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**Marriage by Covenant
Genesis 15**

Why does God do anything and everything? For His glory!

Genesis 15:1-6 *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision: Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great. But Abram said, O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him. This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir. And he brought him outside and said, Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. Then he said to him, So shall your offspring be. And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

God gives Abram promises, not dependent on Abram's prior record. Abram chose to believe, solely on God's intention and ability to fulfill His Word.

Genesis 15:7-11 *And he said to him, I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess. But he said, O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it? He said to him, Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.*

Obedience always includes opposition. Promises usually are met with motivations not to keep those promises.

Genesis 15:12-16 *As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. Then the Lord said to Abram, Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. As for yourself, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*

Those who trust God at His Word will always be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, but as sojourners we have hope of our eventual return. By design, we are contrary to the culture we live in.

Genesis 15:17-19 *When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, To your offspring I give this and, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.*

God initiates His covenant promises

Contract is self-protective - insuring the other party's responsibility

Covenant is protective of the other party - insuring our own responsibility

Ephesians 5:15-21 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

Submission to each other is evidence of our submission to Jesus

Genesis 3:16 *To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.*

Why is submission hard - because it is counter-cultural, and counter-intuitive. Sinful rebellion resulted in the wife wanting to be in charge, submitting to no one but herself.

Genesis 3:17-19 *Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it, cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.*

Adam had failed as a leader, and brought the curse on the earth and all mankind.

How then do we “undo the curse?”

By returning to joyful, trusting submission

Ephesians 5:22-24 *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

Ephesians 5:25-33 *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 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. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

Husbands lead sacrificially

Husbands take the initiative - they pursue their wives

Husbands take responsibility for the one-flesh, holding fast to his wife

But why are wives told to “respect” and the husbands to “love”?

Because each gender naturally speaks a different language

Women naturally know how to give love. Women naturally nurture others

This may be why God had the women give birth

Women crave love - they have several kinds of “love languages”

(Deb’s is flowers...and get me out of town)

Men have primarily one love language - sex

It’s been said that women will give sex to get love, and men will give love to get sex

Men are not naturally driven by a quest for love as much as they are driven to be respected.

Some of us will do everything possible to force people to respect us

Some of us will feel like they cannot successfully gain respect, so they give up and don’t try to do anything

Like it’s safer to not try than to fail

A woman can absolutely love her husband while not respecting him

To respect him because of the role God has given him takes great faith

This is why a woman might bad mouth her husband to her girlfriends

And yet still love him

While a man can respect his wife but not actually love her

Because respect is earned by the other person's performance, but love requires action and sacrifice

Men don't usually bad mouth their wives to his buddies
Until the love has faded and he feels no respect from her
And then, at the dissolution of that relationship the man will think nothing good of her

So Paul urges the church to be counter-cultural, even contrary to the Adam's curse

Women are called to give respect
Men are called to give and respect love

Respect smacks of significance

Even sex with one's wife tells the husband he is significant, because she is willing to share that most intimate part of herself with him

And love smacks of security

And in marriage, love is dependent on the security that comes from the wife knowing with confidence that she is the only object of her husband's affections, interests and pursuits

Love demands action
Even more so than men, women want to be pursued

Our culture tells us that love is a feeling; an emotion

Therefore, if the feeling, the emotion is lost, then the relationship is no longer serves its purpose, therefore no longer necessary

But love is not limited to feeling or emotion - love is a verb.
Love is something you do.

So what does this have to do with us?

God wired us this way

And Adam and Eve screwed it up
He caved and she took over
In doing so, both rebelled against God

Wives want to be in charge, because they don't really respect their husbands
They want the right things to happen, so they take over

Husbands want to sit on the couch and not be active, intentional leaders and pursuers of their wives, because they don't love their wives enough to lead them in Jesus toward Jesus

But we as the redeemed, and by the Holy Spirit we are called to be different, counter-cultural, evidencing the fact that in Jesus the curse has been broken in us

We cannot be gospel people and ignore our calling to our spouses in our marriages

Marriage, covenanted marriage is the clearest example we have of the gospel

Jesus is our husband. He has pursued us. He has made the marriage happen by dying for us. He is the one who leads us.

Our marriages are the most intimate human relationship we can have
Because it mirrors the relationship of Jesus to His Church

Revelation 19:6-8 *then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure - for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

Therefore, Jesus cares about this human relationship more than any other

Hebrews 13:1-6 *Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body. Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?*

God wants our marriages to reflect well of Him.

God wants to use our marriages to teach us the gospel.