

**GRACE BIBLE CHURCH**  
**Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries**

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.**  
**The Tree of Life from the week ending 04/22/07**  
**What it means to be initiated into the secret of the mystery. Part 57.**  
**The mystery of the Christian Marriage. Part 2.**

**W**e have noted that it is through Christian marriage that the great mystery is unfolding and revealed, and God is presenting a devastating blow to Satan's defense. Remember there are three witnesses being called to the stand before the Supreme Court of heaven and the angelic conflict: First, there is the star witness, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is called the faithful and true witness (Rev 3:14). Secondly, there are the individual witnesses, born-again believers who fulfill the spiritual life and glorify God (Act 1:8). Thirdly, there's the corporate witness of Christian marriage where two believers, a man and a woman, fulfill the three laws of marriage (Eph 4:31-5:33). The first law - the husband's love for the wife (Eph 5:25). The second law - the respect of the woman to the man (Eph 5:22). The third law - forgiveness (Eph 4:32). When these three laws are fulfilled, that is a corporate witness against Satan. The third witness, according to the jurisprudence system of God, is accepted by God, though not necessarily needed. Deu 19:15 tells us God's divine viewpoint concerning witnesses in a court case, *"A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed."*

The laws of evidence demand investigation of each accusation. Legitimate evidence is based on two or three witnesses being interrogated independently, and agreeing to their testimony. This principle was also brought out when our Lord was arraigned before the Sanhedrin on the charge of blasphemy. Mat 26:59-60, *"Now the chief priests and the whole council [entire Sanhedrin] kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put him to death; And they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward."* They couldn't get two witnesses to agree on one of the accusations. They had to have at least two who saw what they had accused him of. Mat 26:60-66, *And they did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward And [they] said, 'This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'* And the High Priest stood up and said to him, *'Do you make no answer? What is it that these men are testifying against you?'* But Jesus kept silent. And the High Priest said to him, *'I charge you under oath by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.'* Jesus said to him, *'You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, from now on you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'* Then the High Priest tore his robes, saying, *'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; What do you think?'* They answered and said, *'He is deserving of death!'*

Even if one person rose up against another in Israel and accused someone of murder, it was not to be received as evidence (Num 35:30). Our Lord also taught this principle to the Jews concerning two individuals who are having a dispute between them. Mat 18:16 *"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed."* Paul taught this same principle to the Corinthian church also in 2Co 13:1 *"This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses."* Paul also mentioned the protection that the pastor-teacher is to receive in 1Ti 5:19 *"Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses."* The Bible teaches that all that is needed are two witnesses according to the divine standards of jurisprudence. It is because of this reason that marriage between believers can become a part of the major witnesses against Satan and the fallen angels. So, marriage for the Church-age becomes a place of testing.

The Bible limits the reasons for dissolving a marriage and even fewer reasons for the right of

remarriage. First, we note that divorce was permitted under the Mosaic Law. Secondly, pre-salvation marriage, divorce, and remarriage is not an issue (Isa 44:22, 43:25). Thirdly, marriage is dissolved by the death of a spouse. Adultery is a legitimate basis for divorce and remarriage by the innocent party. If the guilty party remarries that is adultery, and causes the second spouse to be living in adultery. Desertion is a legitimate basis for divorce and remarriage.

1Co 7:15 *“But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away.”* If you are a man with a wife who is not a believer, but who still wants to live with you, you are to stay in that marriage, and the same goes for the woman, 1Co 7:13-15, *“And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.”* If the unbelieving spouse walks out, you are free to let him or her go. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can. In cases where divorce is legal and gives the right of remarriage, two things must be remembered: First, it is always the innocent victim in the adultery case or desertion case who has the right of remarriage, not the guilty person. Secondly, if the guilty person remarries, he or she is living in adultery. However, there is a solution to that as well.

The Scripture is silent on other reasons for divorce such as brutality, drunkenness, drug addiction, sexual molestation especially of children, violence, insanity, criminality, suicidal tendencies. The Bible is silent because the right of divorce in these cases has no right of remarriage; the exception is if the guilty party remarries or dies. Any time the person is in a life-threatening situation they have the right of divorce. Legitimate Biblical divorce is analogous to the death of one partner in the marriage. This category gives the surviving mate the right of remarriage (Rom 7:1-4; 1Co 7:39). However, if you have sinned, and have been the guilty party, remember that any sin or failure regarding marriage or divorce on your part before you became a believer was blotted out at the moment of salvation (Isa 43:25; Psa 103:12; 1Jo 1:7). Every sin including those of marriage, divorce, and remarriage were all judged on the cross by God the Father. If you are now divorced and remarried contrary to Biblical mandate, do not try to resolve the problem no matter how many sins and failures have gone into your marriage. Do not seek divorce as your first option; don't use this doctrine as an excuse to get out of the marriage. Two wrongs do not make a right. Under many circumstances divorce becomes a second wrong. Carry on with your Christian life inside the PPOG. If you are living in adultery in your marital status, do not change your status quo; you cannot rectify past failure in marriage and divorce by leaving your present spouse in a second, third, or fourth marriage and go back to a former spouse. The solution to living in an adulterous marriage is the grace of God, which begins with rebound and logistical grace, and continues through spiritual growth and the attainment of spiritual adulthood. Remain as you are until the Bible clarifies your present status from the standpoint of Bible doctrine and your next move from the standpoint of Bible doctrine. If you are still alive after any failure in the sphere of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, then remember that God still has a purpose for your life - to glorify Him. Finding God's purpose requires learning Bible doctrine, not jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Remember these principles: 1) People are no better in marriage than they are as people. 2) People who are losers in single status are losers in marriage. 3) People who are winners in single status are winners in marriage. 4) It takes two winners to make a successful marriage, because each is responsible for his own decisions and *modus operandi*. 5) A good marriage is not designed for happiness, but for virtue. Virtue in marriage means happiness in marriage. 6) Marriage is not designed for happiness, because happiness comes from sharing the perfect happiness of God (+H). 7) Marriage is not designed for happiness, but for winners, because winners have both understanding and use of the problem-solving devices. Before marriage you should also consider the compatibility checklist. There must be spiritual compatibility: Understanding that your partner is a believer, and agreement as to what constitutes the Christian way of life, and general compatibility in the field of Bible doctrine. This includes understanding and agreement as to your local church preference. You must have soul compatibility, similar priorities in life. Physical compatibility. Economic compatibility, agreement on how money is

going to be administered. There should be a pre-marital agreement so a man cannot touch a woman's money after marriage. There should be agreement on whether or not the wife should work. Family compatibility, agreement on the desirability of children. There should be agreement on the rearing and training of children. Stability compatibility. Avoid marriage where there is substance dependence such as alcohol or drugs, a compulsive gambler, or a neurotic and emotional person.

The battle in this relationship is not really between husband and wife. Marriage is a place of testing, but if husbands and wives apply the standards of the three laws of marriage the testing is passed. Then marriage becomes a place of the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ and phenomenal contentment. Marriage was not designed for happiness. Doctrine in the soul is designed for happiness. Marriage is an arena and a forum for the expression of virtue. And as much as marriage becomes an expression of virtue, marriage becomes a wonderful experience for both parties. If they refuse the divine standards, the problem-solving devices for believers, they enter into bitterness, especially on the part of the man. Therefore, when the husband follows the prescription of loving his wife as Christ loved the Church, the wife feels safe and secure and can respond with respect towards her man. Now both parties of marriage fulfill the law of forgiveness and that marriage has the potential to become a corporate witness for the prosecution of Satan and his appeal trial. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and that does not involve bringing her past the dictates of her conscience in the Holy Spirit; that's arrogance. The false doctrine that says the wife should submit to her husband in anything is a false doctrine, and it is satanic through and through. The head of every man is Christ and the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and part Christ's love is not summoning the Church past the dictates of their conscience in the Holy Spirit. Let's take a look at the man's responsibility in the first law of marriage. Eph 5:25-29, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also 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, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also 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,”*

There are basically two directions in which God's love or virtue love should focus on: 1) Love toward God. 2) Love toward man. Love toward God is to be directed toward God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Love toward man can be directed toward others or toward self. Love toward others = Spiritual Autonomy (SA). Love toward self = Spiritual Self-Esteem (SSE). True Biblical love called *agape* is a virtue; it is not an emotion, not a feeling, but a virtue, character and integrity. In fact, *agape love* is the greatest virtue of all says 1Co 13:13 *“And now abides faith [faith-rest drill], hope [SSE and the resultant confidence about the future], and virtue-love, these three; but the greatest of these is virtue-love.”* This virtue-love (agape) is a system of thinking (1Co 13:5), which proceeds from the mind (Phi 2:2). Now, when love is directed toward God it serves as motivation in the spiritual life, 2Co 5:14 *For the love for Christ motivates us.* Personal love for God motivates the believer; it is a motivational virtue. When love is directed toward mankind then love is a functional virtue. We need the functional virtue of impersonal unconditional love to learn how to function in Christian marriage, and we need the motivational virtue of love toward God for personal motivation. Personal love for God gives the believer confidence toward God and courage toward man. Impersonal unconditional love gives the believer confidence on the one hand, and courage on the other.

However, not all love has virtue. A virtue is a particular moral quality regarded as good or meritorious. God's love (agape love) gives the believer virtue or graciousness and power. Personal love is only a virtue when it is directed toward God, or when it is rooted in God's love. Agape love is a certain type of love, a certain way to love. For example, when God's love is in view, agape love is a mental attitude love; it is a *way* in which God loves and a way in which we are to love. Agape love has virtue when it is the love of God or from God. Agape love has power, and is graceful as God's love, but agape love is not automatically the love of God. Let's look at some passages where agape love is used, but not as a reference to divine love or God's love. Joh 3:19 *“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men [agape'd - they loved] the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.”* God's light streamed into the world, but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God. In Joh 12:43 *“for they agape'd*

[they loved] *the approval of men rather than the approval of God.*” They cared more for human approval than for God's glory. So agape love, when it's personal, is only a virtue when it is directed toward God. Toward God, personal love will give you power and grace in your life. Agape love is only a virtue when it is the love of God. The point is that agape love is a *certain* way of loving, and it all has to do with thought, not feelings or emotions. When someone says they don't love someone anymore, they should be talking about phileo or personal love not agape love. Impersonal unconditional love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get; it's what you are expected to give, which is everything. Virtue-love is, above all, the gift of oneself. Love then becomes a major issue. Not love for people, but love for God first, and then impersonal unconditional agape love for all, especially for the man in Christian marriage. The man is to love his wife by giving her freedom, the freedom to respond and at times, even to react. Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking together in the same direction, for Christian marriage it is love toward God. When the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as one's own satisfaction or security, then the state of love exists. Under no other circumstances is a state of love present, regardless of the popular usage of the term. In Luk 10:25-27, *And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered and said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”* The word for love is *agapao* which refers to a mental attitude love based upon a maximum amount of doctrine resident in your soul. There has to be something in you that causes you to love God and that something is Bible doctrine. So the Lord said, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,”* The heart is the Greek word *kardia* which refers to the frame of reference, memory center, categorical doctrinal storage, conscience, momentum department or department of spiritual growth, the wisdom department or the launching pad, the subconscious mind. You are to love the Lord your God in these areas and from these areas. *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your soul,”* The word for soul is *psyche* and refers to: Self-consciousness (Act 20:10), volition (Act 3:23), emotion (Luk 12:19), conscience (Tit 1:15). You are to love the Lord your God in all these areas from your soul. *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your strength,”* The word for strength is *ischus* which means all your physical strength in the sense of you making the maximum effort to get to know God and His plan for your life. It means putting great exertion into getting to know and love God! *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind;”* The Greek word for mind is *dianoia* which refers to the left lobe of the soul and the place where you first perceive and understand knowledge. After you do that, you will be able to do the last part, *agape-love your neighbor as yourself* [SSE].” You cannot have impersonal love for all mankind until you first have personal love for God. You cannot have the functional virtue of impersonal unconditional love in Christian marriage until you first have personal love for God.

Love for God is extremely important in our lives, 1Co 16:22 *“If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha* [under a curse until the Lord comes back].” Look at 1Co 2:9 *but just as it is written, “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him.”* There is no love for God until there is a certain amount of metabolized doctrine, and that can only come when you accept God's priorities over your personal priorities. There is no real impersonal unconditional agape love toward people until there is first of all personal love toward God. 1Pe 1:8 *“Even though you have not seen Him, you love Him; in fact, though you do not see Him now but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with happiness inexpressible and full of glory.”* The phrase *full of glory* is a reference to the spiritually sustained believer who is reflecting the glory of God. This love then comes from believing the word of God and then falling in love with TLJC. Everything for the believer begins when there is love for God, and when there is love for God, it results in love for people. Personal love for God therefore is a virtuous love, and you must have virtuous love in order to make personal love succeed. The strength of personal love toward people comes from your personal love for God, and when people have no virtue they have no ability to love. So, virtue means graciousness and power. To love people personally demands more ability, character, integrity, grace and more power than anything in life. It demands doctrine, divine viewpoint. People are basically unstable, having wide emotional swings.

One day it's "I love you!" The next day it's "I can't stand you" (if not verbally, mentally). This is why this subject of virtue-love becomes so important. Unless you understand the importance of personal love toward God resulting in agape love or impersonal unconditional love for all mankind, you will never be a good lover, personally.

1Jo 4:16 says, *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* The more doctrine you learn the more you will realize how much God loves you. There is no reality in your life until it is reality from thinking or what is in the right lobe of the soul called the heart in the Bible. Otherwise your life is nothing more than emotion and instinct. Thinking is what separates humans from the animal kingdom. Thinking doctrine is what separates winner believers from the emotional apostates or the self-righteous legalists. So until you have divine viewpoint and metabolized doctrine in your soul you will have no capacity to love and no virtue, and the command for the Christian way of life is virtue first. It is not witnessing, serving, praying, or doing great things for God; it is virtue first. Virtue is the first objective. And remember that virtue is right thinking resulting in right action. Virtue means graciousness and power, and it requires thought. That's why 1Jo 4:16 says *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.* Not only do we learn, or come to know, but then we need to believe or metabolize that doctrine. What is it that we have come to know and have believed? *"the love [or the agape] which God has for us."* Agape is used here in the sense of virtue love and divine love. This is the love which God has from His own virtue or perfect righteousness. It is from His own perfect character, His own perfect integrity, from His own perfect virtue. This introduces the love that God used to solve our problems in Joh 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* God has virtue love or impersonal unconditional love from His own perfect righteousness. So John says *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us.* Everything begins with understanding the fact that God loves you. We don't start by loving God, God starts by loving us. We didn't find God, God found us, Joh 15:16 *"You did not choose Me, but I chose you,"*