

2 - AFTER I DO.

Ephesians 5:21-33

(Video)

Good morning and welcome to Restoration! My name is Wade and I'm the minister here. If you are a guest with us today, please know we are excited you are here. After the service I would love to have an opportunity to meet you. I will be standing by the information table in the lobby, please come by and say hello.

Today we are in the second week of our series called "**Before & After.**" We are talking about the before and afters of marriage. What happens before we say, "I do?" What happens after we say, "I do?"

WEEK 1 REVIEW

Last week we focused on Before I Do. Our culture teaches us it's important to find the right person before you get married, but God's way focuses on **becoming** the right person before you get married.

You see, we all come to marriage with a box of dreams.

I imagine we are going to live in a big dream house.

I imagine we're going to have the perfect dog.

I imagine my wife is going to take care of the house because that's what my mom did.

I imagine we are going to have kids.

I imagine I'll have freedom and make enough money to drive my dream car.

I imagine how we will spend our time in marriage.

I imagine what my wife will NOT wear to bed.

We all come to marriage with all of these desires. There's nothing wrong with that, it's how we are designed to be. God has created us with desires.

Now, the world's way says that in order to have these desires filled, we must find the right person. God's ways says that before we say, "I do," we aren't searching for the right person, we are focused on becoming the right person.

Instead of basing our dreams on a person, we are focused on God and Him providing for our wants and desires. That's why there is nothing wrong with having dreams before marriage, in fact I believe God designed us this way. It is wonderful to dream and talk about Before I Do.

But now let's switch gears to...

AFTER I DO.

Something happens after we say I do. It may happen immediately, while you're walking down the aisle with your box of dreams; or it can be later, but we take all of our dreams... and we put them into this box: The box of **EXPECTATIONS**.

"We talked about this... and I said I do because you said you would. So, make my dreams come true, excuse me, I mean, this is what you're supposed to do. These are my expectations."

Somewhere along the way, our dreams become expectations and this instantly changes the dynamic of the relationship.

It's changed primarily because there isn't just one box of expectations in the marriage, there are two. Both spouses bring their own box. And once these boxes collide, there's only a few options.

Just like last week, I want to compare and contrast God's way with the world's way...

One option is you LEAVE.

If my expectations aren't being met, then I just need to get out of here and find someone who will meet my expectations. And we'll say, "He just wasn't a good husband. She just wasn't a good wife." What does that mean? They didn't meet my expectations. Or we say, "He expected so much of me, I just couldn't live up to their expectations, so I had to get away from it all."

The problem is you pick up your box and go find someone else to dump these on. That's why your second marriage feels a lot like your first marriage. Guess what's there again? We have just brought our box to the new relationship.

A second option is the stronger partner simply WINS.

There generally is a dominant partner in a marriage and they explain over and over again what it means to be a good husband/wife. And they try to live up to your expectations. So as the other spouse gets closer to the bar you've set, you begin to think this is a good marriage. You think this is a good relationship.

But it's very easy for me to be me. It's easy for you to be you. You don't have to wake up and look in the mirror and remind yourself, "Be me today." It's easy for me to be me. However, it's hard for me to be Amanda. So when you win and explain for the 1,000th time this is how a husband is supposed to be, this is how we handle money, this is how we handle conflict, this is how we do our schedule, and the other partner gives in and says ok... you think everything is great. Because it's easy to be you. But when your spouse is trying to be you, it's incredibly stressful to them and you have no idea, because everything seems great.

A marriage where the stronger partner wins is extremely draining. And this is just an observation, but late 30's, 40's, this type of marriage where one partner "wins," given enough time, the marriage will begin to break down. One spouse has been trying to meet expectations, trying to be someone else, and after so much time, they are emotionally drained. They are spent. They have been trying to pull up to the bar and they are exhausted. The other person

thinks marriage is great, but your spouse is exhausted from trying to reach the bar, trying to meet your expectations. And so the marriage unravels from exhaustion.

A third option, and probably the most common option, is to simply COMPROMISE.

You do your part and I'll do my part. We will split the bills and responsibilities. We will split the time with your family and this time with my family. You want to do this with the kids, and I'll do this. You have your friends and I'll have my friends. We get it all worked out to compromise what our expectations are.

Everything will go well for a while in the compromise marriage because I will do my part if you will do your part. I want to make sure I get enough of my part, so I'm going to do just enough for you to get what I want. And it takes both of our expectation boxes and places them right in the center of our marriage.

We tend to think of compromise as the best of these approaches to marriage; however, compromise stems from a commitment to marriage rather than a commitment to our partner. Compromise is really another way to only be committed to self because I want MY MARRIAGE to work out.

You will know you're in a compromise marriage if you say things like...

"I'm really concerned about MY marriage."

"Honey, I'm concerned about the marriage."

"I'm trying to save MY marriage."

Where is the focus at? The focus is all on you. And people in a compromise marriage are VERY committed to the marriage. A compromise marriage is actually a way of looking for that person to fulfill your dreams because you are focused on you. Your dreams have become your expectations and you have to see them fulfilled in your marriage.

This is not a biblical view of marriage. The bible never calls us to be committed to a marriage. The Bible says we are to be committed to a person. Instead of saying we enter into a contract of marriage, the Bible uses a term called Covenant.

This is good news because you don't want to be committed to just "the marriage." The reason is because everyone of us can go out and get another "the marriage." God calls us not to be committed to a marriage, but to a person. God wants us to make a covenant.

A covenant is an agreement, but it's different from a contract. A covenant focuses on your part and makes a commitment that regardless of what the other person in the covenant does, you are going to fulfill your part because you love this person.

A compromise marriage isn't a covenant relationship, it's a contract relationship. And the first thing to go in a contract marriage is romance and intimacy.

Think back to when you were dating and could not stay away from each other. There was nothing about a contract, that you expected them to do this and you would do something else, your relationship was about the other person. You wanted to be with them.

But when you settle for a compromise relationship, it becomes your space and my space, your money and my money, and it's never going to be what God designed you to experience in marriage because even in the compromise marriage, the focus is still on you. Compromise marriages are just another way of managing your box of expectations.

So what about a 4th option? What if we did things God's way?

God's Expectations for Marriage

The answer is not to get rid of your dreams and expectations, the answer is to say you're not in debt to me. You don't owe me anything.

We move from "You owe me" to "You don't owe me anything." I am the person God put in your life to reflect His unconditional love. I'm going to find out what's in your box and do my best to love you.

In Ephesians 5 the Apostle Paul addresses the subject of marriage for the church.

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Submission means I'm going to prioritize your expectations and dreams over mine. Not because I respect you, but because I respect Christ. In light of what Jesus has done for me, I want to submit to others out of respect for His love.

God, I'm so grateful for all You've done for me. You've forgiven me, you're changing me. You've given me what I don't deserve, and so what can I do to show You how thankful I am? God says, "Take all that passion for Me and shower it on your wife." Put her first because I put you first.

Take debt free relationship we have with God and apply it to your marriage. Just as God declares we don't owe Him anything, you declare your wife doesn't owe anything.

Verse 22...

22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Just like you submit to God because of all He's done for you, you channel that to your husband.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

It's not about how lovable she is, it's about Christ. Be willing to lay down your life for her.

It's not about deserving it, it's about what God did for you. How can I say thanks to God? Lay down your life for your wife.

And just to make sure we don't miss it, Paul closes out the chapter in verse 33 by saying this:

33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

After I Do God's way is not about what you are owed, it's about being the person God made to show your spouse what His unconditional love looks like on this earth. This is why last week is so important. Before I Do is about becoming the right person, not finding the right person. You become the right person so you can reflect God's unconditional love to your spouse.

Let me make a few observations and then we will wrap up this morning.

1. We Are Called to Love and Respect

Husbands are told to LOVE their wives. Wives are told specifically to respect their husbands.

First, the commands are directed to our respective and relative weaknesses. We are told to do things that we might not do unless we were told.

For example, children are told to obey their parents because it is easy for children not to do so (Ephesians 6:1). In the same way, husbands are told to love their wives because it is easy for husbands not to do so. Wives are told to honor their husbands because it is easy for wives not to do so. We are called to do things that might not occur to us. If we were all doing these things naturally, why bring it up?

Women are better at loving than men are. Men do well at respecting.

C.S. Lewis once observed that women think of love as taking trouble for others — which is much closer to a scriptural agape love than what men naturally do. Men tend to think of love as not giving trouble to others.

So men must be called to sacrifice for their wives, to take trouble for them, as Christ gave himself for the church.

Women must be urged to respect their husbands. A woman can naturally love a man she does not honor or respect very much, and this is something that Paul would identify as a trouble.

How many times have we heard a terrible story about a girl returning to her abusive boyfriend because she "loves him," even though he treats her like dirt? But if we asked her if she respects him, she would reply, "Are you kidding? Him?"

And men must be called to give themselves away for their wives. This is what a wedding means.

2. Men Run on Respect, Women on Love

When husbands are told to love their wives, we can come to the conclusion from this that wives need to be loved. When wives are told to respect their husbands, we can also arrive at the result from this that husbands need to be respected.

Think of it as two kinds of car that run on different kinds of fuel — diesel and regular gas.

Men run on respect, and wives run on love.

Often when a marriage is in a tough spot, both spouses tend to give what they feel they need — love and respect. Wives reach out to their husbands with love, when respect is what would really help. Husbands can back away, thinking of this as a form of respect, “giving space,” when what they need to do is close in with love.

Men need significance, women need security.

3. When Love and Respect are present they create powerful changes.

When husbands, who will never be perfect like Christ, begin to imitate Christ’s love, it will begin to change the heart of his wife. Likewise, when a woman begins to respect her husband, even though he doesn’t deserve it, she will be putting fuel on the fire.

So then, men and women should love and respect each other. They should do so with all their hearts. But when they are concentrating on their marriages, the men should lean into love. The women should lean into respect. The results can be amazing.

Instead of saying I’m going to leave... Instead of saying I’m going to give in... Instead of saying I’m going to compromise in my marriage...

With God’s way, you don’t owe me anything. In fact, because God has done so much for me, I’m here to reflect His love to you.

When you move your dreams to the expectation box, you have changed your marriage relationship into a debt/debtor relationship. Dreams that become expectations are expressed this way:

YOU OWE ME.

“You’re my wife, this is what you’re supposed to do. You’re my husband, don’t all husbands do this? You’re the provider, you owe me. Remember, you stood at the altar and promised you would do this. You stood up there in front of everyone and GOD, and I’m holding you to keeping your word.”

We can come up with a convincing argument why they owe us this. They promised... even before we said I do, they promised. Am I not justified in expecting a few things from my spouse?

But no matter how justified you may feel or be, you still end up in a debt/debtor relationship. And any time a relationship becomes a debt/debtor type of relationship, intimacy and romance are gone. Because, in a debt/debtor relationship there is no margin for receiving unconditional love.

If my expectation is this, and I get this, how much credit does my spouse get? Zero. That’s what my spouse is supposed to do. And I’m not throwing a party because you did what you’re

expected to do, you don't get credit for loving me, you're simply doing what you're expected to do.

Once your marriage is in a debt/debtor mode, it squeezes out any possibility for unconditional love because love is a gift.

LOVE IS A GIFT!

If everything is expected, there's no opportunity to give or receive love.

This is why you'll never receive a personal, perfume laced letter with a gift card from your electric company.

"Dear Wade, Thank you for sending in your electric payment this month. We've enjoyed keeping the lights on as we are watching your family grow. Lilly is two and growing up so sweetly, here is a gift card to take your family out to dinner. We so appreciate you sending in your monthly electric payment."

It doesn't work like that does it! You'll never get a note or personalized treatment like that from your electric company. The only time you get a note from your electric company is when? When you miss a payment. In fact, if you miss enough payments, they'll call you on the phone. You don't even have to wait for an available operator. They will call you! You will get individualized attention if you don't meet their expectations.

And you know... that's what some of you feel in your marriages.

As long as you do everything right, everything is peaceful, but there's not a lot of love. But if you mess up, whoa... there's a lot of personal attention then! And it is negative. You don't feel loved in your marriage.

As long as everything is in this box, the box of expectations, you will conduct your marriage and do everything under the concept: You owe me.

But, if we can approach marriage from God's way... mutual submission, women running on love and men running on respect, then whenever our spouse hits one of these dreams, we feel so loved and so grateful. Not because that's what we expected them to do, not because they owe us, but because we know they love us, they respect us, and they want to serve Christ with us.

This week, for those of you who are married and even those of you who aren't married, because all of us are called to reflect God's love to this world...

Ask yourself if you are operating God's way or the world's way? Does everyone owe you? Or are you here grateful for what God has done and you can't help but show love to others?

And key in on these two areas...

A lack of expressing gratitude. You complain about something not getting done but rarely thank your spouse when it does get done.

A lack of acts of service. You see something that needs to be done and do nothing about it is because you expect someone else to do it.

God's way says, "You don't owe me, I'm here to reflect God's love to you."

COMMUNION

Ultimately, the only way we know what true love is came to us in Jesus going to the cross.

[16 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 and sisters.](#)

Let's remember Christ and His sacrifice and challenge ourselves to love others the way God has loved us.

(Video after prayer)