

I thoroughly enjoy many of the new worship songs that we sing, but I also enjoy the old hymns of the faith as well. One of my favorites is In The Garden by C. Austin Miles. It reminds me of the opportunity we all have to walk with the Lord in spiritual intimacy. It also reminds me of what it must have been like in the beginning when Adam and Eve walked with God in the Garden. What a great time that must have been as they experienced spiritual oneness with the Lord together.

In our previous lesson we noticed in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that God is concerned about the whole person: body, soul, and spirit; the same is true in our marriages. Every part that goes into making us complete needs our attention. In the past two lessons we have considered the development of physical and emotional oneness in marriage, in this lesson we turn our attention to the development of spiritual oneness. There are three questions I want to address: What is it? What happened to it? How do we get it?

I. What is it?

As humans we are both material and immaterial beings. We have a body but we are more than that. We also have a soul and spirit. The soul is the seat of our emotions. It enables us to think, feel, and act. The spirit is that part of us that enables us to communicate with God. So what does it mean in our marriages? It simply refers to the ability of a husband and wife to relate to God intimately and meaningfully together. According to Genesis 1 the purpose of this is that we might reflect God's image as a couple, raise children that reflect God's image, and reign over our environment.

Wouldn't it be great if that were true in the vast majority of marriages today? It should be and can be. Why is it then that we have so much trouble?

II. What happened to it?

What happened to that which God intended for us to have? Sin entered the scene. We studied this in the previous lesson in Genesis 3. Two immediate consequences of sin were: (1) the fellowship of Adam and Eve as husband

and wife was broken, verse 7, they saw that they were naked and covered themselves from one another. (2) Their fellowship with God was broken, verse 8, they hid themselves from Him. Obviously, these two results deeply affected the intent of spiritual oneness.

We were meant to be one physically, emotionally, and spiritually, but now we fight with each other and hide from each other. We were meant to raise children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord so that they will reflect the image of God, but starting in Genesis 4 Cain rose up and killed his brother Abel and there has been family strife since. We were meant to reign over our circumstances together but in Genesis 3:17-19 we now toil in life. Our circumstances reign over us.

It is extremely important to recognize this because the problem's which exist in marriages today are more than simply physical and emotional, they are also spiritual in nature.

Personally, I think the reason so many marriages are failing is because we have not recognized this. We are involved in a spiritual warfare with Satan and he wants to destroy marriages. Marriage is God's original institution upon which everything else stands or falls. Think about how important marriage is to the raising of children and the stability of society. Today, many seem to be working against its success, but according to Ephesians 6:12 we were not fighting against flesh and blood but against wicked principalities and powers. As tragic, destructive, and intense as this warfare has been God injected a ray of hope which tells us that even today while we are still affected by sin there can be a development of spiritual oneness in the marriage.

See Genesis 3:15...

Who is that seed?

See Galatians 3:16 (Also Galatians 4:4 and Hebrews 2:14-17)

Jesus Christ is the promised seed and in Him there is hope for our marriages to overcome the influence of Satan and free our marriages from the bondage we have gotten them into.

III. What can we do?

So where do you and I start? How do we develop spiritual oneness in our marriages?

First and this has to be the starting place. We need to have a personal relationship with Christ (John 3:16). Why? According to Ephesians 2:1-3 we were spiritually dead, but when we receive Christ as Savior we are made spiritually alive (Verses 5-6), and the channel of communication with God opened up so that we can walk and talk together with God. If you have never asked Christ to be your Savior now is the time. Admit you are a sinner. Believe Jesus died for your sin. Call upon Jesus to save you from your sin.

Second, and this should make all the sense in the world to you, we must walk in the spirit and not the flesh. See Galatians 3:3...

Spiritual oneness in marriage cannot be accomplished in our strength. The evidence of this is all around and in our own marriages. And so, to think we can make it happen is foolishness. The works of the flesh are described in Galatians 5:19-21...

Sadly, that describes a lot of marriages. What we want and need is the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-25...

As couples we must yield the control of our marriages to the Spirit of God so that we function and relate by His power and wisdom.

Now, in some cases both husband and wife are not spiritually alive, they are not both Christians. That does not mean there is no hope for such a marriage. Your relationship with the Lord can still have a significant impact. See 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 and 1 Peter 3:12...

So the message is don't give up. Nurture your spiritual life. You never know how God will use you and when.

Third, there are some spiritual commitments that must be made in every marriage if we are going to reflect God's image, raise children to reflect God's image, and reign over our circumstances in spiritual oneness.

1. Commitment to a Covenant Relationship.

A covenant is an agreement or promise between two or more people. There must be a mutual commitment to staying together. Even though there are over one million divorces every year in our country we still cannot approach marriage with our fingers crossed. We should never go into marriage with divorce as an option. Divorce should be extremely rare among Christians. Marriage must be established as a spiritual covenant with God and one another.

Remember these vows: In the name of God, I take you to be my (wife or husband) to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until death us do part. This is my solemn vow.

The importance of that vow is that it brings God into the marriage. He becomes part of the promise we make to one another. That's exactly as it should be. In Genesis 2:22 God brought Eve to Adam. In 2:23 Adam accepted her with the words, "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." The result in verse 25 was that they became one flesh. God does not take that lightly and neither should we.

See Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:3-11...

The Pharisees had come to Jesus hoping to drag Him into the stormy controversy surrounding divorce. There were many schools of thought then just like today. Jesus ignored the bickering and focused on Scripture as the only authority. He went back to Genesis "*from the beginning*", and pointed out three important facts: (1) God Himself has joined husband and wife together. (2) From God's viewpoint marriage is indissoluble. (3) God will hold accountable any individual who tries to separate what God has joined.

One example – Malachi 2:14-16...

God is a witness to the marriage. You cannot break up the marriage and say you were led by the Spirit. God hates divorce. God holds accountable those who cause such to happen.

The commitment to stay together is a spiritual covenant with God. God does not take it lightly and neither should we. Do you have this in your marriage? If not then you need to because aside from salvation, it is an essential foundation upon which spiritual oneness is developed. Get with your partner,

talk about your marriage, then go before God and renew your vows to one another.

2. Commitment to Creation Roles.

The creation order and roles of marriage are found throughout the Scriptures:

Genesis 2:21-23; 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Corinthians 11:3-12 all emphasize God's creation order and role in marriage. Ephesians 5:22-33 has the same emphasis with an explanation of the roles. There are two roles, one for the wife and one for the husband. Fulfillment of these roles is a spiritual responsibility.

Wives notice verses 22-24...

Husbands notice verses 25-27...

When wives submit as unto the Lord, and husbands love as Christ, then they are going to enjoy a spiritually dynamic relationship. Do you have that kind of commitment in your marriage? If not then confess your sins one to another. Seek God's cleansing and make the needed changes in the way you fulfill your God-given roles.

3. Commitment to each others needs.

God makes this a spiritual responsibility. Ephesians 5, as to the love of the husband in verse 25 and the respect of the wife in verse 32. God views this as something we owe to one another (1 Corinthians 7:3). Consequently, God holds us accountable. Failure on our part destroys spiritual oneness. 1 Peter 3:7 says that our prayers get hindered.

Do you have this kind of commitment in your marriage? If not, then again, there is a need to be honest with one another, to understand each other's needs, and to change where necessary.

Many in our society would say that if we are struggling in our marriage to just get out of it. However, look at what their advice has brought upon us. Many even in the religious world would say the same. Shame on them, they will answer to God. But, if you are tired of all that and you want to see

something better for your marriage – spiritual oneness, then make sure that these three commitments are present: A Covenant Commitment to one another before God. A Creation Commitment to your role as husband or wife. And a commitment to knowing and fulfilling each others needs. These will enable you to walk and talk together in your relationship with God.

Spiritual oneness in marriage is based upon our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, our being yielded to the Spirit and not to the flesh, and our keeping these primary spiritual commitments.

May this be the experience of all our marriages.