prophecy given?**

Here is perhaps where most of the confusion surrounding the gift of prophecy lies. Most people confuse the gift of prophecy with the ministry of a prophet. However, the ministry of a prophet mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 and 1 Corinthians 12:28,29 is something completely different to the gift of prophecy given to all believers for the every day life of the church. All believers are not prophets, however, all believers are called to prophesy. Paul makes

this point clear in the following verses. Please note the word “all” as you read through the verses.

*“1 Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.” (1 Cor. 14:1)(NASB)*

*“5 Now I wish that you **all** spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.” (1 Cor. 14:5)(NASB)*

*“31 For you can **all** prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted;” (1 Cor. 14:31)(NASB)*

*“24 But if **all** prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by **all**, he is called to account by **all**; 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you” (1 Cor. 14:24-25)(NASB)*

It is clear from these verses that every born again believer is to have such a ministry in the church. This gift is not just for “special” people but is given to all believers for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the body of Christ. Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through every believer, works powerfully through this gift of prophecy, building, purifying and growing His church.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, where teaching and preaching are only based upon information gathered from personal study, or observations, or having conversations with others, prophesying is a revelation from the Holy Spirit and He reveals things that cannot be seen and so ministers to the immediate needs of the believers through the gift of prophecy. Sometimes the need of the Church is to be encouraged, sometimes the Church needs to be exhorted, at other times believers desperately need comfort, whatever the need of the Church might be, I praise God that He is FAITHFULL to minister through His Spirit accordingly. So my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord we encourage you along with the apostle Paul to earnestly desire to prophesy!!!

# Testimonies for Jesus

## Carla Le Roux

I was around about 11 when I started to realise a lot of things. I started to realise that my family was beginning to change. I started to realise that my church suddenly felt extremely dead to me. I started to realise that there was something missing, something really important.

I was born in South Africa, moved here when I was just about to turn four. I grew up in Brisbane and had my family, friends and church. Life was pretty normal. I went to a professing Christian school and honestly never really questioned anything. I was happy with the life I was living and felt no need to really think about faith related issues. I had my church and I was alright. However, about five years back things began to change.

My family was beginning a journey that I would soon follow. JP had been touched by a close family friend's testimony and was the first out of all of us to start thinking and asking questions like; why don't I have a relationship with God like him? Why hasn't God changed my life? Why isn't my walk with The Lord like his? God was beginning to work in him.

He talked to my parents, showed them scripture, asked many questions about church and about our lives. Late at night I would remember hearing him in my parents room, probably showing them a new scripture he had come across again. But I was young in my own eyes and just drifted along with whatever happened. I never felt the urge to ask what was going on.

DVD after DVD about all sorts of Christian related material was at one stage one of the only things my family and I watched. I never fully understood most of what I had seen, but it certainly made me very curious. We ended up leaving the church we were at after realising how dead it was and started to look around for another biblically sound place. I was upset that I wouldn't be able to spend time with my friends after church but as time progressed I understood and learnt that church was

something more than a place I go to see friends.

From one extreme to another, we wandered off through the doors of Hillsong church. At this stage I knew a lot. I had paid more attention to the conversations at home and things started to become real for me. We stayed in Hillsong for a while until we noticed the corruption and left. For a while we didn't have a church to go to and generally stayed home on Sundays. During this time I noticed just how much my family had changed, they were different. I knew this was God working in them and as weeks went by I became uneasy. We ended up finding a rather sound church and made that our new place of worship. It went on like that for awhile, feeling constant anxiety each week and just tagging along to church because I had to.

However, one day reality hit me like a train. I don't have what my brother has, I don't have what my parents have. I don't know God as my father and when I die... I'll be going to a place I always heard about in bible stories. Hell. It is real, God is real, and He's calling out to me. It scared me so much to think that if something happened right then and there to me and I took my last breath that I won't be where I thought I would be.

I didn't sleep when I realised this, it was sometimes the only thing I thought about during the day at school. It would chew away at me and I had no clue what to do. I would start to ask more questions, pay attention more in church, come and sit with my family as they watched a sermon. I didn't know much, but what I did know was that I wanted to be saved. As if an answer to my wish the church I was attending announced that they were holding a baptism.

My family and I got baptised on the 15th of September 2013. Now my journey had truly began. I will always remember that day very clearly, the day I publicly confessed to follow Jesus Christ. I had broken down in tears, the

fact that I am so sinful and that the Lord is so merciful was the reason why and till this day, I am beyond thankful for the grace he showed me.

Romans 10:17

“So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Hebrews 3:15

“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”



# Wisdom From Saints

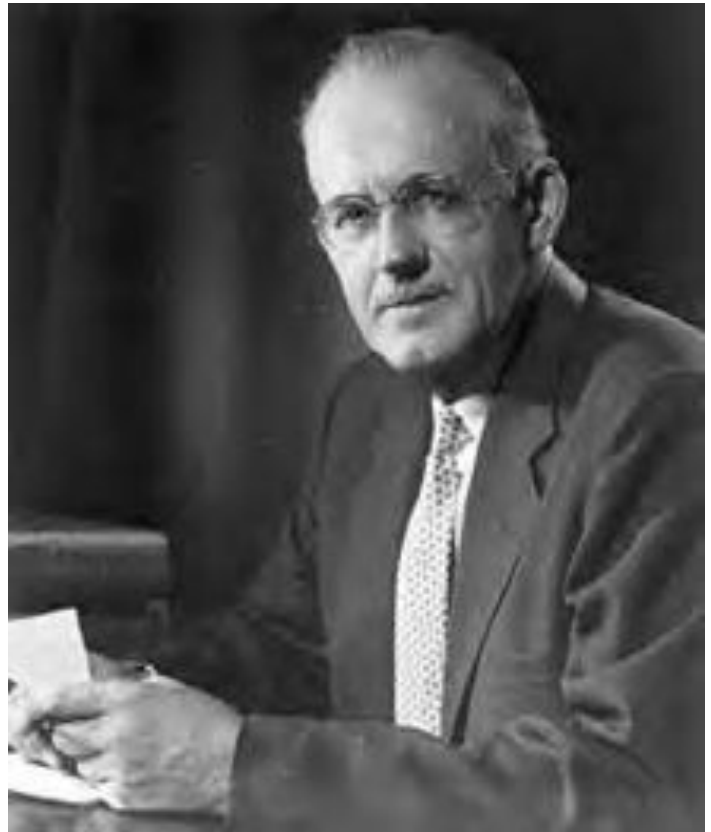
## A Word From Tozer

### Praying Till We PRAY<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Moody Stuart, a great praying man of a past generation, once drew up a set of rules to guide him in his prayers. Among these rules is this one: "Pray till you pray." The difference between praying till you quit and praying till you pray is illustrated by the American evangelist John Wesley Lee. He often likened a season of prayer to a church service, and insisted that many of us close the meeting before the service is over. He confessed that once he arose too soon from a prayer session and started down the street to take care of some pressing business. He had only gone a short distance when an inner voice reproached him. "Son," the voice seemed to say, "did you not pronounce the benediction before the meeting was ended?" He understood, and at once hurried back to the place of prayer where he tarried till the burden lifted and the blessing came down.

The habit of breaking off our prayers before we have truly prayed is as common as it is unfortunate. Often the last ten minutes may mean more to us than the first half hour, because we must spend a long time getting into the proper mood to pray effectively. We may need to struggle with our thoughts to draw them in from where they have been scattered through the multitude of distractions that result from the task of living in a disordered world.

Here, as elsewhere in spiritual matters, we must be sure to distinguish the ideal from the real. Ideally we should be living moment-by-moment in a state of such perfect union with God that no special preparation is necessary.



But actually there are few who can honestly say that this is their experience. Candor will compel most of us to admit that we often experience a struggle before we can escape from the emotional alienation and sense of unreality that sometimes settle over us as a sort of prevailing mood.

Whatever a dreamy idealism may say, we are forced to deal with things down on the level of practical reality. If when we come to prayer our hearts feel dull and unspiritual, we should not try to argue ourselves out of it. Rather, we should admit it frankly and pray our way through. Some Christians smile at the thought of "praying through," but something of the same idea is found in the writings of practically every great praying saint from Daniel to the present day. We cannot afford to stop praying till we have actually prayed.

<sup>1</sup> Tozer, A.W. "Praying Till We PRAY." No pages. Cited 15 March 2018. Online: <http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=3>

# For the Disciples of Jesus

## The Conditions Of Discipleship

Written by Zac Poonen<sup>2</sup>

The Lord told us to make disciples (and not mere converts) in every nation (Matt.28:19). He also told us what He meant by the word "disciple" in Luke 14:26-33. So, if we do not make the three conditions of discipleship (that Jesus taught) clear to people in our preaching, they will never become disciples.

### 1. Hate

Jesus said, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk.14:26).

Jesus used strong words when He spoke about discipleship. He told us to hate our family members and to hate even our own life. He also told us elsewhere to hate money, to despise money, to pluck out our right eye, to cut off our right hand and to eat His flesh and drink His blood. His words were "spirit and life" (Jn.6:63) - but many of His disciples were carnally minded and misunderstood Him and stumbled over His words. They got offended and left Him (Jn.6:60,66) . Many leave Jesus today also, for the same reason.

What did Jesus mean by asking us to hate our father and mother and our children. The meaning becomes clear when we compare His words here with His words in Matthew 10:37. There He said the same thing in slightly different words: "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me". So what Jesus meant by the word "hate" was that we must love Him supremely - more than all our family members. In other words, in the light of our love for Him, all our love for others must fade - like the light of the stars disappear when the sun rises!

This is also what Jesus meant when He told us to hate money and despise earthly wealth (Mammon)(Luke 16:13). We are to love Him

more than all earthly wealth. We can earn money, but we must not love it.

### 2. Put To Death

Jesus said, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple"(Lk.14:27).

The cross has become a dignified symbol in our day. And so we fail to understand the meaning of Jesus' words here. In His day however, the cross was an instrument of shame and death - on which the worst of criminals were crucified. It is the equivalent of being hanged, today. So what Jesus was saying here was that we should "go and hang ourselves every day"! Strong words again! What He meant was that we were to put SELF to death every day, if we wanted to follow Him. It is impossible for us to be His disciples if we seek to please our SELF or if we want to do our own will. SELF must be put to death every day(Gal.5:24).

### 3. Give Up Everything

Jesus said, "None of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions"(Lk.14:33).

Jesus was referring to our possessions here - and not to what we have. When we possess earthly things (that is, whatever we value highly and hold on to tightly) those things will possess us too - and we will become their slaves.

Everything on this earth - house, money, property, car, gold, silver, or whatever - belongs to the Lord (as stated in 1 Cor.10:26). This is a very clear statement of ownership. So whatever we have of this world's goods has only been loaned to us by God for a short period. Jesus wants us to recognize that we are only stewards. But very few have recognized this. And that is why they do not

<sup>2</sup> Poonen, Zac. "The Conditions of Discipleship." No pages. Cited 27 March 2018. Online: <https://www.cfcindia.com/wftw/the-conditions-of-discipleship>

become disciples of Jesus.

Only one who fulfils these three conditions of discipleship can live the type of life described in the New Testament - a life full of love(Rom.5:5), constant rejoicing(Phil.4:4), freedom from anxiety(Phil.4:6) and perpetual victory(2 Cor.2:14). Those who are not

disciples however, will only keep on stating that such a life is impossible on this earth. But praise God that there are a few glorious disciples who are manifesting such a life today. Praise the Lord!

The Lord is inviting you also to live such a life from today.

# A Word For Families

## There Are No His or Her Problems In Marriage

Written by Rick Thomas<sup>3</sup>

### Here is a silly story. It's not true. It's just a silly story

The other day I was trimming some briars behind our fence in the backyard. I caught my arm on a few briars. One of the thorns broke the skin and made a slight laceration on my arm. My arm was hurting. It began to bleed. The pain would not go away, so I yelled at my arm. Anger was my way of "fixing" the problem. I criticized my arm because it was inconveniencing me. If only my arm would cooperate and not hurt, my day would meet my expectations. But it would not cooperate. It continued to hurt, and I kept stewing and sulking because of my non-cooperating flesh. I then had this wild idea. What would it be like to not have this arm? Would I be better off? My mind began to drift to other arms—better arms, as I thought what life would be like with an arm that did a better job at meeting my expectations. At our church meeting, I caught myself looking around to see what other arms were available. My mind wandered. I wondered. I fantasized ever-so-briefly about life with another arm, a wish gone awry. At the end of the day, I felt stuck with this old arm.

### Not So Silly Story

Biff and Mable have been married for eight years, and you'd only have to spend a couple of hours with them to know things were not well in their marriage. They were like the man in my silly arm story. Except for the issues that were wrong with them were real, and the stakes were higher because marriage is not a fictional story. There is a disjointedness in their one-flesh union. Neither of them understands how they are ontologically connected and dependent upon each other. They've forgotten how they are no longer two people, but one flesh. There cannot be a dichotomy, schism, or fracture in marriage.

- When you see Biff, you see Mable.
- When you see Mable, you see Biff.

- They are one flesh.

They are just as one as the man and his arm are one. They are just as one as the body of Christ and the head, who is Christ, are one. Though there are many members in the body of Christ, we are one in the body. There are no competing parts. We all are on the same mission, working the same plan, using our gifts according to how God gives them while putting His name on display.

As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. – 1 Corinthians 12:20

### Marriage Is Similar.

Though the husband and wife have different capacities, personalities, strengths, weaknesses, and experiences, marriage is two people coming together to form one flesh for the glory of God. The body never says to the arm, "I do not need you." There cannot be a division in a one-flesh union. Marriage is not a competition, but the assimilation of two people who present a dynamic picture of Jesus and His Church.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church because we are members of his body. – Ephesians 5:29-30

### Competitors or Friends?

This one flesh idea raises a few questions for all married people to consider.

- Are you and your spouse competitors or friends (John 15:15)?
- Is your spouse your best friend? If not, why not?
- How are you working to maintain unity in your body?

If part of your body is rejecting you or if you're rejecting part of your body, you will die or,

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, Rick. "There Are No His or Her Problems In Marriage." No pages. Cited 15 March 2018. Online: <https://rickthomas.net/your-husbands-problems-are-your-problems-your-wifes-problems-are-your-problems/>

minimally, the rejecting portion may need amputation. A body part not assimilating into the body is diseased. Marriage is similar. Spouses spend their entire lives blending into each other until they are entirely and joyfully one flesh, as much as they can be by life's end. Becoming one flesh does not happen in an absolute complete way on the wedding day. That particular day is a good start, but it is only the beginning of the marriage marathon. On the wedding day, you hear the starter's gun. The race and all its obstacles and joys are still before you. If you don't understand this, you will be set up for a lot of disappointment as you embark on your conjugal journey. I've seen this many times with married couples that I have counseled. They fall into two groups.

### **The "I Didn't Know How" Crowd**

The "I didn't know how" crowd was never informed, trained, or disciplined for marriage. For example, these individuals may have been in a thriving youth group, but that time was not spent getting them ready for the most important thing they will ever do in their lives, outside of being born a second time. Marriage is where they will spend most of their lives and most of their energy. Marriage is more important than parenting because if the marriage is not right, the chances of the children being right are exponentially more difficult. Too many of these unaware newly married couples had parents who kept them preoccupied with other things. Sports and other things dominated their teenage years, while little (if any) time was devoted to teaching them how to be what they were going to be as adults. After their activities fade in their memories or their sport is nothing more than a dusty trophy, the novice couple enters the throes of a long and arduous marriage that they were never equipped to thrive. Other parents have the "myopic-college-view" as though college is an end all. Can I speak plainly here: I counsel more college graduates than any other struggling marriage demographic. I have spent most of my adult life counseling couples who were educated and successful but in miserable marriages. Nobody prepared these couples for marriage. Here are three typical responses I hear over and over again.

1. I never knew. My dad never taught me these things and my church didn't do it either. This "way" is all new to me.
2. I had no idea how to lead and shepherd my wife.
3. The things you're saying are foreign concepts. These ideas are the first time someone took me aside and practically taught me what it means to bring the gospel to bear in my marriage.

### **The "I Didn't Care" Crowd**

Another people-group are those who don't care about leading or following well. Getting a wife was just one of the many "to-do's" on their list of things to accomplish. For some individuals, getting married is better than being single, and being hitched was the beginning and end of their marriage goals. The similarity between this group and the "I didn't know how" group is that nobody envisioned either group was for marriage. The former group was mostly ignorant while the latter group was primarily selfish. There is a slight difference. The uncaring man has the "conquer and move on" mindset. He got the girl, and now it's time to pursue other trophies. He secures a job so he can populate his world with his dreams. He doesn't give his wife a lot of thought unless he needs her to do something. He lives as though there is no need for ongoing marriage maintenance. His views are about himself while his wife is just like he is: a work-in-progress. His wife makes a similar mental misfire, thinking he will act like an adult. She assumes what an adult should be and maps that expectation over her husband. It does not dawn on her that he may have problems and is in need of her discipleship. It's easy for a wife to misunderstand her full role in marriage. It could be she cared about the marriage during the early years, but at some point, she experienced weakened perseverance, and she turned to her children as an escape from her broken marriage dream.

### **Marriage and the Doctrine of Sin**

Both of these groups have a weak view of the doctrine of sin. They don't see sin as cancer that is seeking to devour whomever it can tempt and lure (James 1:14-15). They misunderstand the nature of sin and their complementary roles in marriage.

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. – 1 Peter 5:8

Christian marriage partners are co-inheritors of the gift of life. They are not competitors. They are continually assessing, observing, caring, teaching, and uniquely complementing each other for the glory of God.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. – 1 Peter 3:7

The maturing couple understands the nature of sin and their complementary roles in marriage. They see sin as their ever-encroaching adversary and the marriage as their God-given opportunity to defeat it together. This reality is why discerning couples are considerate, aware, caring, and eager to disciple each other. The husband does not assume everything is okay and ongoing maintenance is not needed. His wife is similar. She is considerate of her husband's weaknesses and eagerly seeks to speak into those weaknesses, knowing they are not competing with each other. They are one flesh friends.

### **Mutually Hurt – Mutually Rejoice**

There are no "his versus hers" in marriage. There is only one. I watched my wife go through three miscarriages. They happened to her. It was her pain, her disappointment, her fear. They were my miscarriages too. I did not feel and hurt the way she did. I have no idea of the physical, mental, and emotional agony of a miscarriage—at least not the way she does. But I hurt because she was hurting. I hurt because I lost something too. We are one flesh. When someone murdered my brother in 1997, my wife hurt along with me. She did not hurt the way I did, but she hurt because her husband was suffering. We are not two people, acting independently of each other. We are one body.

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. – Hebrews 13:3

1. Do you hurt when your spouse is hurting?
2. What hinders you from entering into your spouse's pain?
3. What will it take for you to do for your spouse what Christ did for you (Matthew 18:33)?
4. What is your biblical responsibility regarding your spouse's sin?

When I sin—no matter what it is—my wife has a responsibility in that sin. She would never say, "That's Rick's problem. That's his sin." No, it's our sin. She is not guilty of my sin and she does not repent of my sin, but she has a role to play because she is me and I am her—we are one. When I sin, she runs to my aid by calling me out and caring for me. She becomes my discipler. My confidant. Just like when the briar cuts the arm, the body comes to the rescue. Too many times when one marriage partner sins, the other acts like my silly story at the beginning of this chapter. The wife acts as though she is not part of the body and it's the husband's problem. This reaction is the Job's wife syndrome: The non-sinching spouse gets mad when the other spouse sins (Job 2:9). Ironically, (and biblically) this means both of them are sinning. When two people respond sinfully to sin, they both are guilty before God and before each other. They both need to repent. It's like cursing your arm when it gets cut. That's weird. That's your body. You shouldn't get mad at yourself when something happens to yourself. Are you following my logic? It is biblical insanity to get angry at your spouse when he (she) sins. When part of the body rejects another part of the body, you have a problem. You better call a doctor or, in this case, if you're unwilling to repent, you better call your pastor or elder or small group leader or some other competent helper. You need help. There is something wrong with your body.

### **Are You a Rescuer or an Accuser?**

Are you a rescuer and restorer or are you a critic and condemner? You'll never be more tested on this than when your spouse does something that hurts you. Your spouse is an instrument the Lord uses to measure and mature you. We see this in Paul's warning about a person in sin and a person who helps a person in sin. Take a look at these three verses and note how much time he spent

talking to the helper rather than the person in sin. Paul gives us seven words (underlined) regarding the person in sin. He gives us forty-seven words for the person who is supposed to help the person in sin. This difference is no small matter. We should read this like a warning.

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. – Galatians 6:1-3

If you don't see your spouse's problem as your problem and if you don't actively become part of the solution, your marriage will go to places where it cannot recover. Paul warned the restorers to guard their hearts against this kind

of self-deception, and if you do, you will fulfill the law of Christ, which in this verse means bearing each others' burdens.

### **Call to Action**

1. What are some areas where your husband is weak and needs your help?
2. What areas regarding your role as a wife are weak and need help?
3. When your spouse sins, are you envisioned and ready to restore your spouse? Or, are you more apt to sin against your spouse, similar to my silly story at the beginning of this message?
4. Are you a burden bearer for your spouse? What ways do you need to change to be a burden bearer? Will you write out those ways and talk to your spouse about how you need to change? Will you ask for help?



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