

New Lives.

New Hearts.

New Love.

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Welcome to the "New Lives. New Hearts. New Love." 5-part study.

What you're about to read in the following 5 lessons, is from a book that I have been working on—a book that dives into what an ideal Christian marriage looks like. This book has not yet been published. My friends, you are getting a sneak peek into a project that no one has ever seen!

While my book in its entirety covers many different topics, including the truth about submission, as well as offers practical advice for both husbands and wives, this particular study focuses on Christ's love for His bride—us, the Church. And men, we can't tackle a topic like Christ's love for *His* bride without specifically addressing you, and the call Father has placed upon you as a husband. With that said, wives, I believe you too will be richly blessed as you work your way through the lessons.

This study can be done together as a couple or on your own. For each part, you will have a new reading followed by some journal questions that will be helpful for both husbands and wives as they work through the lessons. Take your time as you work through the following pages, asking Father to reveal to you all that He wants you to know.

New Lives. New Hearts. New Love. uncovers what true binding love looks like, dives into the intimate story of a man who never stopped loving his unfaithful wife, teaches husbands how their love can transform their wife, and how loving like Jesus is utterly impossible for us! But take heart, as with all things for God's children, that is not the end of the story! No, far from it!

While the eternal, infinite, sacrificial, unconditional love we'll be learning about is impossible for us to pull off, it is not bad news for us or our marriages! The truth is, the knowledge that we are so utterly incapable is the best news of all!

You are loved! Pastor Jouh

Lesson 1 Reading

Ephesians 5:22-33 (NASB)

Wives, subject yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are parts of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, as for you individually, each husband is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

How Our Marriages Can Look Like Jesus

We have the love of Jesus filling us and flowing through us to others. Do you know what this means in the context of a marital relationship? People should be able to look at marriages in the Church and see Jesus.

Marriage is not a civil institution; it doesn't belong to the courts, and it doesn't even belong to the Church. It belongs to the Lord Himself. He is the Author as well as the dynamic of marriage. Actually, a Christian couple can (and should) be missionaries—by letting the Spirit of God so fill their lives that others can look at them and see Jesus.

I challenge you to look at your own marriage and then ask people around you what gospel they see. We can do much labor in ministry, but what gospel do people see when they look at our marriage? Can they see Jesus, the head? Can they see Jesus in submission? Can they see Jesus—the unconditional, sacrificial, infinite, eternal lover—flowing in and through your relationship as husband and wife?

You see, that's what this passage in Ephesians 5:22-33 is all about. My dear brothers and sisters, we must own this. We must go beyond the knowing to the doing. We've got to do more than just read this passage and assume, "There, we have the correct understanding: husband, love your wife; wife, love your husband. Hooray!" That's a sham. The truth has to be lived out. We just have to do it. It's got to be visible and practical in order for it to really be fulfilled in our lives.

Watchman Nee made an incredible statement when he said, "We have no right to say that we have come to know something until it has changed our lives dramatically." Isn't that true?

The 19th-century poet, Heinrich Heine, made another interesting statement when he said, "Show me your redeemed life, and I'll be inclined to believe in your redeemer." What a powerful charge. You see, the truth is, people cannot see into our minds, but they can see how we live our lives—especially our marriages.

It's not enough for us to go about and say, "I know Ephesians 5. It says that husbands love and wives submit." It has to be lived out, or it will never be seen by the world.

Nowhere is it more necessary for truth to be lived out for the world to see than in marriage, the most intimate union available to humankind. It is the most intimate relationship, and that's where people are really going to learn about Christianity.

If you think about it, Christianity is really all about relationship. It is truth applied to relationship. In Christianity, we see truth impacting the relationship between the Believer and God. Real Christianity involves truth that affects individuals, and also the interpersonal relationships those individuals enjoy.

If we don't see the effects of truth in our relationships, we have a short-circuited Christianity—a dead orthodoxy—in which we are righteous in Christ but living apart from His life. Do you see the problem with that?

One writer put it this way: "When God tells us about love, He doesn't give us a definition of love. He doesn't give us a methodology, technical advice, or principles. When God tells us about love, all He does is give us the Prince of Love and He says, 'Look at Jesus.' So that you can learn how Jesus loves so that you can do the same." I would add this: "As you trust Him by faith."

In the next lesson, beloved, we'll look at the way Jesus loves.

Lesson 1 Journal Questions

What gospel do others see when they look at your marriage? Do they see Jesus—the unconditional, sacrificial, infinite, eternal lover—flowing in and through our relationship as husband and wife?
When have you most experienced Christ's love through your spouse?
When have you experienced Christ loving your spouse through you?

Lesson 2 Reading

Christ Loved an Unworthy Bride

Jesus took His bride, the Church, very differently from the way men take a bride. When men choose a bride, they look for someone who's very smart, very pretty, very gentle, very submissive, and very loving. And who has a lot of money (just kidding).

But Jesus took a bride that was not wise, not beautiful, and not smart; He chose a bride that was quite foolish, ugly, dirty, and wretched. Now, if a guy chooses a bride with those characteristics, we'd think, "There's something wrong with the man! That's not the way men choose a bride."

Jesus, though, chose a bride who had nothing. Think about it: there was absolutely nothing in her that merited love, but He loved her anyway. And in the process, He transformed her. He purified her.

Can I put it this way? He took the equivalents of a bunch of little piglets that were wallowing in the muck of the world, and He transformed them into sheep that frolic in the pastures of the living God.

The Love of the Groom Transformed the Bride

God loves with a sacrificial love. He loves with an unconditional love. He loves with an infinite love. He loves with an eternal love. And He loves with a purifying, transforming love that changes the beloved.

Jesus' great love for His bride, the Church, would not allow Him to leave her in her original state. Jesus would remove any sin, taint or stain that would hinder the glorious purity of His bride. He took whatever unworthiness was there, and He threw it as far as the east is from the west, never to bring it up again. He took everything that was dirty and filthy about us, and He cleansed us completely. He made us as white as snow.

That's the same kind of love that a husband is to have for his wife. He will seek to guard her and protect her, to lead her away from anything that's unwise, and direct her into righteousness.

Guys, the woman you have claimed as your bride is more than a cook and a housekeeper. She's more than a child trainer and an occasional sex partner. She is a gift from the hand of the living God Himself. What an incredible thing!

I hope as you walk in intimate relationship with Him that you will learn to release the dynamic love of Christ toward your wife. That incredible love is going to have a transforming, purifying effect on her, just as Jesus' love had a purifying and transforming effect on us on the day we embraced Him by faith as our Savior.

My prayer is that we enter into an understanding of the dynamic of the power of the love of God. I want us to meditate on His love and move away from the fear inspired by the Old Covenant. The New Covenant offers a brand new and far more superior motive. It says, "If you love me, you'll keep my commandments." Under the New Covenant, it is the *love* of God that transforms our lives and leads us into holiness—not the *fear* of God.

Paul said that the love of God compelled him and led him to serve people. Men, what an incredible thing, that this supernatural love has been placed in you. As you love your bride, I believe that love will progressively transform her, as she receives it and experiences it for herself.

Craig Glickman, author of *Solomon's Song of Love*, expressed his thoughts about romantic love. He said, do you ever wonder why spring has always been the season for lovers, the background of romantic literature in every century of man's existence? Authors always write about spring when they write about love and the Bible's no different. Song of Solomon talks about springtime as the season when the couple went out together and experienced love. Everything is fresh in the spring, new life flows through the world, and happiness and colors triumph over winter's boring gray. Whenever a couple is in love, it is spring for them. Their lives are fresh, and everything in life has a new perspective. What was black and white is now in color; what was dark is now light.

Then Glickman shared a memory of his from high school saying, it would often happen that one who was formerly a rather ordinary girl would suddenly become noticeably attractive almost overnight. Glickman and the other members of the "girl watchers' brigade" would ask themselves why they had never noticed her before. The answer was simple: they hadn't seen this brand new version. She had fallen in love, and it had transformed her appearance. She was now happier, better dressed, and a much more lovely person. Too late for any of them, let the lesson remain, new life is found when there is new love.

Guys, your love will transform your bride. Your love will allow her to become the kind of woman she never could have become without you, as she rests in you, her safe harbor in this very wicked world, given to her by the very hand of the living God. Love her with a purifying, transforming love.

In lesson 3, we'll discover what it means to love with a binding love.

Lesson 2 Journal Questions

How has the sacrificial, unconditional, infinite, eternal love of God transformed you? How does
it feel to know that you are loved that way?
Women: In what ways has the love of Christ through your husband transformed you?
Men: How can you show the dynamic love of Christ to your wife in a new way this week?

Lesson 3 Reading

A Binding Love

Husbands are to love their wives with a "binding love." Ephesians 5:28-31 (NASB) describes this binding kind of love this way:

So husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are parts of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

A "binding love" is twofold. The first aspect is a *oneness* or *union*, the second aspect is *permanence*.

Binding Love Means Oneness

Husbands are called to love their wives as their own bodies. When your body is hungry, you feed it. When it's thirsty, you drink. When it's tired, you sleep. And when your body is dirty, hopefully, you wash it! You care for your body because it's *your* body.

So it is with your wife. You love your wife, guys, because she is your body. That's how "one" you have become with her. This truth is stated very clearly in Genesis 2:24 when it tells us, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (NASB). The word for "joined" is proskollao, which means to glue together.

In God's economy, then, the formula is 1+1=1. This union, of course, is only accomplished by Jesus in you. What we then have is 1+1+1=1. That's why Paul says in Ephesians 5:28 that if you love your wife, guys, you're actually loving yourself. That's how united you are with her.

Guys, if you tear your wife down all the time, if you are negative and critical of her, you are actually tearing yourself down. If you're using and abusing her, you're abusing yourself. It's that simple. You're destroying your own union. You're doing it to yourself and you have no one to blame but yourself.

Ephesians 5 states that a husband is as one with his wife as Jesus is with His Church. And how does Jesus treat His Church? Verses 29 and 30 say, "for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are parts of His body" (NASB). The Holy Spirit couldn't have made it any clearer. You, husband, are as one with your wife as Jesus is with His Church.

Jesus is the head of His body, which is the Church. That's us! As His body, we are intimately connected with Him. What happens if you sever a head from a body? There's no more life! We are that united with Him.

One of the most neglected verses in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 6:17, which says, "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (NASB). I must tell you, this concept of union is one that I see the Church really struggling with. The fall has so programmed our minds with independence and selfishness that we have a real tough time coming to grips with union. Please don't dare let union with Christ be neglected in your life.

We are in a union with Christ, and yet we are two different persons. Romans 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit" (NASB). How many spirits are referred to in this verse? Two—ours and the Holy Spirit. And yet, 1 Corinthians 6:17 says that we are one spirit. So you have two spirits unionized as one, but they remain separate. We didn't become Jesus, and Jesus didn't become us; we entered into a union. Does this remind you of the marriage union?

This truth has some incredible ramifications for us. It means that all we have now belongs to whom? To Jesus! That includes all our shame, all our guilt, all our sin, all our weakness, and all our failures—it all belongs to Him.

But it also means that all He has now belongs to whom? To us! We have His righteousness, so how righteous are we? We are as righteous as Jesus because He gave us His righteousness. Do we have room to boast? No, we don't boast, because He did it all. We have His peace, and we have His joy.

In fact, 2 Peter 1:4 tells us that all believers have "become partakers of the divine nature" (NASB). Did you become God? No, but you came into union with God in a way that boggles the mind. It's incredible. And this is the same kind of love with which a husband is to love his wife.

This means that when Jesus provides for us—which He always does—He's actually providing for Himself. Think about it. When He provides for us, He is providing for His own body, since we are one with Him. To not provide for His Church would be to not provide for Himself. Do you see that? Do you really see it? That's how one we are with Him.

Listen, friends, because you are one with Him, God is not against you. It's a shame that the Church is often mistreated from the pulpit by insecure men who beat the flock up in order to control them rather than teach them who they are in Christ so they can stand on their own two feet. God is for you. That's how one you are with Him.

But let's not stop with just thinking about the work of Christ to love His Church. Let's allow the work of Christ to change our lives.

Men, let's apply what we've just learned in the context of our oneness with our spouse. Husbands, you should diligently pursue doing for your bride, because when you do for her, you're actually doing for yourself. Isn't that incredible?

So when she needs a listening ear, what should you do? Listen! Really, you're actually doing it for yourself, because you're one with her. If she needs a hug, what should you do? Hug her, because she's one with you! And if you fail to do for her, you're failing to do so for yourself. That's how one you are with her.

You are two separate persons, and yet you comprise a union. The husband doesn't become the wife, and the wife doesn't become the husband. Everything that the husband owned now belongs to her, and everything that belonged to the wife now belongs to him.

Oh, how I pray that we would understand oneness—oneness with God, and how much He wants to fill us and meet our needs so that oneness can spill over into our marital union and so that the world can see Christ. In fact, oneness should spill over into all of our relationships in the Church, because as Ephesians 4:4 tells us, "*There is one body and one Spirit*" (NASB). It's time to stop letting petty doctrinal differences separate us when Jesus has made us one. The one rallying, binding theme between believers is always Jesus.

Binding Love Means Permanence

The second aspect of "binding love" is the idea of permanence. *Proskollao* means to glue together. So I ask you: when we glue a china dish back together, are we thinking, "Now I can break it again"? No, that would be dumb.

God united Himself to you, beloved, with the expressed purpose of never ever again separating Himself from you. John 10:28 says, "No one will snatch them out of My hand" (NASB). Philippians 1:6 tells us, "He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus" (NASB). And Ephesians 4:30 says, "You were sealed for the day of redemption" (NASB).

If we understand the whole idea of marriage as a picture of Christ's relationship with His Church, we wouldn't see as many people get wrapped up with the fear of losing their salvation.

When God joins a couple, He says, "Let no man ever separate." So why would we think we could lose our salvation when marriage illustrates our relationship with God? That's why God says, "I hate divorce." That's why God said that what He's joined together, man is to never separate—because when the world looks at divorce, it sees a tainted view of Jesus' relationship with the Church.

The next time someone argues with you about the eternal security of the believer, point out this truth to him. God hates divorce on any terms for any reason. There are no qualifiers in

Malachi 2:16—"For I hate divorce,' says the Lord, the God of Israel..." (NASB). But He allows divorce—and He forgives it—just like He allows and forgives all sin. God loves the divorced person and God forgives the divorced one. I'll tell you, the Church has done a terrible job of communicating that He loves those who divorce—but His love for the people involved doesn't change the fact that He hates divorce itself.

The application is very clear: just as God never separates Himself from us, when a husband and wife join together, they should never separate.

The idea of a binding love is a love of permanence. It's one plus one becoming one. When a couple divorces, they are not two ones again; they are two halves of a union. That's why divorce is so devastating. A person can carry the pain and the trauma for years, sometimes even to the grave. These folks need to receive the healing of Jesus Christ.

Binding love is a love of permanence, and there's no greater example than the book of Hosea—and we'll take a look at that in the next lesson.

Lesson 3 Journal Questions

Describe how it feels to know that you belong to Jesus and how that means that all you have
now belongs to Him too; your shame, guilt, sin, your weakness, and failures. Do you find
freedom in knowing this or do you struggle to believe it to be true?
Do you experience "binding love" in your marriage? Do you feel like you are one with you
spouse? Do you feel secure in the permanence of your marriage? If not, how would you
relationship with your spouse need to change for you to experience it?
Does the truth about divorce, as outlined in this chapter, differ from what you've been taught
or believed? What stood out most to you in today's reading about how God sees divorce?

Lesson 4 Reading

A Binding Love: The Story of Hosea and Gomer

God told Hosea to marry a woman named Gomer. Even though Gomer played the harlot and the adulteress, God had that man, Hosea, continue to love her.

Hosea even gave food and money to a man with whom she was living, so that he could care for her. That's some kind of love! In the end, life in the fast lane took its toll on Gomer, and she became an old, unclean woman who had been used, abused, and cast out onto the streets, with no one to take her in. Her only recourse was to sell herself into slavery and hope for the best—that some benevolent owner would buy her; otherwise, she would soon die on the streets. Enter Hosea, her husband.

Let's own the dynamic of what's happening here because these are not just printed words on a page, friends; this was real life. Here was a man whose wife had continued to repeatedly commit adultery against him and had spurned his love. Own Hosea's horror and pain as he saw his wife put up on the auction block to have her clothes stripped off in the manner that slaves were displayed for sale. Feel the anger in his heart and the hurt and the agony as his wife was shamed publicly in the destitution of her sin. Own it, as all the rest of the buyers mocked and laughed.

Surely there were some who said, "You're going to have to pay *us* to take her." Can you imagine what went on in Gomer's mind when her eyes looked up from her shame and saw Hosea? "Why is he here? After all these years, has the old fool come to mock me?"

And then, can you imagine her horror as he began to bid for her? "Oh, so this is what he's going to do; he's going to buy me for himself. Why? To torture me for the rest of my pitiful life? Oh God, maybe he'll just kill me and it'll be a welcome relief."

Picture Gomer, lost so deeply in her own world that she didn't even notice that the bidding was over. It hadn't taken long; there weren't many bidders and the price was cheap. She was brought out of her thoughts and into reality only when Hosea took the platform to take possession of his wife. But as she looked at him, she didn't see vengeance; she saw compassion and forgiveness. And as she moved from his eyes down his body, she saw in his hands not a whip, but his own cloak, to reach out and to clothe her and to cover her shame.

As he led her off the platform, he said to her, "You shall no longer play the harlot. You shall be my bride and I shall be a husband to you." Now that's permanent love. That's binding love, men. The way Hosea loved Gomer is how we're to love our wives.

God in His Word has allowed divorce, but that's not His ideal, not even for adultery. He allows it, but only because of the hard heart of man that finds it so very difficult to love.

In Ephesians 5:32-33, Paul says, "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, as for you individually, each husband is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband" (NASB). It's so hard to come to grips with the truth that our marriages can picture the relationship between Christ and His Church. In verse 33, the Holy Spirit instantly brings the subject back to our responsibility and our roles.

Look at how Paul ends the passage: "Nevertheless..." Paul admonishes that though it's right to be focused on Jesus here, we nevertheless need to move on from that focus and apply the truth of the passage to our lives, and to our marriage. "As for you individually, each husband is to love his own wife the same as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

It's difficult to do! We're fighting the flesh here and releasing the Spirit of God in our lives.

In our final lesson, we'll be looking at how the eternal, infinite love we've been learning about is impossible for us to pull off. And while that sounds like bad news, the truth is, knowing that we are so utterly incapable is the best news of all!

Lesson 4 Journal Questions

Can you imagine what went on in Gomer's mind when her eyes looked up from her shame
and saw Hosea? What feelings stirred in you as you read their story?
Describe a time in your marriage where you most experienced the "binding love" we've been
talking about with your spouse.
taiking about with your spouse.
Throughout your walk with God, when have you most experienced His "binding love"—His unconditional, infinite, eternal love.

Lesson 5 Reading

Eternal, Infinite Love is Impossible

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

Why is it so important that we begin to understand this and let the text speak to us, with all its incredible charge and power? The reason, beloved, is that we can fool ourselves into thinking that we can actually pull this off. You see, we are to love unconditionally. And we can do that sometimes, can't we? We are also to love sacrificially—and we can do that sometimes, too.

But when you and I are living the reality of this charge to love with an infinite, eternal love, only then do we begin to realize the utter impossibility of fulfilling Ephesians 5:25. We realize our inability. And, beloved, it drives us to Jesus, because the only one who can love like Jesus, is Jesus.

If we try to love like Him, we are in essence trying to be like God. Tell me, where have you read about that before? In Genesis 3, where Adam in his own resources and efforts tried to become like God and sinned. And the temptation to be like God continues today.

I ask people who come to me for help when they're frustrated and bitter in their Christian life: "Do you live the Christian life?" And 90 percent of the time, do you know the answer I get? "I try." That's why the Christian life isn't working for them. We can't live the Christian life. The only one who's ever lived the Christian life is Jesus Christ.

A few years ago, there was an organization that gained popularity called *Promise Keepers*, which is a wonderful ministry in a lot of ways—calling men to be men. It's calling men to come out of that little tortoiseshell, to not be distant workaholics and emotional machines at home. It calls them to be real and to be human beings, and that's a good thing to do. I've attended some Promise Keepers events, and I've worked with men who have returned from those same events.

The meetings can be a colossal time—a motivational, encouraging experience. There are a lot of vows made there, but the living out of a vow involves a lot of self-discipline and self-determination. Some of the men came back from those events and burned themselves out. They made the vow, the promise, to love their wife like Jesus loves the Church, and then they came home and tried—but found they couldn't do it.

The quickest case of burnout I saw was six weeks after a conference. To their credit, the conference in Washington, D.C. sent a letter home to all the men in attendance that they were to open three days later. The letter stated to the attendees that they had made some

wonderful promises, but to please understand that they would not be able to keep even one of them without the Lord Jesus Christ.

The concern I have, though, is this: that should not be tacked on in a letter; it needs to be the supreme message. You can't get 50,000 men together in a stadium singing praises to God without having it affect your life, or at least affect you emotionally. But we know that emotions go up and down. We need something more than that, which is why God established this incredible thing called the New Covenant.

Many theologians over the years have called it different things. Hudson Taylor, the great missionary to China, called it "The Exchanged Life." A.W. Tozer called it "The Deeper Life." Andrew Murray called it "The Higher Life." I just love what the Scriptures call it: "The Christ Life." Jesus in you, allowing you to do what you could not do on your own.

My dear people, I have gone back and listened to old recordings of my early messages on this passage, in which I taught that a husband should love his wife sacrificially and unconditionally. I taught, "Try to love her with an infinite, eternal love," not even realizing what I was saying.

I believe that one of the reasons God put man and woman together is to drive us to "The Christ Life" in us. One of the things that I've wanted supremely in my life was to love my wife. However, I found that I just couldn't do it! Oh, I could do it when she didn't do it the way I thought she ought to do it.

Please understand, my heart was to love her. But I found myself failing all the time until I began to understand Christ in me. The only way to begin to love your wife is to first admit that you can't love her because that recognition will drive you to Jesus.

Do you know something, beloved? Our only charge in the New Covenant is to abide. Abide; that's the supreme goal. When we abide in Him, He will be living through us. And that's when everything changes.

Lesson 5 Journal Questions

In order to love with an infinite, eternal love, we must first realize the utter impossibility of it
The only one who can love like Jesus, is Jesus—does this truth evoke freedom or fear in you?
What would it mean to stop trying, and completely trust God with loving your spouse?
Ask God to show you if there are any areas in your marriage where you have been "trying to
love your spouse instead of abiding in Him to do the loving. Sit quietly for a moment and
journal what comes to your mind.
journal what comes to your mind.
What would your relationship look like if Jesus was loving your spouse? Do you think you
relationship would change? How?
Ask God to show you ways He wants to love your spouse—make a list.
Ask God to show you ways the wants to love your spouse. Thake a list.