

Having a Jesus-Centered Marriage Begins With This High Calling

As Christians, the ultimate goal of our entire lives is to be like Jesus. To walk, talk, believe, feel and be like Jesus in our daily life—this is our inner ambition. This ambition is also shared with the Holy Spirit. As God, He comes into us for the sole purpose of creating the nature of Christ in us.

Decade after decade, marriage provides ample opportunities to be Christ-like. After all, ultimately, that is the Father's primary objective for marriage—to make us Christlike. Have you ever wondered why you are married to someone quite different from you? This is not meant to irritate us, but rather to kill our flesh and help us become Christ-like as we die to our flesh in the process of loving this amazing being; our spouse.

Now, if we are going to be like Jesus, especially in our marriage (the true testing ground for our faith, beliefs and what truly lurks in our hearts), we need to really understand the servant nature and calling of Jesus.

Jesus, just like Adam and Jeremiah (and probably you and I), had a calling and purpose for us before we were created. You and I were created and given life to solve a problem here on earth. We have a destiny to touch lives in our time frame in world history. Some of us find our purpose from the Father, some fight it, some never seek it and sadly, some die without achieving their purpose.

In Genesis, God said there was no man to work the Garden (problem) before he created man (solution). He said it was not good for Adam to be alone (problem), so He created the solution (woman). Jeremiah said God knew him before He created him to be a proclaimer of God's message: "Now says the Lord,

who formed me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (yet I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is my strength)" (Is. 49:5).

There is an echo of this being a solution for all of us in our heart of hearts. We are not the problem; we are to be the solutions on planet Earth as well as in our marriages. When I am a servant husband, I am a solution to my wife and family.

One of the most famous teachings of Jesus about serving is taught in several scriptures: Matthew 20:26, 23:11-12, and Mark 9:35, 10:43-44. In Matthew 20, we find a story of a mother of two disciples making a request of Jesus that he put her sons in a place of honor and esteem above the other disciples, specifically at His right and left in His kingdom. As the story proceeds, Jesus makes this famous statement in verses 26 and 27: "Whoever would be great among you, let him serve you, and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave." It is interesting that He did not rebuke the idea of someone wanting to be great. He just shifted the idea of the process.

You come to marriage from a vastly different place when you accept the calling to serve your spouse rather than to rule them. You also experience two very different outcomes. A servant will become great in the eyes of those he or she serves. A less than positive-hearted person will desire to be seen as great without the service record required.

Being a servant in a marriage is the only way to be great in a marriage. Serving one's spouse kills selfishness and self-centeredness—what we call our "flesh." By dying to ourselves in marriage, we prepare ourselves for the selfless task of parenting. In conferences I kiddingly say, "What God cannot kill in you in your marriage, He'll allow your children to finish off." You get the point. I think marriage is an awesome opportunity to die. Serving is all about voluntarily

dying to our preferences and growing in honor and appreciation of our spouses.

Optimally, it is best when both spouses in a marriage understand their calling to serve. When this happens, the children get to see two different personalities serving each other. This is the most beautiful and healthy way to grow up, for sure.

The world will never change. Even the last book of the Bible talks about kings and world “leaders,” not servants. So, the world will call to you to lead in your marriage and be served—not to serve. These two contrasting ideas will battle throughout time.

Only God’s voice calls to each one of us, as believers in Christ Jesus, to die to ourselves—regardless of gender, wealth, academic or other accomplishments—and serve Him and our spouse.

I love serving my spouse, Lisa. Admittedly, it took some revelation and obedience to get me to where I began enjoying my role and calling to serve Lisa, but the blessings of doing so have made this more than worth it. As you and your spouse walk through your journey with the Lord in servant marriage, you will have many chapters to write of dying to selfishness, being right, being most important, and a whole host of other really bad ideas. You will have many more chapters about the blessings of servant marriage not only for you and your spouse, but also for your children, grandchildren and others who had a front-row seat to see it. {eoa}

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