

Homewrecker #4: Self-Centeredness//Philippians

2:1–6

This week functions somewhat like an explosion here @Summit. Every year for the last 5 years we explode onto the city, getting out into the streets demonstrating the love of Christ.

- 5 areas
- This is not supposed to be a one time event, where we get dirty then wash our hands and go back to our lives; this week is supposed to catalyze relationships that last all year long.
- There are some ministries I have been involved in throughout the year that I began on a week like this.
- I was talking to my assistant who was telling me that she and her small group began an ongoing relationship with a refugee family through these type of events.
- Bottom line: Our church should be in the places where our city is the most needy. (MLK rally)
- This is not for a few of us, it's for all of us. You; your family; your small group.
- Sign up: HOW?

We're in the middle of a series called "Homewreckers" (we're looking at the things the Bible points to that corrode our relationships and destroy our homes). We're going to deal with one that is a cancer on marriage.

- One marriage counselor I was reading that said that this was the foundational issue behind all the other issues.
- And, BTW, I'm going to apply this a lot to marriage today but you're going to see it applies to really any relationship.

This particular homewrecker is really deceptive because it tells you that unless you are this way, you're never going to be taken care of.

I'm talking about self-centeredness—the idea that you need to look out for yourself; that *you* need to think first of all about your needs and what you need and what you deserve—because if you don't, I mean, who else will?

We're all naturally self-centered.

- It comes as naturally to us as breathing. When you look at a group photo, who is the first person you look for? You. *And you determine whether or not it's a good picture by how you look.*
- **When we think about our life, the first person's needs we're concerned about is our own.** Because, again, if you don't look out for your needs, who else will? This is like the law of the universe; every organism has to look out 1st for itself; the survival of the fittest.

I'm going to show you that while it may come instinctively to you, it's a destroyer of marriages. Again, one of the books that I was reading said that self-centeredness might be the foundational problem in most, if not all marriages. It certainly has been in mine. Veronica is so self-centered... no, no I'm kidding.

- Self-centeredness is one of those things that you usually have a hard time seeing in yourself but everybody else can see plainly.
- My wife found out that I was preaching a sermon on self-centeredness and she said, "*Isn't that like Representative Weiner preaching a message on modesty?*" Yes. My life has been very, very self-centered. Two things that have really broken the streak of self-centeredness in me, or at least have

begun the process. The first is having kids; the second is the gospel. When you have kids, you're forced to start thinking about somebody else.

- When you get married, you're supposed to start thinking about somebody else, but the problem was I hijacked marriage to say, "Hmm... now, instead of only one person to think about me all the time, I have TWO people to think about me."
- But when you kids, there is just no way they are going to think about you and your needs? They don't come out of the womb crying about you and your needs; they come out crying about theirs. **(Stuff about my kids—I used to have the most miserable time on vacation)**. I'd come back tired and mad about it. Vacations are supposed to be about ME. I remember one year I just resolved: vacations are not about me anymore. They're about them. If I ever come back from vacation less tired than when I started, I need to repent, because I haven't served my family like I should.
- Can I tell you all? Once I resolved that, I've been so much happier on vacations. That's one of the things I'll show you; it's counter-intuitive, but one of the ways we really learn to find joy is by getting outside of ourselves and serving others.
- When you do you rest? I don't know. I'll get plenty of rest when I'm dead, I guess. Which, at this rate, might be soon.

Having kids is one way to stop being self-centered. The other one, and more powerful one, is to contemplate the gospel, which is what we're going to talk about today.

I'm going to show you how the gospel cures self-centeredness. You guys ready for a good, and really convicting sermon? So, if you have your Bibles, or your I pads or phones, open them to: **Philippians 2**... Do you have your Bible? Listen, for those of you who didn't bring your Bible, let me say to you what my dad used to say to me: *Would you go fishing without a fishing pole?* What do you want to get out this today?

Philippians 2:1–11 (ESV)

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy (in Christ; if you have any concept of the extraordinary grace of Christ toward you), ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

- You see where he starts? With Christ. The secret to living in right relationships is being "in Christ." Apart from Christ we have this clingy sense of neediness and fear. We've talked about that for the past few weeks. But in Christ releases you from that. You have a sense of completeness, of confidence.
- Little phrase I'm going to start teaching you: **In Christ you can give up all you have because in Christ you have everything you need.**
 - TULLIAN'S STUFF
 - Only in Christ do you ever develop the attitude of being a servant, because only in Christ do you have the satisfaction and security that enables you to take your eyes off of yourself.
- In Christ, you can give up all you have (or, let go of all you have; or do without what you deserve) because in Christ you have everything you need.

³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit,

- *Rivalry* is competition. We're always angling to make sure our needs are met and that we're getting recognition. In marriage, we'll always thinking about how well the other person is doing at meeting our needs and giving us what we think we deserve.
- **Conceit:** *Conceit* is actually not a great translation... The King James uses a better word that is really a literal transliteration: "vainglory." In Greek, "keno-doxia" or "useless-glory." The idea that we deserve better things and are always making sure our spouse is giving us what we deserve.

Paul says to do *nothing* from either of those motivations...

but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

- Think about what you really deserved, and then count others more significant than yourselves.
- What do you deserve? Hell. Write this down: **"I am unworthy of any of the love my spouse gives to me."** You're not going to hear that on Oprah. But it's the foundation of real happiness and love in marriage.
- When you realize how much of your life is grace, you start to think less about what you need and deserve; you start to love your spouse with undeserving love. Why? Because that's what Christ did for you.

⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

- Why? Vs. 1: Because of Christ. ¹ *"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy (in Jesus)," be this way.*

⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

- Think about what Christ was for you:
- Personal example:
 - I've told you about this moment in my marriage: **1st sinner; 2nd sinned against.**
 - Here's another variation on that: **1st served; 2nd servant.** On the last night of His life on earth Jesus got His disciples together and pulled out a washbasin and a towel and started to wash the disciples dirty, grimy, feet. It was the role of the servant. Then he said: "This is the role that I, your Lord and Master, am taking with you. If I'm that way with you, this is the attitude you should have with each other. Wash each other's feet."
 - Jesus, who had the highest place in the universe, voluntarily took the lower place. And it wouldn't stop there, of course. He would go on to bear in his body our sin, and be punished for them.
 - Here's the thing:
 - When you know you know that in Him you've been given the highest place as a gift, you won't be afraid to take the lower place.
 - Because you have tasted of eternal love, you won't be so focused on what your spouse is or is not giving to you.
- **Christian marriage:** Recognizing the unmerited favor God has shown to you in Christ and showing that same type of unmerited favor to your spouse.
- You say, 'My spouse doesn't deserve my service.' Of course they don't. That's the point! You didn't deserve it from Christ, either.
- Notice that word in vs. 3, "count?" It means that you see reckon or you choose to see them that way, not that they actually are that way. It's the same kind of word Paul used when He talked about how Christ sees us: Christ sees believers as innocent of sin not because they are innocent of sin, but because of what He has accomplished for them and credited to them. He says, "See others that way."
- You say, "Well, if I serve them, they'll just take advantage of me." So? In Christ you're secure enough to do that. Jesus washed Judas' feet. Serving people when they don't deserve it is *how* Jesus changes us. Totally opposite of how the world thinks: **The world says you change through punishment; God says you change through grace. Punishment produces fear and selfishness. Grace produces love.**

So what's this look like in action? How do we ⁴ "...look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" in marriage?

We serve our spouse...

1. In playing the role God has given us to play in marriage

Husbands and wives are given roles in marriage that are supposed to serve one another. Two words to remember: Husbands: Serve; Wives: Submit. This is all in Ephesians 5:22–33. He says, **“Husbands, love your wives like Christ loves the church.” (Ephesians 5:25)** and **“Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” (Ephesians 5:24)**

Which one of those you talk about first? Everybody turn to your neighbor and say, “Our pastor loves us which is why he’s not afraid to teach us even the unpopular parts of the word of God.” (If you totally disagree with me, here, at least hear me out).

Let’s do wives first:

- Wives: Submit
 - **Submit** is a very strong word. In Greek, it’s actually a military term. In a marriage, It means that God has given the man the point position; the responsibility for the direction and spiritual protection of the family.
 - Guys, it is an enormous weight. My wife always says she thinks she got the easy part. Probably right: Who had the easier role on earth, Christ or the disciples?
 - Guys, I’ll show you more of this in a a minute, but this is never a license to dominate your wife or do whatever you want to do; **it’s not license to do what you want to do; it’s empowerment to do what you ought to do.**
 - But girls, this means that when a decision is supposed to be made, he’s been given the call on making it.
 - You say, “I don’t agree with that. He’s not smarter or wiser than me.” I didn’t say he was. Quit putting words in my mouth. This is one of the ways you serve Him. Let me come back to that in a second. But let’s get to the guys.
- Dudes: Love your wives, like Christ loved the church. Which means you serve them like Christ *served* the church.
 - Christ was not out bossing the church around asking where his dinner was and demanding they rub his feet and leave Him alone. On the night before He died, He was washing *their* feet. Talk about a big day ahead of Him. Honey, tomorrow, I’ve got to die for the sins of the world. I feel like that warrants a night off. But He’s washing their feet.
 - C. S. Lewis said that the crown men wear in a relationship is first and foremost one of thorns. **Wedding ring.**
 - **Let me make this real practical for you guys:**
 - My wife is supposed to submit to me, yes. But my leadership of her is supposed to be service to her, which means I need to lose about 90% of the fights I have with my wife. For the most part, she gets to choose colors; styles; cars; movies we go to; restaurants we frequent. Because my leadership of her is service to her.
 - Now the Scriptures say that when some decision needs to be made, and we can’t come to consensus, then the burden lies on me to make the call about what I think is best for the family and she needs to submit to me in that.
 - So sometimes I say to her, “I love you; Yeah, I hear that; I’m concerned about that too... but I think we need to take this direction.”
- Some of you say, “Well, I just don’t agree with that.”
 - Well, humbly speaking, you need to decide who is Lord in your life. If your attitude toward the Bible is that you take the parts of the Bible you like and leave the parts you don’t, then I might ask you to consider who is really in charge in your life. For some of you, your problem in this has less to do with submitting in marriage and more to do with submitting to Jesus. If you still read parts of the Bible with the attitude of, “I’m not sure if I’m going to follow that,” then Jesus might be your advisor, but He’s not your Lord.

- You say, “Well, can’t we work on the principle of consensus?”
 - Yes, of course: Guys, you should work on the principle of consensus. If you make decisions without the full counsel of your wife than you are a moron. *Rarely do I go against my wife’s counsel.* It’s only when I feel restrained by conscience or conviction that I go against her.
 - But girls, it’s not submission when you only follow him when you are in full agreement. That’s not submission; that’s agreement. Submission *implies* disagreement.
- You say, “Well, what if he’s telling me something that will harm me physically or is commanding to do things against the will of God? He’s insisting no one in our family wear seatbelts; or, he’s commanding me to get drunk and watch pornography with him.”
 - I agree with John Piper that **submission is more of a disposition than a specific action.**
 - No, you’d never disobey a clear directive of God or put yourself in harm’s way. But in so doing you can still be submissive.
- You say, “Well, my husband just won’t lead.”
 - Girls, I realize that. I do. A lot of girls feel like they have to do it because the guy is too much a lazy, backboneless self-centered slug to do it.
 - But let me flip that around for a minute: for some of you, the reasons he WON’T lead is that you’ve always done it. I’m not saying it’s entirely your fault; I’m saying it’s partially your fault. If you started, in faith, to show an attitude of submission to him, you might actually create a vacuum of leadership that would draw out the spiritual leader in him, which would be so good for your family.
 - What happens a lot is a guy never moves past adolescence. And then he marries this girl who is responsible and dominates. She becomes an empowerer for his never becoming a man. And as much as you might complain about it, girl, you’re part of the problem.
 - Here’s my challenge to you, girls: Get out of the driver’s seat and say, “You know what, you’re responsible for this car and if you run it into the ditch that’s on you, not me.” And you just might find that he gets off his potato-chip stuffed rear end and starts driving.
 - You say, “Me dominating works for us.” You might think so, but it is very harmful for your family when your kids see a man who doesn’t lead. It distorts their view of God.

2. By learning to love our spouse in *their* way

- Let me state the obvious here for a moment. Guys are girls are different. Really different. Which is why when you’re getting married we’re sitting in the audience looking at you gush all over each other we’re like, “Oh, how sweet. And naive.”
- The fun part of the first year of marriage is discovering how incredibly different you are from one another.

I heard about a new store in NYC called The Husband Store. A woman goes in on the first floor and it explains that on the floors above there will be different types of husbands for sale. The higher you go up, the better they are, and the more expensive they are. She goes up one floor, and there are a bunch of men standing around and there is a big sign that says, “These men have jobs.” She thinks, “That’s pretty good.” But, you know, she’s curious about what’s on the next floor of guys, and so she goes up. On the 2nd floor there’s a sign that says, “These men have jobs AND they’re good with kids.” She says, “Wow.” So she goes up another floor. “These men have jobs, they love kids, AND they’re really cute.” She thinks, “This is fantastic!” So she goes up to the fifth floor and there is a sign that says, “These men have jobs, they love kids, they’re good-looking AND they help out around the house.” Well the woman is just blown away so she goes up one more floor; There’s no men on the floor; just a sign that says, “You are visitor 31,284,618. The floor is here simply to prove that women are never satisfied.”

Across the street, they opened up a Wife Store. There you go in on the first floor and it said the same thing: the women get nicer as you go up. So the man goes in to the first floor and there's a sign that says, "These wives love to have sex." No man has ever made it past the first floor.

- A lot of books have been written on the differences in men and women.
 - A lot of it is overdone. Our pastoral counselor, Brad H told me, "When I read some of these books about the differences between men and women, I usually sound more like the woman." But, that said, sometimes they can have some helpful generalities in them.
- ***His Needs, Her Needs*** by William Harley. Basic idea is that men and women enter marriage with 2 different ideas about what love looks like in action. These are not exact, but they may be helpful:

5 biggest ways the woman experiences love:

- Affection: Touch and constant verbal reminders...
- Conversation:
 - The last thing most guys feel like after a long day at work is a 45 minute talk with my wife. That's right. That conversation will *cost* you something. But that's what service is. Doing something for your spouse even at cost to yourself.
 - Guys: what are you doing each day that costs you something? If you're not doing anything that costs you something, you're not serving her or loving her like Christ loves the church!
 - 15 hours (?). At least more than comes naturally to most of you guys.
- To trust him: that he keeps his word; that he's not one person around her and another one on the road. So keeping promises, calling her while you are traveling, those things go a long way.
- Financial security: that he can provide
- Familial security:
 - That's he's a good father. When my wife sees me taking care of my kids... that's one of the biggest aphrodisiacs, which is why I'm kind of an expert on kids' books.

5 ways the man experiences love:

- Sex (Counseling a couple: 15 hours?)
 - By the way, sometimes this is reversed in a marriage
- Recreational companionship: someone who enjoys being with him.
- Attractive
- Domestic support: peace and quiet
- Respect and admiration
 - Don't have time to go deeply into this one... but sometimes girls don't get this.
 - Emerson Eggerich, *Love and Respect*: In surveys where they asked men "would you rather be unloved and completely left alone in the world, or thought of as inadequate and disrespected?" Consistently, men came back at about 74% that they would rather be unloved and left alone in the world than thought of as inadequate, and over 80% of women said the opposite.
 - They're just often different on this regard.
 - That's why it kills me to hear a woman tearing down her husband. She honestly has no idea what she's doing to him.
 - Women need to hear "Have I told you lately that I love you?" Men need to hear, "Have I told you lately how many people I've told how awesome I think you are?"

- **The big point: Serving them means learning how they feel love and loving them on their terms.**
 - Some of the best marriage advice I got: become a student of your spouse. Maybe they are like these things; maybe they are not.
 - **Don't be like the guy I once heard say**, "My wife is always complaining about me not telling her I love her. I provide for her." It's selfish of her to be disappointed that I don't tell her I love her and buy her gifts. Dear clueless dude: that's loving her on your terms, not serving her. It's selfishness.

3. By considering their sexual needs more significant than yours

- It means you have a servant attitude in the bedroom.

One of the best passages of this is in another of Paul's letters, the letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 7:3 *The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

- **Girls:** You're in the grocery store, he pinches your rear end. You say, "Stop that. Don't touch my rear end." He's got a verse! He says, "That's not your rear end, that's my rear end, and I'll pinch it if I want to."
- **Girl says to a guy:**
 - "**Shave** between your eyebrows." He says, "Why?" She says, "Because that's my forehead and I want 2 eyebrows on my forehead."
 - She says, "Quit dressing like a homeless guy when we go out." You say, "Why? I'm comfortable like this." She says, "It's my body. It turns me on when you dress that way."
 - She says, "I want to **snuggle**." Guy says, "What? Let's just have sex then watch Sportscenter. Better yet, let's have sex while I watch Sportscenter." She says, "Nope, its my body. Bring it over here."
- **In marriage I consider my body to be under the authority of my wife's sexual desires. All Paul is doing is applying the Philippians 2 servanthood principle to sex.** It's taking the principle of foot-washing into the bedroom.
- **Alright, here we go:**
- **Girls:** A servant-like attitude toward sex means that sex is NOT a reward for when he's earned it; and it is not a tool that you use to manipulate him to be what you want him to be.
 - **You say**, But I just don't want to do it as much as he wants to do it. Do you see conditionality in this verse? **Don't send me a raging email unless you include in it a better explanation for this verse.**
 - You say, "*He doesn't deserve it.*" Exactly! Fulfilling your husband sexually when he doesn't deserve it means to love your husband like Jesus loves you. If God only responded to you prayer when you deserved it, would He ever answer them? One of the reasons God had you marry a disappointing jerk because he wanted to teach you to love like Him.
 - **Girl** says, "Well that's all we we'll do, all the time." **Guys:** Be reasonable. Don't download this sermon and play it every night before you go to bed. (Some of you guys are going to memorize your first verse) If your wife has different sexual desires, then one of the ways you serve her is by taking that into account. *You are to love your wife like Christ loved the church.* Which means that she is not your toy... and if you are demanding she have sex with you on your schedule, or when she's tired, or when you've been a jerk all day, or when you're fighting, then you are not loving her like Christ loved the church.

- And that means that if you always are trying to touch her body without having made a conscious effort throughout the day to touch her heart and mind, you are not serving her. You are using her to meet your sexual needs rather than serving her in hers.

The point: You are to both have a servant attitude during sex.

5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- Don't deprive each other. If you do, it should only be a short time, and there ought to be a lot of prayer involved. Doesn't mean when he comes into the bedroom, girl, you hop down on your knees and say, "I'm in the safe zone. Don't touch me."
- The simplest explanation of that verse if you're married, you should have sex often. How many times if often? I don't know, enough to qualify as "often."
- What if my spouse wants to have sex and for whatever reason I just can't handle it right now?
 - 24 hr rule: if you say no, say yes in 24 hrs.
 - If you are not having sex with your spouse often you are depriving them and you are in direct disobedience to this verse.
- So go home and have sex for the glory of Jesus.
- Bottom line: It's not about what you feel like; it's about serving them. If you started to serve one another that way... you'd find things altogether different, I promise!
- One more comment here: Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*, "Developing a fulfilling sex life means I concern myself more with bringing generosity and service into the bedroom than with bringing washboard abdomens into bed. It means I see my wife as a holy temple of God, not just as a tantalizing human body."¹

But what if they just won't do it... they just say "no." Be patient. Serve them. Forgive them. Leave that between them and God and let God deal with it. Keep loving and serving them even when they don't deserve it. You may need to get some counseling. We provide some here at the Summit.

So, I've given you 3 ways you can apply Philippians 2, to serve one another, in marriage: (1) in the roles we play in marriage; (2) in how we express love to our spouse; and (3) in offering yourselves up sexually to them. There are certainly others (we'll do one more next week), but I think that's a good place to start. I love you guys.

I'll end today by taking you back to the beginning... that you will find the strength and freedom to live this way only in Christ.

- Think about your fullness in Him; Most of us can't serve our spouse, or anybody, because we're depending on them for so much! We need them so we're always using them to fill some deep need we have in our life.
- TULLIAN? Christ can give you a fullness in Him so that you won't crave it any longer from others. In Christ, you can be released from your need for approval and "useless glory" and recognition. And you can start to serve.

Remember these phrases from the beginning:

When you know you have the highest place, you are not afraid to take the lower place. When you know the highest place was given to you as a gift, you'll eagerly take the lower place.

¹ Sacred Marriage, 226.

In Christ, I can give up all that I have because in Christ I have all that I need.

I got inspiration for this sermon from a strange place this past week... visiting our church planters in Central Asai: Ka-Ren...

- Where do you learn to serve and bless someone who has hurt you? From Christ.

STRONG MARRIAGES BEGIN IN CHRIST. Some of you, your horizontal problems in marriage go back to a vertical problem with Jesus. Let us talk to you about Him. Ask one of your pastors at your campus, or, even better, the person who brought you.

Bullpen:

- When you have the highest place in Christ, you can take the lower place. When you have the richest treasure, you can handle the impoverished circumstances.
-
- Women, we were asleep when you were made; still no clue. Man went to sleep, God took out the rib. Kind of like when you slept through geometry and then the test came and you're like, "I've never seen or heard of that before." I was asleep when the explanation was given. Women, we were asleep when you were made. And it's not even our fault because God supernaturally put us to sleep.
- You are not seeking simply to bring yourself pleasure, but the whole event is your attempt to satisfy her. By asking her what she wants and serving her.
- **This means you have to talk a lot during sex.** You have to tell him what you like and what you don't like... especially you girls. Tell him what you like during sex. Men are morons when it comes to woman's body. I promise you your husband will like it. A guy never looks at a girl in the midst of sex and says, "Shhh."
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- **Guys:** If your body is hers, that means you'll seek to *touch her heart and her mind to a greater degree than you seek to touch her body*:²
 - **Guys:** make a date night! You say, "I can't afford it. I can assure you it is much more affordable than giving money to lawyers for a divorce! You take her out to a restaurant she likes. You bathe. You shave. You wear things that she wants you to wear. They shouldn't yell "Welcome to Moe's" when you walk in and Sportscenter should not be playing all around you. If there is a TV in the restaurant, you face away from it. And you put your body at her service and you listen to her. And not in normal guy listening mode; real conversation. Guys have a code language...
 - "Uh-huh," "sure, honey," or "yes dear," really means absolutely nothing; it's a conditioned male response.
 - "That's interesting, dear," really means, "Are you still talking?"
 - "It would take too long to explain," really means, "I have no idea how it works."
 - "Take a break, honey, you're working too hard," really means, "I can't hear the game over the vacuum cleaner."
 - "I heard you," really means, "I haven't the foggiest clue what you just said, and I am desperately hoping that I can fake it well enough so that you don't spend the next three days yelling at me."
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- This principle presupposes that men and women's sex drives are sometimes different! Any married couple will acknowledge as much.
 - **Bottle rocket**—lights up fast, burns fast, fizzles out fast; **diesel**: may take a while to get the motor running, but once she's running, she'll run for miles.³
 - Not always true.
 - Girls should understand that just because a guy doesn't want to be affectionate, it doesn't mean he doesn't love you. It's just that they are different!
 - *Because they are different, you have to realize that God commanded each of you to view your body as the property of your spouse for the fulfillment of their sexual needs.*

~~(Marriage is supposed to be one of God's natural laboratories He uses to teach you not to be self-centered. When you're single, a lot of times you don't really have to think about anybody but yourself; but you get~~

² C. J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*.

³ Jeff Foxworthy, *Blue Collar Comedy Tour*.

~~married and you're supposed to learn to think about somebody else. What usually happens, though, is that you start thinking "Now, instead of 1 person to always think about me (me), I have TWO people to think about me." And so marriages become these little cauldrons of boiling self-centeredness.)~~

- "In humility count others more worthy than yourself."
 - *count* others. Count means "reckon." Doesn't mean they are more worthy, but that you count them as more worthy.
 - *Mortgage payment example?*
 - The reason I point that out is that some of you are going to write off this whole message by saying, "Oh, but my spouse doesn't deserve my service." Of course they don't. Neither did you deserve forgiveness. But if you have received the unmerited forgiveness of Jesus; then you will give unmerited service in your marriage.

It doesn't mean that they *are* more worthy, but that you count them as more worthy.

God is worthy of our response, even if our spouse is not
A covenant with yourself

- Or let's talk about conflict... some of you are really upset at a spouse or someone who has hurt you. "They took from me... they took advantage of me." I'm not trying to make light of that. I'm really not. Here's the question: What personal losses did Jesus undergo for you and me? How did He respond to us? And what if He had insisted on our rights?
 - By the way, I'm not saying you won't ever confront somebody when they are hurting you. Christ confronted us about our sin, but not out of a sense of what we did to Him, but for our sake, out of love for us. You don't find Him on the cross going, "I can't believe how much you've taken me for granted, taken advantage of me and trampled on me." He endured it, silently, lovingly, forgivingly, and when He did speak to us He did so for our sake. He showed us He was willing to have all His rights trampled on to put our interests first. What does that enable you to do to the ones that are hurting you? Can you forgive them and seek their good, not your revenge?
 - **This is one of the hardest things to do, because deep down you feel like you have rights, and those are the LAST things you feel like you should ever have to give up.** (I have a hard enough time with letting go of what *doesn't* rightfully belong to us, much less what does rightfully belong to me!)

William Booth... founder of the Salvation Army, in his old age was scheduled to speak at the annual meeting of the Salvation Army in NYC. He became very sick, however, and was unable to travel, and so he telegraphed what many people said was the most powerful speech he ever gave. It was only one word: "*Others*"

Context: *The Philippians were struggling with outside forces, therefore making internal unity that much more significant. The same could said concerning marriage.*

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue

confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Ephesians 5

- People who have been oppressed or abused in childhood often pity themselves to the point of self-centeredness. How do we help them?
 - Self-centeredness is actually not the result of that oppression. It acts as an aggressor. Keller calls it a cloud of smoke that chokes us and aggravates our self-centeredness even more.
- When we are hurt in a relationship, we sometimes turn straight to our previous wounded ness... This is the wrong way.
 - We must turn to the gospel which is the destroyer of self-centeredness.
- The essence of marriage is not a feeling (ie love), not bearing children, or enjoying sexual intimacy; it is a vow/promise.
 - This promise is 'making an appointment with your self' 10 years in advance and knowing the decisions that you will make, which will be based on that initial promise.
- There are two types of self-centeredness.
 - One is thinking too highly of ourselves
 - The other is thinking too lowly