

I had a short week this week (and a busy one). We had Nephew Daniel’s wedding on Friday in Toowoomba, and I was conducting it, so I had to prepare a message & be there for a practice on Thursday and whatnot...

Anyway, I realised I wasn’t going to have a whole lot of time to prepare a second message for today, so I came up with a cunning plan...

For today, we’re going to have a break from our series in Luke, and we’re going to use the Bible reading that Daniel and Jeanie chose, and we’re going to apply it to the topic of “Marriage”.

Some of our congregation are:

- married;
- contemplating marriage;
  
- been married for a very long time;
- just starting out in marriage.
  
- at a stage of transition:
  - Children are arriving;
  - Children have grown up and they’re now leaving the nest;
  
  - transitioning to retirement;
  - aging, and your husband or wife of many years has died...
  
- blessed to be in a marriage of great harmony and joy.

- might be hard work, and a lot of pain...

Some of you may be single, and always intend to be single. And that's OK too. In fact, the New Testament makes it sound that serving God in singleness, is perhaps a higher calling.

But regardless of where anyone is at, Colossians 3 has great Godly Wisdom, for when it comes to relationships of all kinds.

So, let's have that Bible Reading now.

Colossians 3:12-15.

So, let's talk about marriage.

It may surprise you, what I'm about to say, because I'm not generally known for my fashion-sense, (under-appreciated in that regard, I think...), but here comes my advice to you on marriage:

*“The secret to a successful marriage, is all about the wardrobe. If you're wearing the right thing, your marriage is going to be so much better.”*

Did you expect me to say that? Righto, well let's dig in, and see why I said it.

When the happy couple chose this reading, they probably thought they were doing everybody a favour, by picking a short one... And it **is** short, but boy-o-boy, it is deep....

And the first thing we need to realise, is this passage is not about marriage. It’s about Christians – it’s about who we are as Christians, and it’s about “the church” – it’s about “How we live (as Christians) together.”

And so, this is a passage that I cannot really use as “marital advice” for an **unbeliever**. And if an **unbeliever** is wanting advice on how to make their marriage better (or to fix their marriage), the starting point (for any advice I have to offer), is “you need Jesus”,,,, because Jesus is the one who restores **us**, and our relationships cannot be properly restored until **we** are set right....

You see, for two **unbelievers** combined together in marriage, the words of **this** Bible Reading would be totally inappropriate. For them, it would be nothing more than **unachievable** platitudes.

*You see, to ask a couple, who do not follow Jesus, to model their marriage after these words, would be like giving a recipe from MasterChef to a peasant who doesn’t even have enough rice to boil for his dinner..., and say “Cook this up” ...  
“What do I do with this? I haven’t got the ingredients.”*

How could an **unbeliever**, model their marriage on this, when they do not have the Spirit of God.

So, that’s the first thing: This is about Christian living. And we are going to apply it to marriage. And that, **is** a very good plan.

## **Secondly:**

Being a Disciple of Jesus (living as a Christian), is **not** based on rule-keeping... And this has gotta be, one of the biggest misunderstandings that many people have, of the Christian faith. In fact, one of the reasons Paul wrote this letter, was to encourage the church in Colossae to **resist** the notion of “religious rule-keeping”. (Chapter 2)...

So, this is **not** a bunch of “rules for a successful marriage”. (Don’t treat it as if it is.)

Way too many couples fall for the lie, that “All we need, is the right tools. And if we have the right psychological tools, and the right relationship tools; and to work hard, and our marriage will be a blissful success.” What a nonsense that is.

Because, after years and years of hard work,

- the rough edges (that they thought they’d knock off their husband/wife):– they’re still there.
- the person has **not** changed for the better (as they had hoped); and
- they have worked so hard, for so long...

It is downright exhausting... That’s what rule-keeping does –  
It’s exhausting...

We don’t need more rules – What we need, is a heart that is transformed, to the heart of Christ,, and **that**, is what this is about.

So, let’s unpack it a bit:

The tiny snippet of Colossians we just read, is obviously part of a larger discussion.

And this is the beginning point: As a Christian, you are **not**, what you once were.

Becoming a Christian, involves a complete transformation. It is something so radical, Jesus described it as being “born again”. You cannot give your heart to Jesus, and stay the same. Nor would you want to. You don’t want to stay the same do you???

At one time, we were caught up in the world – we were caught up in the ways/priorities/principals/ethics of the world... But now, things **must** be very different. Why? Because we are now dead to the world, and we are “alive, in Christ”.

And so Paul says V<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, (alright, If you are a Christian, you are chosen by God; holy; beloved)

Put on then... compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another.... and it goes on...

Put these things on.

That means: “clothe yourself with these things”. **It is all about the wardrobe.**

And **this** is the difference that Christ makes to a marriage. It’s the difference between putting on Christ – clothing ourselves in Christ-likeness... .... as opposed to “putting-it-on” – pretending – playing dress-ups, where:

- I’m **not** compassionate, but I’ll try to act if I care;
- Humility??? What’s that? It’s not even a virtue in the eyes of the world.

It’s putting others before self?; It’s a willingness to waive my own rights (for the sake of the other)?... I’d look weak if I did that... Maybe we can water it down a bit, and I’ll try to **not** come across as being so “proud” “arrogant” or so “full of myself”... That’ll do...

You see, that’s “putting-it-on” – pretending – playing dress-ups... Another name for it is “hypocrisy” – pretending to be something that I am not.

And let me tell you, “working harder”, to do these good things in a marriage, is hypocritical and exhausting, if that is not who you are...

BTW, for those who aren't yet married, I hope we're all starting to realise by now, that it is really important, “Who we choose to marry”... It's essential to consider:

- “Is this person, “putting it on”?” They might be trying hard to be nice for me, (and that makes you feel special – they're trying hard for you) but are they trying to be something that they are not?
- **Or** is this person “in Christ”?
  - Do they have the Holy Spirit in them?; and
  - Is there **evidence** of this – is there evidence of them being transformed, to become like Jesus?
  - Do they even **want** to be like Jesus?

Now, to our shame, not all Christians do this well. That's why Paul wrote this letter in the first place. That's why he had to command people in a church:

- “Clothe yourselves”;
- <sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you....
- put off the old self and what the old-self does,,,; and
- put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

To our shame, there are some who believe in Jesus, but they are the embodiment of a spiritual wardrobe malfunction. They are not following Jesus very well, because they are **not** putting

off the old self, and they are **not** being the new creation that God has saved us to be.

- You are chosen by God;
- You **are** Holy (Some might feel embarrassed);
- You **are** “beloved” by God.

So, **dress** as if you are. Now, I don’t mean, “wear a suit and tie” (because that’s what Christians do) (Although apparently not at BD)...

If you are a Christian, clothe yourself with Christ-likeness...

*With this hot weather we’re having at the moment, you might want to go down to the river and have a swim this afternoon. You will be a swimmer. Are you going to wear your jeans and long sleeves and work-boots? No! You’re going to wear your togs!!! You’re a swimmer – get dressed for swimming.*

*If you are a welder, are you going to wear a polyester Hawaiian shirt, pair of rayon footy shorts and thongs to work? No! They’re going to melt and you’ll have molten spatter burning holes in your feet and skin. If you are a welder, dress as the welder that you are.*

As a Christian, you are:

- chosen; holy; beloved;
- alive in Christ.
- a new creation.



therefore clothe yourself in Christ-likeness.

In other words, God works a miracle to change and transform those who are His (sanctification). **But** He cannot do that, if we continue to hold on to the ways of the world.

So, in your marriage, and not just in your marriage – in your **life**, take off your old sinful nature, and clothe yourself with the nature of Jesus.

Examples of this?:::

“Put on compassionate hearts”.

A better translation would be “Put on heart-felt compassion”...

“Compassion”, is to show mercy and genuine concern for the other. And the fact that it’s “heart-felt”, means it is something that cannot be faked, because it is an expression of mercy and concern that wells-up from the depths of a person’s being???

You see, as a Christian, **that** is where Christ-likeness comes from – from the depths of your being. Why? Because when you were born again, the Holy Spirit of Christ moved into your heart (and took up residence)... And when Jesus moves in, He brings His wardrobe with Him. The wardrobe of Christ-likeness is right there in the heart of a Disciple of Jesus.... All we you gotta do, is put it on.

## Put on kindness...

To my shame, there have been times when I have been unkind to my wife. And the experience of every “normal” married couple, is there are going to be times, when you are tempted to do what a worldly person would do. You will be tempted to be unkind to the other. (tempted to say something hurtful, and makes them feel bad...)

Put it to death, that evil desire that is in you. And put on kindness.

## Put on humility.

That is to have a Christ-like attitude toward “self”. Humility, is a readiness to forgo my own rights, for the sake of the other. It is to put the other first, and myself last.

## Put on “meekness”

In other words, be: humble; gentle; considerate...

Take time to hear the other, and don’t always override the other...

BTW, “meekness” is not “weakness”... It was the **meekness** of Jesus, that enabled Him to endure the:

- scourge of the whip;
- dreadful humiliation; and
- piercing of the nails.

And let me tell you, that was not weakness. It was strength – to be willing to suffer and die so that we can be saved....

So, “meekness” isn’t weakness.

Put on patience.

The Greek word that we translate as “patience” is actually μακροθυμίαν ( makrothymian ), (Macro – big) (thumia - suffering) (Long-suffering)...

Clothe yourself with patience / long suffering.

This is the type of patience that “endures wrong”. And it puts up with the exasperating conduct of another...

Are there any married couples here, who have never been exasperated with each other?

*Of course not. In a marriage, there are going to be times where your husband/wife will exasperate you... and you’ll be at your wits-end... And guess what: There’s going to be times when you exasperate them...*

Clothe yourselves with the long-suffering patience of Jesus...

<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another

(not apart from one another. **With** one another)

As Christians,,,,, in the church, when things get tough / when relationships get strained, we do **not** cut-and-run – we bear

**with** one another. And in a **marriage** we put on Christ, and we don't cut-and-run. We bear with one another.

and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other

In marriage, you will get to know your husband/wife other, better than anyone else in the world. And you're not always going to like what you see. In your marriage, there are going to be times when you have a genuine complaint against the other... What are you going to do at that point???

*Retaliate!!! ; or*

*If you've hurt me, I'm going to hurt you back!*

*I'll just give you the cold-shoulder & shut you out... (That'll learn ya)*

**anger, wrath, malice, slander**:- that's the way of the world... The way of Jesus, is forgiveness... You know, if a husband and a wife don't genuinely forgive one another, their marriage is going to be like a stewing pot of discontent and bad memories (bile, gall and bitterness...)

The way of Jesus, is forgiveness. And as Christians, we should understand this very well, because God has forgiven us. Because we have experienced the forgiveness of God, we know how to forgive others...

And if we hold on to **unforgiveness**, that's going to hurt us (probably even more than the other.) In fact, Jesus told some

parables, that very clearly taught, that if we are unwilling to forgive, then His forgiveness of us, is in peril.

So, we forgive, as Christ has forgiven us...

And the thing that wraps it all up, is “love”.

You know, people talk about “falling in love”; and over the years, the Top 40 hit-list has been filled with songs about “falling in love”... But then, some folk looking for a divorce, talk about “falling out of love”... They obviously don’t understand love.

In Christ, the type of love that we’re talking about today, is much, much more than a feeling. This kind of love, is an act of the will. There will be times, when you won’t feel like loving the other,, but you **do**; and you **will**; and you **must**, because the love that we give, is the same as the love that God has for us.

Mind you, love on its own, doesn’t hold a marriage together. What love does, is it pulls together; holds together; and completes, all of this beautiful wardrobe of Christ-likeness that we’ve been talking about, to create the perfect ensemble.

The sort of love that God has for us, is the sort of love that you need, for one another. It is a love, that continues to love through:

- hurt;
- trials;

- tragedy;
- betrayal...

And it’s love that will keep you:

- patient; and
  - kind; and
  - humble; and
  - meek.
- 
- will enable you to forgive; and
  - give you a heart-felt compassion

That’s the sort of love that holds it altogether.

And finally, we come to “**peace**”.

There are a lot of things, that make a marriage good... But I reckon one of the most important things in a marriage, is peace.

*In regards to the Middle-East at the moment, our government keeps saying “There needs to be peace-talks” ...*

Seriously... As if “Peace” is the absence of active warfare, or some kind of short-term postponement of war, but we know they are going to keep on hating each other. That ain’t peace.

And yet, some marriages are very much like that... *“As long as we’re not at war with each other, then that’s “as good as it gets”, and that’ll do... ”*...

Let me tell you, “As Christians, we understand “peace” a whole lot better than that”. Peace is not “the absence of war”. Peace is “the **antithesis** of war” – the opposite of war. I’d say, “Peace, is a state of loving, unified well-being”,,, and blessed are those who live in genuine peace.

And that, is what a marriage should reflect: “a state of loving, unified well-being”.

Once again, I **cannot** give this as marital advice to an unbeliever. What does **the peace of Christ** have to do with an **unbeliever**??? A person can never have true, inner peace, unless the Prince of Peace (That’s one of the Names of Jesus) is resident in their heart... And unless a person has “peace with God” (Paul calls it “The peace that passes all understanding”) – unless a person has that peace, trying to have genuine peace in a marriage, is going to be an uphill battle.

<sup>15</sup> ... let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts

In other words, let **the peace of Christ** be dominant in your heart. Let it rule. And, when the old sinful nature wants to bring conflict, stomp it down. Put it to death. And let **the peace of Christ rule in your hearts** ...

And so, we give thanks.

How often do you give thanks to God, for your Husband/Wife? We should give thanks to God, every day:

- for the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ;
- that the Holy Spirit is changing/strengthening you, to become more like Jesus;
- that He is at work in your husband/wife;
  
- for the one that God has given you in marriage  
- that they are a believer, and  
that your relationship can be complete, in the love and peace of Christ.

I told you there was a lot in it, hey... But it is so good – the blessing of Christ, in a marriage????

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,  
We want to thank You for Your great love for us,  
a love so great, that Jesus gave His own life,  
that we might be saved.

We thank You, for the gift of faith.  
And we thank You,  
for the wonderful transforming work  
of Your Holy Spirit, in our heart.



Lord, we pray,  
for our marriages.  
We pray, that You would begin with us.  
- that You would transform us,  
That we would be better husbands;  
Better wives...

Lord, help us, by Your Grace,  
to put to death our old, worldly ways;  
To take off our old sinful nature; and  
To put on Christ and Christ-likeness.

Lord, by Your Holy Spirit,  
transform us to be the Holy people  
You have saved us to be.

And we pray for Your peace.  
May the peace of Christ, rule in our hearts.  
And may our homes,  
be characterised by the peace of Jesus Christ.

Amen.