# Home - Part 3

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Covenant Partnership

(Matthew 19:5-6)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. I’m so glad that you joined us for part three of our series entitled “Home”. If you’ve missed earlier weeks, we’ve been preparing and equipping you with the tools and the spiritual understanding to have homes and relationships that would honor God. Because seriously, it doesn’t matter where you look, there are homes that are struggling, relationships that just aren’t what they should be, and God wants something so much better for his Church. And so, we’re trying to help people prepare today for a godly marriage in the future, and we’re trying to equip those who are married and everyone else to have the kind of relationships that we know that God wants us to have.

Now, I wonder how many of you married somebody that you would say was totally 180 degrees different from you? And how many of you, when you were dating, didn’t see it quite that way? You saw the similarities and not the differences.

In my home, my wife Dana is different from me. I’m more of an introvert and she’s more extroverted. I am the thinker and she’s a feeler, but you know, it’s good that we’re different, because if we were the same, then one of us would be unnecessary, right? You know, the thing that I really love is how God uses our differences to enhance and strengthen our relationship, but on the other hand, the problem is that Satan also attempts to use our differences to divide us. And so today, I want to talk about a covenant partnership, because I believe this biblical truth will lay a strong foundation for our homes.

You see, family begins with a covenant partnership and maybe you’ve never heard this before, but when we enter into marriage saying those words, “Until death do us part”, what that really means is that from that moment forward, life is no longer about me, but life is about us together, serving and glorifying God. You could say it this way, your life has become a united partnership.

## 1. United Partnership

Now, before we get into the Word of God, I want to acknowledge that there are so many people that have experienced the pain of broken relationships. So, I want to be extremely sensitive, because I know that there are so many who never wanted that, who would’ve done anything for it not to happen, and others who would admit that they were at fault in so many ways. And so, I want you to understand that my purpose is not to condemn or cause any feelings of guilt for what’s happened in the past, but my goal is to build a foundation so that we can build homes that will not only last, but homes that will be God honoring and homes that will influence generations.

The problem I see in our culture today is that so many children are brought up and encouraged to go from relationship to relationship, practicing marriage and divorce, without realizing that they’re giving away a piece of their heart every step of the way. Today, so many people do married things before they get married and it’s very common that when people like each other or kind of love one another that they move in together, that they do what married people do. And so, this is your side and that’s my side, your toothbrush and my toothbrush, and they do married things.

Unfortunately, it’s all surface level, there’s no commitment, and so when faced with conflict and the feelings begin to subside, they just pack up their toothbrush and move on. They continue from one relationship to another, doing married things, just pretending, doing married things, and then when things get rough they do what divorced people do. You know, you split up, you move down the road, and you start over again. You see, our culture has trained the last two generations to pretend to be married and when it doesn’t work out to practice getting divorced.

And so, is it any wonder that so many homes are falling apart? The first time a marriage starts to struggle they fall back on what they’ve been practicing for so many years, because we did married things before we were married. And yet, none of us can change the past, so we’ve got to acknowledge what the Bible teaches us. And in Matthew chapter 19, Jesus quoted Genesis saying this in verse five:

“For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5).

Now this word “united” comes from a Greek word, “Kollao” and it means to glue or to stick. Therefore, when a man is “united to his wife” it means they’re completely joined as one; the two will be glued, stuck together as one flesh, united in Christ. And that’s why Jesus said in verse 6,

“So, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate." (Matthew 19:6).

And so, now it’s a united partnership, it’s no longer you and I, but it’s “we” forever. It’s no longer about what I want, but it’s about what’s best for us, and what’s best for our home. Yet the question arises, how in the world can we actually live this out with so much selfishness, so much divorce, and so much pain?

Well, today I want to start by giving you a foundational understanding of what marriage is. You see, so often people will say, “Well, marriage is just a piece of paper,” implying that marriage is a contract, it’s just something the judge would sign. And so, what we as the Church need to understand is that marriage is not a contract, but marriage is actually a binding covenant before a holy God.

## 2. A Binding Covenant

A binding covenant is very different from a contract. A covenant is built on trust and a contract is based on a lack of trust. A contract basically is a formal obligation to prove your faithfulness and if you’re not faithful then the one requesting the contract has a legal basis against you. One of the most common forms of a contract is for rental properties, because they don’t know the people that they’re renting to, and so they have a contract which states if you don’t pay, you don’t stay. And if you don’t keep up the apartment then you’ll lose your security deposit. And so, a contract is based on a lack of trust.

But a covenant is entirely different, because a covenant is based on a relationship of mutual trust and of commitment to that relationship. The Hebrew word translated as covenant is the word “beriyth” which means a cutting, a passing between pieces of flesh, and it is a compact, a union, a binding agreement; very literally it’s a blood covenant. You can see this illustrated in Genesis chapter 15, when the Lord said to Abraham,

“I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." But Abram said, "O Sovereign Lord, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" (Genesis 15:7-8).

Here, Abraham's question wasn’t a sign of unbelief, but a request for some form of symbol or token of assurance. He was confident that God would give him the promised son, but this land, this land was in the control of many pagan nations, and so he’s like, “Give me some sort of sign that my descendants will possess it.” And the Lord replied to him in verse 9,

"Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away. As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep…” (Genesis 15:9-12).

Verse 17 says, “When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land” (Genesis 15:17-18).

I like to think of this is Abram’s burning bush experience like Moses, but this is what’s described as "cutting a covenant." This most solemn of rituals involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The parties making the covenant would sacrifice the animals, dividing their bodies, and then both parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices declaring that if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals, giving real meaning to the words “Until death do we part”.

Now Abram's experience was a little different from the typical covenant, because he killed the animals, he laid them on the ground, but as the sun went down, he fell into a deep sleep. It was God alone who passed between the parts of the sacrifices, it was God alone who made the promises, and there were no conditions attached. It was a binding covenant of grace from the heart of our generous God much like in the New Testament when God made a New Covenant sending his Son Jesus, the Lamb of God, and shedding his blood on the cross.

At the Last Supper, Jesus foreshadowed this as he took the cup of grape juice, celebrating the Passover, gave thanks, and offered it to his disciples saying,

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28).

And so, today we’re not under the Old Covenant as Abram was, we’re under the New Covenant in Christ, and that’s what marriage is, it’s a binding covenant in Christ. That’s why we say those words, “From this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, I will be faithful to you as long as we both shall live, so help me God.” It’s a united partnership. It’s 100% committed. It’s about we and not me. It’s giving everything we’ve got until death do we part. It’s a binding covenant between two believers in mutual submission to Christ and one another.

## 3. Mutual Submission

Now, the moment I say submission I know there are some of you who will tense up, because this word has so often been misused and abused. But notice that I said mutual submission, this isn’t 50-50, this isn’t I’ll do my part if you do your part, this is 100% all the way in. You see, marriage is an illustration of what Christ has done for you, he gave his life and that’s what we do in the context of marriage.

When the Bible talks about marriage, the apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 5 actually begins stating the context of Christian marriage by saying that we should,

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

That’s where he begins. The literal translation of this verse is, “Submitting yourselves one to another in fear of God.” Our verse, translated “submit” means to subordinate reflexively, or to obey; of which Jesus said,

"If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

And so, as we submit to one another, that mutual submission, as we humble ourselves, loving one another as Christ loved us, in obedience to his command in John chapter 13,

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13:34).

And “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (1 John 3:16). And to that I would add, for our sisters, our spouses, and our sons and daughters.

Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (1 John 4:11). As the apostle Paul said, “Serving one another in love” (Galatians 5:13). A love which he described to the church at Corinth as being patient and kind, a love that doesn’t envy, it doesn’t boast, and it’s not proud, a love that’s not rude, self-seeking, or easily angered, a love that doesn’t keep a record of wrongs. You see, love doesn’t delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres, because love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).

And therefore, when the apostle wrote to the Philippians he said,

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit… have the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look… to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:1-4).

And so, if I excel in spiritual gifts, speaking God’s Word with power, and have faith that moves mountains, but don’t have love I’m nothing. No matter what I say, what I believe, or what I do, I’m bankrupt without love. But as Dana and I submit to one another in the fear of God, we actually complement one another, and we’re able to make the most of our skills, our spiritual gifts, and the passions that we bring into our relationship. As a matter of fact, I would never want to silence her or diminish her in any way, because I value her input, I need her discernment, and often find myself waiting, refusing to make a decision, until we have that unity of mutual submission.

And so, the first thing that Paul said was, “Submit to one another” and then in verse 22, he says,

“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (Ephesians 5:22-23).

And for those of us who are husbands the responsibility and the commitment to our wives just increased a hundredfold. Again, like I said, this verse has been abused a lot, it’s caused a lot of pain due to misinterpretation, but the word “submit” is actually a beautiful word. We see Jesus, the Son of God, modeling submission for us as he lay down his life for the church and now calls us to live surrendered and mutually submissive lives to one another. Paul continues saying in verse 24,

“Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:24).

As the church submits to Christ, as we submit to God, and as we submit to every authority, it’s a God honoring privilege to be able to submit to one another, with the wife submitting under the husband as he leads in the home. Now of course, a man can abuse that, he can act as a bully or a dictator, but Jesus would tell us that we don’t want to lord over our wives. In fact, the Bible tells us in Luke chapter 22, of a time when a dispute arose among the disciples as to which of them was the greatest, you know, who was second-in-command. And Jesus said to them in verse 25,

"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves” (Luke 22:24-27).

Jesus said, “You’re not to be like that, you’re not to lord over one another, but you’re to be like a child or the one who serves”. And so, as followers of Christ we’re to be submissive to one another, having the heart of Christ, our Servant Leader, who tells us in Ephesians chapter 5,

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

We’ve been called to lay down our lives for our wives. Therefore, our leadership in the home should reflect Christ and as servants of Christ we must have grace for one another, we need to have grace for one another, because the husband’s not always going to get it right, the wife may disagree, and he may make a decision that’s just plain wrong, but the family still falls under his leadership on decisions. He’s responsible, he’s accountable, and the wife honors God as she allows her husband to lead. But you know, I feel this is important to say, because leading doesn’t mean that you make all the decisions.

You see, leadership is where you set the tone and the direction, but it’s not a dictatorship. And so, it’s like when I’m leading the church I don’t make all the decisions, but I have people of whom I seek counsel, people who I bounce ideas off, and people whom I trust to make decisions. However, I do cast the vision for the church, I do set the tone for how we do things, and maybe you’ve noticed, but a lot of what we do comes from you in our catalyst meetings.

In the same way, in our homes the husbands set the spiritual tone as they come along side of their wives who contribute all day long in massive and amazing ways. The husband is the point man; the husband is leading the family, the husband is on the frontline, and they’re the first to give their lives. They lead with honor, with dignity, and by serving first. That’s a united partnership, a husband and wife in a binding covenant, mutually submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. That’s a beautiful picture of what God wants for our marriages, for our homes, and what God wants for you. As difficult as life can be sometimes, when we’re submitted to Christ, serving our families, and laying down our lives for one another, not only will our homes be transformed, but generations will be changed. As we come together in a covenant partnership we’ll be building a foundation for homes that will last, homes that will be God honoring, and that will influence generations.

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September 17, 2017

[www.cccemmitsburg.org](http://www.cccemmitsburg.org/)

Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, Preaching Library, and PC Study Bible.

Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.