

Mystery & Clarity//God's Laboratories//Ephesians 5:22–6:9

The title of our Ephesians series is *Mystery & Clarity...* (*our media guys complain because they do all this work coming up with a catchy concept and then they say I refer to it one time and never bring it up again... so, here's where it comes from...* As I was discussing what was happening in the book of Ephesians they came up with the title *Mystery & Clarity...* which is really good...)

...because Ephesians shows you how the deepest **mysteries** of God... who He is and what He's been up to... mysteries we sometimes can't quite explain or even get our minds around... these mysteries are the very things that bring clarity to our lives.

Well, we are nearing the end of our study... Last week we saw how the world we live in is toxic to the development of Christian virtue, and if we are going to make it spiritually we have to fight, tooth and nail, we have to swim upstream... which means we have to strive to learn God's way, we have to bring our hearts in line with His purposes, and we have to take control of our schedules so that we give priority to the things that matter most... none of these things happens naturally... Doesn't for me. Evidently not for Paul or the people he was speaking to... but *life is a battle, and if you are not actively fighting it, you are losing.*

Well, at the end of Ephesians 5, Paul gives you another very important principle for spiritual growth. And I think it's quite fascinating... something that could change your life because it is something God puts in your life 24/7 to teach you about Himself... that most of us usually don't even realize is there.

And that is our relationships. **Paul takes 3 very common relationships... marriage; the nuclear family; and work...** and explains that these relationships are like **laboratories** that God has set up to make you like Himself.

We have a lot of medical people; pharmacists, or what we refer to as legalized drug dealers—use labs to work on products until you get them right; lab sermon—trying out new jokes to produce the masterpiece...) God uses relationships to make us his masterpiece

First, let me review a couple of very important truths we've already learned from Ephesians which undergird this:

(1) God's main purpose for us is Christ-likeness (Eph 1:12) (Eph 1:12 says that God's primary purpose in salvation was to make us into people who would bring Him glory... we would do that by becoming like Him in every way. We would imitate Him and resemble Him. We would be, in every way, His sons and daughters; loving what He loves; reacting like He reacts, etc.

- This is a process called "**sanctification.**" Sanctification is a big religious-sounding word, but all it really means is "make like God."

Second, we learned that **(2) God is sovereign (which means nothing is outside his control), and He uses all things in our lives for that purpose (Eph 1:11).** Eph 1:11 says God "*works all things according to the counsel of His will*" to accomplish His purpose in our lives... and what was that purpose? (*Look at the screen—Christ-likeness*)

Now, in chapters 5 and 6 He applies those 2 truths to our relationships, and shows us something fascinating... that is that in the most basic of human relationships God is sovereignly at work, like a scientist in a laboratory, making us like Himself. **Write stuff down?**

Thesis: God uses our relationships to teach us about Himself and make us like Himself.

3 examples...(we're going to spend most of our time on the 1st one and then have time to just touch on the other 2)... but more important than the actual examples is the principle behind these examples... that principle... God is using our relationships...

Enough intro... let's get into the 1st one: **marriage***²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* ²³ *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.* ²⁴ *Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...* ²⁸ *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.* ²⁹ *For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,* ³⁰ *because we are members of his body.*

Gen 2:25³¹ *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* ³² **This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

God gave marriage... get this... to teach us about His love for us. It's not even that God looked at it and thought, I know... I'll use that to teach them about me... but God made it, designed it, to teach us about Him.

How? At least 3 ways... Let's start with the most fun... and then work to the most painful.

(1) In the delights of marriage, we get a taste of the beauty of God (v. 32)

- C.S. Lewis (50 years ago)... ray of the sunshine

- He was really repeating what Jonathan Edwards had said 300 years ago: "Marriage is the ray, God's love is the sun; marriage is the symbol, God's love is the reality; marriage is stream, God's love is the ocean." Marriage is a tangible way to experience
- It is the love of God pictured in marriage that makes marriage so beautiful: why people cry.
 - Girls... guys... wedding channel
 - You may not even have known it, but what you are experiencing is God... calling out to you.
- Marriage pictures a love that every human being was created for.
 - **It is a love where 2 human beings become one...** Sexually, there is a fusion
 - **Exclusive:** you are completely mine and I am completely yours. You get to experience godly jealousy
 - **Unconditional:** Every human being has the desire to be known and loved... To be loved but not known is superficial. But to be known but not loved is rejection. We need both! But that leaves us with a dilemma... When people know us, they don't want to love us. What you call the **porcupine's Dilemma. Porcupines need love to, want to spoon... 25,000 quills.** What you see in marriage is a picture of being known and loved, and it is beautiful.
- That love is shadowed in marriage, but the reality it points to is God's love
- **Very important:** You can let marriage teach you about God's love, but you can't let it replace God's love in your life. When that happens, when you look at the ray of the sunshine as if it were the sun itself, you will find that it is insufficient to sustain the weight your soul puts on it.
- **I occasionally do a lot of marriage counseling** (used to do a lot more)... **#1 reason marriages go wrong** (imhbao). Rather than learning about God through our spouse we replace God with our spouse, or at least try to. We start to look for a security, a

love and a fulfillment in our spouse that ought to be there in God.

- Best I've heard this... **Angela Thomas, Am I Beautiful: Questions Every Woman Asks**. The question you are asking is why I read this book... and I'm not going to answer it, now or ever.

"Here is one thing I can say with great confidence: the man that you love is just a man. He may be your soul mate. He is possibly your best friend. He may be studly and funny and surprising and strong (clearly, this was written by Veronica), but he will never—not in a million years, not if he goes to relationship therapy twice a week and keeps every promise written - be enough to fill your soul...he will never make you whole.

He wasn't made to be enough. He could not be even if he tried. He is just a man, and he can give only as a man and interact as a man and love as a man. He wasn't designed to fill the depth of a woman's longings, anticipate every need, and jump through every hoop. He can't. Those deep places inside you were made for God.

The man is simply a vessel. God uses him to give you a part of the filling of His holy love. But he is not the only vessel, nor is he able to fill you from his own strength, nor is he the only thing you will ever need (I don't care what BackStreet Boys say)

There will never be a man on the face of the earth who can make you whole. Being filled in the depths of your soul is only about the love of God...knowing him...hearing His voice...believing that He's wild about you...dancing in His arms."

- Wives (and prospective wives): your identity cannot be based on what he thinks about you (your identity is what the most

important person in our lives thinks about you. He can't be that. He can be a shadow of that, but not that).

- **Husband**: you cannot look primarily to her for affirmation, happiness or security...
- You can't look to someone else to do what only God can do. When you look to someone in the place of God, they will disappoint you. The way I explain this in premarital counseling... (floating in sea of loneliness and despair...)
- I say this as a happily married man who married way over his head: Lonely, insecure, obsessive single people become lonely, insecure, obsessive married people... If you can't be happy as a single person, you won't be happy as a married person. You might as well give it up.
- **You don't need a relationship with a perfect man; you need a relationship with a gracious God.**

(2) In the roles in marriage, we get a picture of the image of God

- This is *DEEP*: What we learn from Genesis is that man and woman are both created in the image of God, but differently, and this is what Paul is saying to them in this passage.
 - When God looked at man and said (hmm... he's alone), "not good," He didn't fix it by creating someone just like the man, because that would be, "Not good, not good."
 - Each is created differently to reveal a complementary aspect of the image of God, and when the 2 come together in marriage you get a fuller picture of the image of God than you do when 1 is alone.
- **Vs. 23** says the husband plays the role of "head" of the wife... like Christ is the head of the church and is himself its Savior." Which means he is to lead her like God leads His people, and in leading her **she** gets to experience what God's leadership is like, **like a ray of the sun**, and you, the man, get to experience what it's like to love and lead like God.
- When you study Genesis you find **4 ways the man was to be the leader**:

- **In provision** (Before God creates the woman, he's got man working in the garden... in other words, he has a job. Girls, if he can't hold down a job... if he's a bad student, stay away from him. You don't want to be living with him in his momma's basement sleeping on *Star Trek* sheets when you're 40.)... If this stung, it probably should. (People leave in sermon)
- **Spiritually** (When she is created, he already has a relationship to God and she is brought into it... The commands about the tree have already been given to him, and evidently he is supposed to tell her what those are and lead her in obeying them. the man is supposed to lead the woman spiritually...
 - Paul reminds us of that here... **vs. 26**, "He tells the husband, "It is your role to help your wife live faultless before God."
 - I have to lead our family in a way that doesn't lead my wife to materialism or self-sufficiency or pride or apathy, or gossip...
 - When I first got married... I thought I was supposed to have no secrets... I thought it was the 1 place where the no-gossiping rule did not apply... "Just being honest about my feelings." But here's the problem... didn't change the fact that I was revealing a real lack of love for other people... which is never ok... and even worse, causing my wife to think bad thoughts about others... I have to answer to God for that.
 - *God holds me responsible for that.* I have to help protect her heart... Tony Evans: Spiritual headship is God telling the woman to duck...
- **In romance:**
 - The 1st human words recorded in the Bible were that of the man composing a love poem about his wife... He says, (Gen 2:26) "*This is*

now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh..."
 You say, "That doesn't sound that romantic."
 He's saying a naked woman for the 1st time in his life, cut him some slack. He didn't have time to come up with several revisions of that poem... But in Hebrew it is poetry, a song. A love song.

- Girls, he is supposed to take the lead in relationships. Is it wrong for a girl to ask a guy out? Put it this way... if he doesn't have the spine to ask you out... he's probably not going to lead in romance the rest of your life. So, if a guy isn't enough of a man to ask my daughter out, I don't expect he'll be the man to lead her spiritually.
- **In sacrifice:**
 - Here in Ephesians you see he is to love her like Christ loves the church... which is not in any way a domineering, "*let me control you and use you*" kind of leadership, but the kind of leadership that puts her needs above your own... that kind of leadership that comes not to be served but to serve... like Jesus; the kind to forgive. We'll come back to that
- These 4 ways, and husband, here's what you should hear... Your wife learns about God from you... and you are supposed to learn to be like God as you love and lead her.
 - **I have a real burden for this...** we want men to *lead* at this church. In the church, in the home...
 - Our church is like many... in that many of the women seem much more engaged spiritually than the men... Not always... If we could just get you to start... we figured out in the kid's ministry that we get the average kid only 40 hours in a year... you 3000 hours. We can't fix

your children, you have to... 1st sin came from men not leaving

- We are trying to figure out how to do that...
- *So, some of you need to stop being deadbeats and be the leaders God designed you to be.*
Happy Mother's Day.

- **Wife, what is your role? You are to play the role of the church.** *How is the woman like the church?*

- *Y'all ready for this?* (I need some encouragement). **Vs**

24 The wife is like the church in that *she* submits.

You're like, "Ununn, no he didn't... Yes he did." (I had them check to make sure this podium was bulletproof)

- Which means (a) she surrenders her ambitions to his.
 - See how vs. 23 says the man is the head? She ceases to be the head of her own life. That means she ceases to build her own kingdom and yields herself to building her husband's and her family's kingdom. This is my wife... she is smarter than me, graduated from a better University... but has given up her kingdom to live for mine and for my family.
 - **The Bible is not against women in careers.** It is against those who do so at the expense of their families.
 - **"That offends me"...** I'm sorry, I really am... At some point, you have to decide... if you are going to follow CH professors and Oprah or the Word of God... and this is as good a time as any to decide taht
- It means (b) she surrenders her will to his.
 - Many of you are like, "Well, I'd submit if he'd grow up... My husband is such an

idiot... last time I went to my sister's for the weekend he almost sold our house for some magic beans. I can't submit to that...

- **2 thoughts:**

- (1) If you only submit to your husband when you agree with him, that's not submission; it's agreement. Submission implies you don't agree and that you think he's making a wrong decision.
- **(2) The reason you don't have a husband who will take leadership is because you've always done it.** You say, "Pastor, but if I don't, no one will." Let there be a leadership vacuum created. **When that mantle of leadership falls on his shoulders, sometimes the weight of that changes him!**
 - *One of our assoc pastors, Rick, and I were talking this weekend...* in the history of this church there was a power struggle... The gravity that God is going to hold me responsible for the direction of this church... that changed me.
 - Many of you have passive husbands because you've always stepped in and taken leadership.
 - "I've got the hard part." Husband called to love like Christ. You have to submit, but he has to die.
- *(Men, for us...* Not to dominate, I lead like Christ... I want to lead her in such a sacrificial way that submitting to me is a

delight for her and not a burden. I want her submission to me to be like her submission to the temptation for chocolate. Give in, let go... this is most enjoyable submission... I want to lead my wife in a way that independence from me is a burden)

- Here's my point: Men and women were created differently to reveal complementary aspects of the image of God... It's not that men are superior, or that women are superior, they are equal... it's just that the roles we play are different so we can more accurately see and learn about God... and when you tear down that distinction, as our culture has done, you remove something very important God intended to use to teach us about Himself.
 - Which is why as our society has thrown this off it has produced unparalleled harm in our homes and children... you can trace (not old preacher statistics) the increase of crime, dropout rates, teen pregnancy, suicide rates, homosexuality, and a number of other things to when our society formally rejected the biblical understanding of family... with the radical feminist revolution... and part of that movement was good, it really was...
 - but it went too far in that it tore down any distinctions and said the only differences between men and women were the plumbing... and that's not true. Lots of parts of you are different to reveal different dimensions of the image of God

(3) In the forgiveness required in marriage, we get a taste of the grace of God

- Biggest learning curve in marriage is how much you disappoint each other that 1st year... (I always say I've been married for 8 wonderful years... we've actually been married for 10, but 2 of them were bad... so 8 wonderful...)

- You think you're marrying somebody perfect... and then you're like, "Wow. How did they keep that hidden while we were dating? How did I not see that?"
- And a lot of people get disappointed, and then divorce. And they feel justified... they say, "You were supposed to make me happy..." You didn't keep up you're end of the contract, so I'm out...
- But here's the question... what if God's main intention in marriage was not to make you *happy* by giving you a perfect mate? If that was God's intention, He'd have had us marry angels. (Some newlywed guy says, "I did marry an angel." Shut up. No, you didn't. You married a sinner. Unless they were virgin born chances are they have some deep dysfunction. If you don't know that yet... have a fun next year. Enjoy.)
- What if His main intention was to make you like Jesus? And what if in marriage He gives you a chance to be up close to a sinner, and see all their faults, so you can learn how Jesus loves you?
- And men, this is the primary place you were supposed to lead! **"love your wives, as Christ loved the church" (v. 25)**
 - Do you ever stop to think about what that really means, to love your wife like Christ loves the church? Usually we just think it means that we are sensitive and thoughtful and bring home some flowers from time to time... but to quote C. S. Lewis, "**The husband who embodies this verse is the one whose marriage most feels like a crucifixion;**... it is the husband *whose wife receives most and gives the least, it's the one whose wife is most unworthy of him, who is—in her own mere nature—least lovable. For the church has no beauty but what the bridegroom gives her; he does not find, but makes her, lovely.*
 - There is a moment in every wedding... when the wife (almost said 'storms in') the church... sometimes I get a lump in my throat... rarely is

it because of how beautiful the wife is... (no offense) but I think, here is a picture of purity and beauty... yet, when Christ married me, I was ugly and scarred and deformed... and had sold myself to sin completely... a hor to sin, and Christ received me. **He made me, not found me, lovely.**

- How did Jesus do that? How did Jesus make me lovely? By absorbing my sin when I wronged him. **“love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her... so that he might present the church to himself... holy and without blemish” (v. 25–27)**

- You help your spouse become holy not by punishing them for their sin, or paying them back, but by giving them radical grace.
 - When our spouses have a problem... when she has a blemish, in marriage, our way to correct that is usually to try and “fix” them. To pay them back. **This was my whole 1st year of marriage.** Argue her back to godliness.
 - They wronged you, so you will yell and them and correct them...
- But that’s not how Jesus changed you. Jesus didn’t change you by paying you back for your sin. He changed you by absorbing the effects of sin into Himself. **And seeing His grace awoke in me a love for Him that changed my heart.**

- God uses marriage to a sinner to put me in a relationship where I can give that kind of grace to my spouse and experience that kind of grace from her.
- That means that whenever my wife disappoints me or hurts me... I can lash out... or I can experience, God’s greater purposes in my life in her unfairness.

- Her rudeness was sovereignly appointed by God (part of the all things, Eph 1) to teach me what I am like to God, to teach me how much He’s forgiven me of, and to give me a chance to learn to love like Him.
- Doesn’t excuse them... they will answer to God for their actions (can’t be like, “I’m only being rude because God wants me to be a tool of your sanctification)

- And I’m also not saying... that when you are being wronged that we just stand there and take it? No... you correct them, but not with a desire to repay them, but in a loving way where you try to help them see the destructiveness of their behavior to themselves and to you!
 - Jesus had a great way of talking about this... Turning the other cheek...
- *You say... Wow, do you live this? Sometimes... Especially during those weeks where I know I’m preaching on marriage. I’ll do some really great things for my wife and she’ll be like “Wow... you preaching on marriage again?”*

So, see? In these 3 ways marriage is given to us to be God’s laboratory for teaching us about Himself...

But there’s 2 others... (I told you I’d mention briefly):

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

- **A child’s relationship to his parents teach him about the authority of God. That means to those of you who are children...** When you disrespect your parents, disobey, lie to your parents, you lie to God.
- **See, he ties your obedience to the 10 commandments...** ² **“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise),** ³ **“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”**

- Obedience to mom and dad is a matter of obedience to God.
- Important: notice the commandment says to honor our parents... this is something that applies to us our entire lives, but the “obedience” command is given to children. Honor and obedience are different... when you are a child, you obey. When you grow up, you honor, which doesn’t always mean direct obedience...
- Parents: the flip side is for you... Your child learns to submit to God by submitting to you. You are like the training wheels.
 - Don’t know about you... but that lays a huge weight on me.
 - I have to love and guide my children like God does. I never am to discipline them in a way that is selfish. Because they have irritated me.
 - I think that’s what Paul is getting at in this verse... ⁴ **Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** When you have provoked them to anger, that’s a pretty good indicator you are punishing them selfishly. When your discipline produces nothing but anger in your kid, you should ask, **“What am I doing wrong?”**
 - This is also a challenge to me never to extend my authority beyond what is helpful in teaching them to submit to God...
 - One of the things that infuriates me most is when I see parents who try to control their children for the rest of their lives...
 - “No, you can’t go the mission field. I need you here.” You’re using your authority to force your kids to disobey God? God help you.
 - If you’re in that situation, you do not need to do what your parents are saying... in fact, you can most honor them (vs. 2) by obeying God. Nothing brings more honor to your parents than obeying

God, because that was the whole reason they were given to you anyway!

One more relationship: He tells...

⁵ **Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,**

Whoa, whoa... slaves (passage gets more and more un-PC)? Here’s the deal... Paul is writing into a context in where the existence of slavery is an established fact. Now, in reality, most of the slaves were more like indentured servants than what we think of as slavery... However, we know that either way this still this is not a good an equitable economic system. So, why didn’t Paul say something? **Underground railroad?** Well, in other places he will... here he is not addressing the social system... he’s acknowledging the reality, right or wrong, and telling you about God’s purposes for you, the Christian, even when you are in an massively unjust system.

So he tells them to ⁵ ~~Slaves,~~ **obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,** ⁶ **not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,** ⁷ **rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man...**

- Here is what he is saying: **God uses our work relationships to teach us to work excellently for Him**
- And here’s why it is relevant to you:
 - Many of you are in jobs where you boss is a jerk... (Say Amen? Unless he’s here) he’s unfair... but nobody in here is an actual *slave*. If so, you should probably report that to the Better Business Bureau. Nobody is an actual slave. But for them, many of their bosses were actually slavemasters!
 - When you really want to criticize your boss, you say, “Man, he’s a slavemaster.” For them, that’s not a metaphor... their’s actually was a slavemaster! Even

there... even in an unjust situation, you do your work for God.

- Same with you. He says, “Even in an unjust relationship, you should do your work for God, not for men.”
 - One of the things that is apparent from the life of Jesus is that no matter who Jesus was standing in front of, Jesus was responding to God, not to people. Jesus in front of Pilate, condemned to be crucified... Jesus submitted, because behind Pilate was God.
- You also... even when the person over you is unfair and unjust. You always do your work for God. Turn the other cheek... But God might be using even their unfairness to teach you patience and to serve like Christ did.

⁹ *Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.*

- This is where everything changes. You have that have been given power, think on how God used His power to serve you... and treat others that way. God laid down His life for people. You are to lay down your life for those you have power over.
 - Even as the boss, you are the servant. You look at your job as being one to promote and empower others... to serve them, lift them up, and forgive them.
 - One quick story: **Keller** manager story

All your relationships are given to you to teach you about God. Christian growth takes place when the beauty and glory of this one God you know so captures your heart that it transforms all your relationships, so that all you do... even the most mundane, is a way to serve Him and be like Him and know Him. It gives you purpose in everything.

We are used to **sacred/spiritual split**. *Paul here says: Everything is spiritual.*

The pressing question is, “Do you know this God that has created this passion for change, a God that is better to you than any other earthly reality you have ever found?” A God that gives purpose to every part of your life? A God that has always been there in your life and is the real answer to all the questions you’ve been asking in life?

If not, you can know Him today by receiving Jesus Christ, His son, as your Lord and Savior. Christianity is believing that God has paid for all your sins in Jesus and receiving that and surrendering to Him as God and the Lord of your life. If you’ve never done that, you can do it today!

Bullpen:

As a pastor, I get to do a lot of weddings...

- I realize I could get them to promise me about anything...
- This is the passage we use.

- If you want to grow with God, you have to make time. Personal study, for church, for your small group
- If you want to know unbelievers...
- If you want to give sacrificially... has to be the 1st part of our budget, not the last item...

That's the most important thing to learn, because when you learn that God is sovereign and using all things for your good... it means that in every situation, even when you are treated wrongly, you can respond to God, who has a purpose of good for you, even when the person wronging you intends bad for you.)

- When you tear down the God-designed distinctions between men and women, people lose a significant ability to know *God*.

Now, the elephant in the room is that we live in a culture that says that teaching is backwards and anathema. I want to be clear... parts of the feminist revolution were good... that women are of equal value and equal status under the law... but there was, and is, another part of the feminist revolution that is basically was a tearing down of the distinctions of men and women, as if

- BTW, why God hates divorce. Because it tells the world and you a completely false picture about the love of God. It says

that when you disappoint me, I am leaving. But God's love is such that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And He made us, not found us, lovely.

"Here is one thing I can say with great confidence: the man that you love is just a man. He may be your soul mate. He is possibly your best friend. He may be studly and funny and surprising and strong (clearly, this was written by Veronica), but he will never—not in a million years, not if he goes to relationship therapy twice a week and keeps every promise written - be enough to fill your soul...he will never make you whole.

He wasn't made to be enough. He could not be even if he tried. He is just a man, and he can give only as a man and interact as a man and love as a man. He wasn't designed to fill the depth of a woman's longings, anticipate every need, and jump through every hoop. He can't. Those deep places inside you were made for God.

The man is simply a vessel. God uses him to give you a part of the filling of His holy love. But he is not the only vessel, nor is he able to fill you from his own strength, nor is he the only thing you will ever need.

*There will never be a man on the face of the earth who can make you whole. Being filled in the depths of your soul is only about the love of God...knowing him...hearing His voice...believing that He's wild about you...dancing in His arms." – Angela Thomas, **Am I Beautiful: Questions Every Woman Asks***

- My discipline of them is never because they have angered me, but because I am trying to form their character.
- There's a little test in here... w
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- As you get older, that shifts from obeying to honoring...

- One of the clearest places I ever saw this explained was in a book by a Jewish atheist, a guy named Ernest Becker... in his book *The Denial of Death*, he spoke about what happened in human society with a loss of the sense of God:

We still need to feel that our life matters in the scheme of things. We still want to merge our selves with some higher self-absorbing meaning in trust and in gratitude. But if we no longer have God, how are we to do this?

One of the first ways that occurred to the modern person was the romantic solution. The self-glorification that we need in our innermost being, we now look for in the love partner. The love partner becomes the divine ideal within which to fulfill one's life. Spiritual and moral needs now become focused on one individual.

What is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to this position? We want to be rid of our faults. We want to be rid of our feeling of nothingness. We want to be justified. We want to know that our existence hasn't been in vain. We want redemption, nothing less... In case we are inclined to forget how deified the romantic love object is, the popular songs continually remind us...

Ernest Becker went on to say... *But no human relationship can bear (this) burden of godhood... If your*

partner is your 'ALL' then any shortcoming in him becomes a major threat to you.¹

And in fact, the Bible plants the seeds that would lead ultimately, to the undoing of slavery, in passages like this one. Vs. 9 Paul tells Masters to treat their servants like God treated them... and what did God do? Set them free.

Again, doesn't license abuse or you never saying anything. They will answer to God for that. But God might be using even their unfairness to teach you patience and to serve like Christ did.

- If I could... "Will not support the weight of your soul"
- Girl who wants to get married: He will make a wonderful companion but a terrible God.

¹ Pp. 160–67.