

God Unites, Men Break Up

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True Love Cannot Be Exchanged With Wealth

I acquainted the bride and bridegroom a few years ago. This time they invited me to their wedding. Today is a big day for them. I wish to take this opportunity to give them some advices about their marriage. I hope that these advices not only can help them, but also can help everyone of you here.

Probably, some people among you have never attended a Christian wedding before. I believe you will be amazed with what you will see and what you will hear for the first time in your life soon. Inside the programme in your hands, have you noticed the shocking words on page one?

Song 8:7 Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it. If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised.

For example, in the first sentence: "Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it." Have you seen such kind of love? Are you shocked by this? Surging waters cannot quench love; floodwaters cannot overflow it. Have a look at the relationship around you today, they are so fragile that they can easily be broken. Do you find it strange when you read this? Have you seen such kind of love?

In the second sentence: "If someone were to offer all his possessions to buy love, the offer would be utterly despised." You might find this strange too. How do people treat love? If you don't have wealth, don't even think about obtaining love. Are you shocked when you read

this sentence? Where can you find this kind of love these days? Nowadays, the value system of this world tells you: "If you don't have money, don't expect you would have love; because people would despise you!" But I have to tell you frankly, the kind of love that can be exchanged with treasure is not true love. It is not even friendship. If I want to make friends, I won't talk to them about money, because true friendship should not be maintained by money. If the love that you have is acquired using your wealth, I can guarantee that it is not true love.

Nowadays we really need to have the courage to be men of a different kind; we need to change our old concept of values, because the value system that the present society has brainwashed us is crooked, wrong and upside down. You want to get married? You need to have an Audi or a Benz, a black one too. Otherwise, you wouldn't have the face to pick up the bride. The reception venue must be splendid. Otherwise, you wouldn't have the face to invite your friends and relatives to attend. The gift offered to the bride's family must be at least one hundred thousand dollars or more. Otherwise you wouldn't have a chance to get the consent from the bride's family. No wonder all people on earth agree that without wealth, you can't get love; because without wealth, you would be completely despised.

Actually all these have nothing to do with love. These are the result of wrong concept of values, which has frustrated and misled a lot of young people, thinking that all these are the standard for measuring whether you have love or not. Being influenced by this wrong concept of values, consequently, nowadays, the relationships of a lot of couples are built on fragile foundation of love. So fragile that it can collapse anytime. It is all because their love is maintained by money.

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I wish that today God does not bless these new couple only; God's blessings also come to each one of you through their wedding,

especially for the young fellows. I'm going to use the words from the Bible to advise this new couple, because the Bible's words are extraordinarily precious, extraordinarily important. The two sentences that you just read are a good example. Only the words of the Bible can help us establish a correct and long lasting marriage. Let us read another verse from the Bible:

² Then some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵ But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment for you because of your hard hearts. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation he made them male and female. ⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Mark 10:2-9)

When you read this Bible verse, you have to grasp its main theme. Do not be like a blind man touching an elephant. What did Jesus really want to say in these verses? A lot of people think that these verses can be grouped into two parts. The first part talks about divorce. The second part talks about marriage. But how are they related to each other? It seems it is not obvious.

Today let me briefly tell you the theme of these verses: God likes to unite people, but men like to break up each other's relationship. Notice these special sentences: a man should join with his wife, the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. These are God's deeds. The deeds He often does are - joining people together.

When you read the Bible, you would notice that the Bible often emphasizes that we must love others as ourselves and love one another.

Why is it so important to love others as ourselves? It is because love can join people together. Why does the Bible often emphasize we must forgive one another? It is because forgiveness can bring each other's relationship closer. Without forgiveness, the gap between each other would become bigger and bigger.

The Bible also teaches us to love our enemies. A lot of people would find "loving enemies" totally unacceptable. Why should we love our enemies? It is because this is the only way to resolve all the issues between you and your enemies. "A tooth for a tooth" would end in mutual destruction.

This is what God always does – unite people, bring people together. God sent Jesus to die on the cross in order to unite us with Him, and then unite one another. What is the major issue of men? It is the breaking up of each other's relationship. Notice the question the Pharisees asked Jesus: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" In today's word it is to ask: "Can we divorce?" What is divorce? Divorce is the breaking up of a relationship. This is why I said the theme of this passage is: "God unites, Men break up."

Whose heart is hard that leads to the breaking up of a marriage relationship?

Perhaps we should talk about divorce first. I'm sorry, in order to understand this verse correctly, we have to start from the negative angle. Jesus did not answer the Pharisees' question directly. Instead he asked them what was written in the Bible about this. They answered, "Moses said divorce is permitted with a certificate of dismissal." Implying that divorce is lawful. Jesus did not comment whether Moses was right or wrong directly. He just said, "He wrote this commandment for you because of your hard hearts." In other words, Jesus agreed, according to the laws of the Old Testament, people can divorce. But what was the reason? It was because of your hard hearts.

I want to ask you a question. Whose heart is hard? We all would suppose that it must be the one who initiates the divorce. Right? For example, the husband gambles, gets drunk and beats his wife and children every night, the wife cannot bear it anymore, eventually she proposes to divorce. Is it the wife whose heart is hard? I want you to think about this question thoroughly. Do not answer it generally like most Christians: "No matter what, divorce should not be allowed in any circumstances. Whoever proposes divorce must be hard hearted and sins against God." If that is the case, was Moses against God with what he did?

For another example, the husband flirts and sleeps with other women, the wife cannot bear with it anymore and proposes to divorce. Whose heart is hard in this case? I ask you in this way so that you can understand that the issue is not so simple as you may think: whoever initiating divorce must be the one with a hard heart. The correct question you should ask is: whose heart is so hard that it has caused the marriage relationship to be developed into a situation that it can no longer be maintained.

Why would a man's heart be hardened? It is because our hearts are hardened towards God, not willing to listen to God. "What God has joined together, let no one separate." Would you listen to that? You wouldn't. Your heart is very hard, because you simply do not want to listen to God. Therefore, once there is a shipwreck in a marriage, many couples would choose to divorce. They do not care about what may happen to their children. This is the showcase of a hard heart. We don't need God. We don't want to listen to God. This is why our hearts are hardened. Husband's heart is hardened against his wife. Wife's heart is hardened against her husband. This is the whole issue of our society today.

Marriage relations cannot be isolated from God

What am I trying to say in this saga? What I am trying to say is:

Marriage relations can never be isolated from God. Once it is isolated from God, your heart would become hard. You cannot understand the meaning of marriage. Just a little temptation would cause your heart to change. You do not understand why you have to be faithful to your spouse. Didn't I mention it just now – nowadays, love can be exchanged with money. Apart from money, many other things can be used to exchange love, just like any commodity. Get a new one after you get sick of it. But the Bible tells us: any person who breaks up what God has united is a hard hearted person.

I wish you can understand the true meaning of these words from Jesus. Why did Moses allow people to divorce? Have you understood yet? When one side becomes hard hearted, a marriage relationship would become a hell on earth. Therefore, Moses reluctantly let them separate. If he insisted not to let them, the hard hearted one would torture the spouse to death. This is why Jesus said, "He wrote this commandment for you because of your hard hearts."

Do not let others interfere with your marriage

Today, the wedding theme of this new couple is: "Walk with God in one heart". I want to remind them. If you want to be in one heart, you must walk with God first. God is like a big ring. You are like two small rings. You two must be locked together with Him so that you can be locked to each other firmly.

Let us have a look at verse 9: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." We have to read carefully every word here. The Bible did not say: "what God joined together, no one can separate." The Bible just said: "Marriage is joined by God. If you establish this relationship according to God's will, God would be pleased to join you together. You have to join together with a respectful attitude towards marriage. Only in this way God would bless you.

This is to say: If they fear God, God would be happy to join them. Jesus

reminded us: “what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Here it did not say no one can separate. In other words, God has given the responsibility to people to maintain the marriage relationship. To whom is this responsibility given? First, the couple, you two have the responsibility to strive to maintain the marriage relationship with all your strength. Since God has joined you together, you must be determined to be faithful to each other no matter what kind of tests or trials are encountered.

“What God has joined together, let no one separate.” Apart from the new couple, whom else does this statement speak to? This statement also speaks to the parents of the couple. Being mums and dads, do you realise that a lot of marriage breakdowns are caused by your excessive interference? Mums love and care for their daughters very much. Often teach their daughters on how to protect themselves against their husbands and how to control them. The mums of the husbands also remind their sons restlessly on how to control and beware of their wives. This kind of endless interference leads to the failure of them to build a solid relation between them. It is because parents from both sides are trying to separate them. The seed of divorce had been silently sown before they were married. How tragic!

“What God has joined together, let no one separate.” Whom else does this statement speak to? This statement also speaks to those who are the third ones that damage other people’s marriage. You have to be very careful. Do not be the third one. This is a sin God hates very much. Because you are breaking up what God has joined. You should not be attracted by other people’s wealth too. Do not become a person’s mistress for money. Do not flirt with other people’s husbands or wives. You must be careful. Don’t even think about it. This kind of thought should not be in your mind. Because the Bible warns us: “what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

A man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife

⁶ But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. ⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], ⁸ and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. (Mark 10:6-8)

If you are not familiar with the Bible, you may not know why it is emphasized here that “God made them male and female.” If you read Genesis, you would know that in the beginning, God only made one man and one woman. In other words, He deliberately not to give man too many choices, not for woman too. God did not let man have trial marriage among a group of women.

Nowadays, trial marriages are being promoted. Men can try. Women can also try. We thought that by going through trial marriage, we can find the most ideal spouse. If that is the case, in a society, the more common trial marriage is, the less the divorce rate should be. Because everyone’s spouse is the most ideal. Is that so?

There is also a very special account in Genesis: Man was made of dust. Woman was made of a rib from the man. If you are the author of the Bible, would you write like that? Truly, there are a lot of profound and subtle (amazing) things in the Bible. If we are the author of the Bible, we would write like this: God made man out of dust. He also made woman out of dust. Man and woman are equal. Everyone is happy.

But the Bible recorded very strangely. Man was made of dust. Woman was made by God using a rib from man. Therefore, the man (Adam) said later, “This is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh.” What does that mean? The two are one body. The man started to realise – this wife is an inseparable part of his life. God wanted to teach Adam (man) this lesson from the very beginning. Of course, the lesson is also for us to learn.

But why is it mentioned here that: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother.” This statement is very strange too, because Adam did not have father and mother. Obviously these words were spoken to us.

But why was it said: “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.”? In fact, the words “a man leaves his father and mother” can be omitted. “This is why a man bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.” Wouldn’t this sentence be more fluent?

Here it is to remind us that the relationship between husband and wife is closer than the relationship with parents. This is exactly the meaning of “leave” here. You have to make a choice. If you want to get married, but hesitate to leave your parents, or do not want to give up your reliance on them, then you are not ready to get married; because you fundamentally do not understand the meaning of marriage.

This is Bible’s perspective on marriage. The Bible treats the relationship between husband and wife much closer than the relationship with parents. Therefore, marriage is a sacred and solemn relationship. It cannot be tried. Nowadays, we often take marriage as a “sentimental” relationship. We must have the “feel” before we get married. Truly, there is a feeling side in a marriage relationship. But there is also a rational side. We have to make a commitment based on our rationality. We have to understand what this commitment means. You must think over thoroughly before you enter into this sacred relationship. This relationship is much more intimate and important than the relationship with our parent.

Have you heard of a poem called “Wo Nong Ci” (《我侬词》)? The author of this poem was a lady scholar from the “Yuan” dynasty. Her name was called “Guan Dao Sheng” (管道升), a very unique name. Her husband was called “Zhao Meng Fu” (赵孟頫), a scholar in southern side of Yangtze River. One day, the husband wanted to marry a concubine (second wife) following the examples of other people, but he was reluctant to ask his wife face to face. He then put down what he wanted in a poem. In summary, the meaning of the poem was briefly: “I am a scholar, you are a Madame. Have you heard that Wang Xi Zhi (王羲之) married 2 concubines called Tao Ye and Tao Gen? Su Dong

Po (苏东坡) also had two concubines called Zhao Yun and Mu Yun? Therefore, it is not too much for me to marry some concubines. You are over 40 years old already. You can still maintain your position as my official first wife.”

His wife was also a scholar. Both were learned and civilised. Thus, it was not proper for them to quarrel in the public to hurt each other’s dignity. The husband wrote his wife a poem. The wife replied in a poem too. The poem was called “Wo Nong Ci”. The meaning of the poem was briefly: “We are just like two clay dolls. Due to love, the two dolls are mixed together in water to form a single clay. Out of this clay, two new dolls are moulded. Therefore, from now on, there is you in my clay, and there is me in your clay. We can never be separated.” After reading the poem, her husband never mentioned anything about marrying a concubine again.

This poem is very meaningful indeed. It expresses the inseparable unity between husband and wife. Guan Dao Sheng’s understanding about marriage matches seamlessly with the Bible’s perspective on marriage. Very few people have the profoundness of understanding on marriage as she did. She completely understood the meaning of “two persons become one flesh.”

The Bible describes the relationship of husband and wife as “two persons become one flesh.” That is to say, the relationship of husband and wife is tightly bonded and inseparable, because they are joined by God.

The parents should not interfere with their children’s marriage

There is another very important reason for a married couple to leave their parents. It is what I have just mentioned: parents’ excessive interference in their children’s marriage is damaging their unity. I have to tell you the truth. Too much advice from the parents is the main cause for many marriage issues. Because parents’ advice often confuses them and leads them to frustration.

Out of ignorance, for the sake of loving and caring their daughters, many parents advise their daughters and say, "After marriage, you should keep money for your own and do not let your husband know. Also, never trust him too much." But don't forget, the husband's mother would also advise her son the same thing because she had been a daughter-in-law before too. Eventually, a nice family becomes the battlefield for the parents from both families. You can imagine the consequences.

Take the home coming during Chinese New Year as an example. The husband's parents say ' "Hey! You two must come home for the New Year. If not, your mum, your grandpa and grandma would be broken hearted." The wife's parents would also say, "You two must come home for the New Year. Otherwise, never come back again!" As a result, the couple does not know what to do. Because they only have a limited number of days for the holidays, whose home should they go back for the New Year? Subsequently, they argue and quarrel with each other. The New Year is not a happy holiday for them.

Our children's marriages are best to be decided by them, because they have a long road to run in their lives. The relationship between the parents and their children would only have 20-30 years remaining to last. You should not interfere with them. Let them focus on building their own home in one heart. Unfortunately, out of ignorance, many parents do not understand the great wisdom of the Bible. Their "love" eventually leads to their children's marriage breakdowns.

A sister from the church told me the following story. Her brother married a wife. Her brother's problem was that he did not want to leave his parents. Why? Because he can rely on his parents for food and accommodation, saving him a lot of expenses. Therefore, they continue to live with his parents after they were married. As time goes by, his mum started to pick on the daughter-in-law, complaining that she has this problem and that problem, or she is not good this way and

that way.

At the beginning, her brother did not notice. After a while, he became annoyed with his mum's frequent grumbling about his wife. Everybody has his/her own weaknesses. It is not strange at all. But if a person's problem is being magnified, then it would be hard for the person to bear. Consequently, the couple was divorced ultimately. It happened as the parents wanted. They successfully got rid of their daughter-in-law. Not long later, the son married again. Of course, the parents were happy, but the happiness only lasted for 3 months perhaps. Eventually, the endless grumbling started again. The fundamental problem was that this man does not want to leave his parents. Consequently, he cannot join with his wife.

In a wedding, the father hands over his daughter to the bridegroom

The joining of husband and wife is a huge task. If you are married, then you know how difficult it is to build this relationship. Therefore, do not put too many obstacles in front of you. This new couple are Christians. They have to understand God's will in order to build this relationship according to God's initial intention for having a marriage.

During a western style wedding ceremony, a section of the programme is for the father of the bride to walk into the hall with the bride, and then hand over the bride to the bridegroom. What does that mean? I reckon this ceremony is very symbolic. It reminds the bride that: your father now hands you over to this man. From now on, let him look after and guide you.

I reckon this section of the wedding is very meaningful. It reminds the bride (also reminds the parents): this is a new stage in your life; develop each other's relationship properly; do not linger with your parents' family any more. The father passes the responsibility of guiding and caring for the daughter to the bridegroom. The father blesses them and said, "Go! I'm letting go of my hands now."

If you can understand the profound meaning of all these, it would be very meaningful for the ceremony to combine with the teaching of the Bible. If the parents, bride and bridegroom all understand the true meaning of marriage, this understanding would be very helpful for the children to build up their marriage relationship. Marriage no longer is the living together of two persons for different reasons. Instead, it is a very meaningful union of two persons.

Summary

I hope that the words from the Bible not only encourage this new couple, but also encourage everybody here. There are quite a number of young people here among you. You must be looking forward to a wonderful marriage relationship. I hope that through their wedding, God's blessings also come upon you. At last, let me summarise:

Point 1: Marriage relationship cannot be built without God

If you want an unbreakable marriage relationship, you cannot leave God. You must build a relationship with God yourselves. Obey His words and guidance, just like the two little rings that must be connected with the big ring; so that your relationships are bonded together strongly, and safeguarded by God. This is point number one.

Point 2: God tries His best to unite people together

I want to use this passage to let you understand God's heart. I feel that God often sighs in heaven because He sees that men often break up each other's relationship, not only their own, but also other's. In fact, not only marriage relationships, but also other relationships, what we often do is to damage, to break up. Do you realise that in fact human relationships are very fragile? A careless word, a mindless action or an improper facial expression can damage a relationship.

This is exactly what we do every day. It is because we are hard hearted. We don't like to listen to God's words. We can't accept God's words in

our hearts. I hope that this new couple can understand God's heart. God's heart is to try to unite us by all means. I must emphasize that, God does not only want to unite husband and wife, He also wants to unite everybody. Therefore, the Bible describes the church as a family. It is a picture of unity.

Point 3: To walk with God is to do what God does

The theme of the wedding is "Walk with God". In order to walk with God, one must do what God does. Then it can be regarded as walking together with the hearts together. Since God's will and intention is to unite people, they have to take up this noble mission too. Treat this as their goal, doing God's works together with one heart. This is an exceedingly important and meaningful mission.

Testimony 1: God helps to rebuild the relationship of father and son.

My wife and I have served God for many years. We can truly see that in this society, the relationship among each other is very fragile. Nevertheless, we can also see that when we are willing to walk with God in one heart, God often uses us to accomplish His tasks.

A while ago, I came to know of a student who hated his father deeply inside his heart. According to my judgement, his hatred towards his father was totally unreasonable. He once told me why he hated his father. It was because many years ago, his father went to Canada and intended to apply for permanent residency and then arrange the whole family to migrate there. Unfortunately, his father found that he had cancer after reaching Canada. There was no one to look after him in a foreign country. He also could not afford the medical expenses there. At last, he decided to return to his own country to be treated. The plan to apply for a green card could no longer proceed.

In order to treat his father's disease, his mother sold their house. At last, they sold almost everything and nothing was left. Therefore, this 19 year-old teenager hated his father because he thought that his father

ruined his future by robbing his chance to go to Canada.

Sometime later, my wife and I taught him English and the Bible. After a period of time, God's words entered into his heart. He began to have some changes. One day, he received a message from home telling him that his father was in a critical situation. The doctor said his father had only a few days to live. He must come home immediately. He came to my place and told me that he had to go home to see his father immediately. But strangely, he could not get any air ticket on that day. The earliest one would be a week later.

I asked him what was in his mind for this trip home? I told him that it could be his last chance to see his father. What was he going to say to his father? He kept silent. I suggested to him that he should apologise to his father. Tell him that he was wrong for hating him all these years. Ask him for forgiveness.

He didn't answer me. He didn't say he was not willing either. He just listened to me silently. I advised him to pray for this matter sincerely. If he truly was willing to apologise to his father according to the words of the Bible, he did not need to worry about what the doctor had said. God must give him the chance to see his father.

Subsequently after a week, he bought a ticket to go home. He had the chance to be with his father for half a month. When he returned to school, his father was still alive. His father passed away a little while after he returned to school. After he returned, his first priority was to find me and told me that he understood at last that his father had laboured and suffered in his whole life because of him. He shouldn't have blamed his father for not letting him to go abroad. He felt that he owed his father. The only thing he could pay back to his father was to study hard.

Seeing his change, I was moved in my heart. I felt that God's words were truly amazing. When they enter into one's heart, they can unite

people together. I am not talking about the relationship between husband and wife here. I am talking about the relationship between father and son. Sin destroys all levels of human relationships. Only God can help us repair these relationships.

Testimony 2: God helped a couple to reconcile

Not long ago, a wonderful incident happened. A lady that I don't know sent me an email. She had an issue that she wanted to seek my opinion. She said that she had read the Bible for a while. She had also listened to some of my sermons. She wanted to become a Christian. She also told me that she had committed adultery. She was a married woman but had an affair. Her husband knew nothing about it. As she had decided to become a Christian, she cut off the relationship with her boyfriend a month ago. She repented to God. She had determined that she would never see her boyfriend anymore. But a month later, she found that she was pregnant. She asked me what she was supposed to do?

This question was really hard to answer. The quickest and simplest way was to tell her to have abortion. But I felt that it was one wrong deed after another. I told her the Bible's principle. I listed the options in front of her and told her, "You have to pray to God yourself. I can't make a choice on your behalf. I know that God had been guiding her. Therefore, I encouraged her to pray and ask God. I knew that God would give her a clear answer.

Then I heard nothing from her. Abortion must be taken within a certain timeframe. She told me that she had calculated that she must make a decision before a certain date. I thought that she would have chosen the simplest solution. To my surprise, after a while, she sent an email to tell me that she decided to keep the baby. She didn't want to be wrong again after a wrong deed. Also, she decided to let her husband know about this. She didn't know how her husband would respond but she had prepared for the worst.

Later, she sent me the third email. She told me that she had confessed to her husband about her sin. After hearing her confession, The immediate response from her husband was that he cried brokenheartedly. He pleaded to her not to keep the baby. She told her husband that she had to listen to the Bible's words. She could not get rid of the baby. Otherwise, she would be wrong once again. Later, her husband agreed and promised to bring up the child as his own.

I found this really amazing. Her husband's response was really a miracle. Certainly God was working among them. And then she wrote me the 4th email. She told me that her husband now went to church to listen to the sermon with her every week. This really was an unexpected outcome. Their relationship was even a step further. In her last email, she told me that she was baptised. Her husband was also there to witness her baptism. Thank God indeed!

I feel that what we are doing is extraordinarily meaningful. To be able to walk with God in one heart, lead people to know God, to reconcile with God, and to reconcile with one another, this is indeed an extraordinarily meaningful task. After someone had known God, the relationship between him and the people around him would change naturally. I haven't got a million dollars, or ten million. The purpose of life is not for money. It is to do meaningful things. Do what is good in God's eyes. Therefore, I want to encourage this new couple that, since God Yahweh used Jesus to accomplish the task of making peace among people, if you want to walk with God in one heart, you too should also take up this noble mission, to become God's ambassadors of peace with one heart, to lead people to God. (Translated by Peter Ng)

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