

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament compares the love relationship Christ has with the church with the love of a husband and a wife. But there's a huge difference. The church is symbolized as the bride and Christ is the Bridegroom. He is a perfect husband. All of us who are husbands are far from perfect, but we never stop trying to figure out this relationship called marriage. Every marriage is a work in process. And speaking from the standpoint of a husband, I realize most of us husbands aren't the best at understanding our wives. I came across several observations husbands made about marriage.

1. My wife and I have been married so long that she can finish my sentences. She also starts most of them and supplies the middle parts too.
2. My wife asked me what I wanted for dinner. Then she told me I was wrong.
3. Marriage is all about knowing which hand towels you can use and which ones are for the better people who visit your wife's home.
4. My wife told me that it's like every man on earth shares one brain. I couldn't answer her because it wasn't my time to use the brain.
5. Before I got married, I didn't even know that there was a wrong way to put the milk back into the fridge. And I never knew that there was only one exact way to load the dishwasher.
6. I'm headed to Goodwill to buy back something I donated yesterday because this is my lesson on why marriage communication is so important.
7. It took me so long to install the car seat that when I finished, I asked, "Okay where's the baby?" My wife said, "In college."

In John 7 we join Jesus again at the Jewish Feast of Shelters. It's also called the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feasts of Booths. For eight days, Jewish people would move out of their houses of stone and build temporary shelters using sticks, leaves, and brush. It was an eight-day holiday for everyone and there was a lot of celebrating and feasting. The Feasts of Passover and Pentecost were in the spring, and Shelters was in the fall. Jerusalem would have been packed by all the Jews who had traveled great distances to be a part of this celebration. But as I mentioned in the last message, Jesus turned what would have been a celebration into a confrontation. To put it another way Jesus got into a Feast Fight.

John 7:19: Jesus asked, "Didn't Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" "You have a demon!" the crowd responded. "Who is trying to kill you?" "I performed one work, and you are all amazed," Jesus answered. "This is why Moses has given you circumcision—not that it comes from Moses but from the fathers—and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses won't be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath? Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment."

Some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Yet, look, he's speaking publicly and they're saying nothing to him. Can it be true that

the authorities know he is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from. When the Messiah comes, nobody will know where he is from.”

As he was teaching in the temple, Jesus cried out, “You know me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the one who sent me is true. You don’t know him; I know him because I am from him, and he sent me.”

Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come. However, many from the crowd believed in him and said, “When the Messiah comes, he won’t perform more signs than this man has done, will he?” The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about him, and so the chief priests and the Pharisees sent servants to arrest him.

In order to understand this hostility toward Jesus, you must distinguish between the common Jewish people and the Religious leaders. The Bible says that the common people heard Jesus gladly. They loved to hear Him tell stories and even challenge the religious establishment. But the Jewish religious leaders hated Him because He was messing up their nice, neat system. When Jesus is speaking to the crowds, there are usually both common people and the group out to arrest Jesus whom I call the Jewish Mafia.

There are several important lessons we can learn from this conversation. Let’s focus on three powerful practical applications that Jesus shared.

I. DON’T JUDGE THINGS BY WHAT CAN BE SEEN.

Jesus said, “Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment.” (John 7:24) The context of this debate was simple. The Jewish Mafia were still mad because Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath Day and told him to pick up his bed and carry it. Both of those were Sabbath violations.

But Jesus countered by claiming that the Jews themselves broke the Sabbath. When a Jewish baby boy was born he had to be circumcised on the eighth day. And if that eighth day fell on the Sabbath, the Jews would still circumcise the baby, even though that was breaking the Sabbath Law. So Jesus asked them what the difference was. They were carrying out a rite that predated the Sabbath laws of Moses. Abraham taught circumcision long before the law of Moses went into effect. Jesus claimed His authority predated Abraham and Moses. He was sent from Heaven to carry out His Father’s plan. He reasoned that it was better to make a man whole on the Sabbath than to follow a religious ritual.

So, what does this mean to us in 2019? We should be careful that we don’t make a snap judgment about someone or something just by outward appearance. To express it the way we’ve all heard it: you can’t judge a book by its cover.

We see an example of this from the Old Testament. After King Saul disobeyed God, the Lord told Samuel to visit the house of Jesse in Bethlehem because He had already picked the next King. Samuel arrived and Jesse had all of his sons appear before Him. The first was named Eliab. He was tall and handsome and strong. He looked like he could be on the cover of *GQ Magazine*.

But the Lord had other plans. The Bible says, "When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and said, 'Certainly the Lord's anointed one is here before him.' But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:6-7)

So Samuel looked at the firstborn and said, "No, he's not the one. Do you have any more sons?" Jesse showed him his seven oldest sons. "Nope. Nope. Nada. No. Sorry. You're out. Not you." Samuel said, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse said, "Well, I do have one more, but he's the runt of the litter. He's out tending the sheep."

Samuel said, "Go get him. We're not going to sit down to eat until you fetch him for me." So off went the servants. Soon they can back with young David. The King James Version said he was "ruddy with a beautiful countenance." Ruddy means that he was so young that he still had peace fuzz on his cheeks, but he had a beautiful smile. Samuel said, "this is the next King. Because he has a HEART for God."

God is a lot more interested in the condition of a person's heart than on what you see on the outside. We can all be guilty of judging a person by their appearance. We see someone whose skin color is not our own, and we form an impression that is unfair. We see someone with body ink or piercings and we automatically make assumptions about them that aren't true. We see someone who may be academically slow or autistic and we make judgments about them that aren't fair. Don't ever judge or criticize a person until you know what's in the inside. Someone has said, "Don't criticize someone until you have walked a mile in their shoes." After all, then you'll be a mile away and you'll have their shoes!

We are so quick to judge on appearance alone. And most of the time we are wrong. True story. It was January of 1955, a cold day in Memphis, Tennessee. The salesmen at a Cadillac dealership were all huddled in their warm offices when a redneck climbed out of his run-down pick-up and started walking across the lot looking at used Cadillacs. Most of the salesmen looked up judged that this guy wouldn't buy a Cadillac. But one salesman, Bud Davis, walked out and smiled and held out his hand. He said, "I'm Bud Davis, would you like to buy a Cadillac today." The young man shook his hand and said, "I'm Elvis Presley. And yeah, I could dig one of these." Elvis hadn't made it big yet. That day Bud Davis sold Elvis a used 1954 Cadillac Fleetwood. Elvis eventually bought over 200 Cadillacs from Bud Davis. And today in Memphis, the dealership is named Bud Davis Cadillac. That's a great reminder to us that we shouldn't judge anything on outward appearance!

II. REJOICE THAT YOU CAN KNOW GOD.

Jesus said, "You know me and you know where I am from. Yet I have not come on my own, but the one who sent me is true. You don't know him; I know him because I am from him, and he sent me." (John 7:28-29) Jesus spoke these strong words to the religious leaders. He said, "I know God because He sent me. But you don't know God because you don't believe He sent me."

This is just one of the many passages of scripture in the Bible that speaks of the amazing possibility that we can know our Creator. Do you know the Lord? I didn't ask if you know about the Lord? Do you know Him?

There are a lot of things people like to boast about in our culture. We're so enamored about getting a degree from a certain college or university that we've discovered a huge scam where parents have bribed people to get their kids into school. And we all suspect that this one scam is just the tip of the iceberg. People like to brag because their degree is from a certain prestigious institution.

People like to boast about their wealth. When *Forbes* released their list of the richest Americans this past year, Jeff Bezos was at the top with a net worth of almost \$140 billion. Bill Gates was second at a net worth of \$97 billion. According to *Forbes* there are 585 billionaires in the United States. But according to the Bible, your true worth is not tied to your net worth. Your true worth is determined by how well you know your Creator.

People boast about their athletic prowess. Americans worship at the altar of winning championships. There's no room for #2. It's the Super Bowl or nothing. It's the World Series or nothing. It's the Stanley Cup or nothing.

So is there anything that we CAN boast about that pleases God? Certainly. One of my very favorite verses is Jeremiah 9:23. This is what the Lord says: "The wise person should not boast in his wisdom; the strong should not boast in his strength; the wealthy should not boast in his wealth. But the one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me - that I am the Lord, showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things." This is the Lord's declaration.

Did you know it is possible to know God? And when you know Him you understand that He is a God of faithful love, justice and righteousness.

I've always loved to read the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:10 when he wrote: "I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection." I used to scratch my head and ask, "I thought Paul DID know God. Why would he write that he WANTED to know Him?" Then I came to understand that you can know the Lord, and then you can get to know Him better and better as you continue to walk with Him day by day. Rejoice that Jesus said that you can know God.

III. LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD'S TIMING.

The Bible says, "Then they tried to seize him. Yet no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come." (John 7:30)

In John 7:6 Jesus told his half-brothers, "I'm not going up to the feast because my time has not yet come." The Bible uses two words for time. From the word *chronos* we get our word "chronology," which means sequential time, moment after moment after moment. But the word for time Jesus used in John 7 was *kairos*, which means a specific, appropriate time.

There are several times recorded in the Gospel accounts where a crowd tried to kill Jesus—but it wasn't his time—*kairos*. He knew He would be sacrificed as a Lamb during the Feast of Passover, not the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Bible teaches us that time is valuable. You've heard it said, "Time is money." But that's not right. Time is more valuable than money. You can make more money but you can't make more time.

The Bible says, "Pay careful attention, then, to how you live—not as unwise people but as wise - making the most of the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15-16). The phrase "making the most of the time" literally means to "redeem the time." It means to buy it back and use it for another purpose. Here are two ways to redeem God's time.

A. Be accountable to God how you spend your time.

Time belongs to God. And once you give your life to God, we are accountable to Him on how we spend time. We should be living with a sense of urgency. Jesus said in John 9:4, "We must do the works of him who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work." We are living in the daylight of opportunity, but there is coming a time when we can no longer work the works of God.

It's true that time flies—but you're the pilot. God has gifted you with a certain amount of time, and you get to choose how you will spend most of it. So how are most people spending their time these days? We're all a bunch of screenagers. According to the American Heart Association, kids aged 8-18 spend an average of 7 hours a day looking at a screen. And young and middle-aged adults spend an average of 9 hours a day interacting with media. We need to disconnect so we can connect with God and with each other again.

Here are three ways to spend your time wisely. First, spend time alone with God in prayer and Bible study and yes, you can do that on your device. Second, make sure you are spending quality and quantity time with your family. And that means no devices, looking eye-to-eye and talking with words instead of texts or tweets. Third, you can invest time in serving the Lord. Whether you serve the Lord in the church, or in the community, unselfish service is a great way to redeem the time.

Jesus said we will all stand before the Master and be asked, "How did you invest the gifts I gave you?" One of the most precious gifts we have is time. How are you investing it?

B. View every opportunity in light of eternity.

Some people follow the YOLO philosophy. "You only live Once...so live it up." Some people say, "Live as if there's no tomorrow. But what they really mean is "live as if there's no eternity." I'm okay with YOLO if you add three letters to it. YOLO ATE. You only live once and then eternity.

There was an old hillbilly farmer whose family's schedule operated around their faithful, old grandfather clock. Early one morning around 2:00 a.m., the clock began to chime the hour and it went bong, bong, and then something malfunctioned in the mechanism and it continued to chime until it chimed 18 times. The old farmer jumped up and said, "Wake up, kids. It's later than it's ever been before!" And to be sure, it is later than it's ever been before in history because history is "His-story."

Are you ready to meet the Lord? There is time for you to trust Him today, but one day you will be out of time. Let me ask you a personal question: When were you the closest to death in your life? Some of you are thinking, "When I had that surgery" or "When I had that heart attack" or "When I was in that accident." Oh, no. The time you were the closest to death is right now! You survived the wreck; you survived the surgery; you survived the heart attack; and this moment you are closer to death than you have ever been before, so you could die. The opportunity could pass for you to accept Christ.

Jim Croce was one of my favorite singers and songwriters of the 1970s. He had two totally different sounds. He could growl out a barroom ballad like "Bad Bad Leroy Brown" or sing a soft love song like "Operator." One of his most powerful songs was "Time in a Bottle."

He wrote "Time in a Bottle" on the day in 1970 that his wife Ing learned she was pregnant with their son. Jim realized he had to become a real professional performer to support his family so he threw himself into his performances. "Time in a Bottle" was released in 1972, but it wasn't a hit. Then on September 20, 1973, after performing at a concert at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, Jim was killed along with the other passengers on a private plane taking off from Natchitoches. Jim Croce was 30 years old. After his death "Time in a Bottle" was re-released and it became a #1 hit.

After his wife, Ing, and their son A.J. returned from Jim's funeral they received a letter that Jim had mailed a few days before the crash. In it he expressed regret at spending so much time away and promised to stay and home and give more time to his wife and son. Those lyrics are still beautiful and haunting, "If I could save time in a bottle. The first thing that I'd like to do. Is to save every day 'til eternity passes away. Just to spend them with you."

But sadly, none of us can store up time. We can spend it or waste it, but you can't save it. But according to the Bible there's something else you can do with time. You can REDEEM it.

God is speaking to all of us today. He's telling us we shouldn't judge things by outward appearances only. He's reminding us that He created us to have a personal love relationship with Him. And He is telling us that time is precious and we should live according to His timing, not the timing of the world.

OUTLINE

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For the Joy...
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