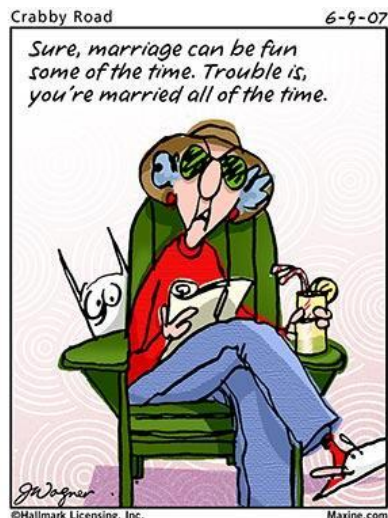


E-Series

Relationship Residue



21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22** Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, **27** and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **28** In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- **30** for we are members of his body. **31** "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." **32** This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about

Christ and the church. **33** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. —**Ephesians 5:21-33**

Sunday we finished our Lenten series exploring different obstacles that hinder our ability to shine the light of God's love to those around us. Like I said on Sunday, there are infinitely many different things that can create eclipses in our lives, preventing us from reflecting the light of the Son.

Maybe it was my recent viewing of the movie *Fireproof: Never Leave Your Partner Behind*. Maybe it was that movie combined with the launching of a new Growth Group for couples that Heather and I are involved with; or, maybe it was all that combined with the realization that I haven't spent as much time as I need to lately with my family, and particularly with my wife. Whatever it was, I kept coming back to Relationship Residue for the final week of our series.

When Relationship Residue and Marital Messiness build up in our lives, it can certainly affect our ability to shine. When any relationship in our lives is strained, it ramps up our stress level, takes a toll on energy level, and saps our passion. This is particularly so when it is the second-most important relationship in our lives (second only to our relationship with Christ).

The insidious thing about Marital Messiness is that, Most of the time, it accumulates very slowly. Slowly, subtly, but ever so surely, when we don't deal with conflict, when we don't keep open lines of communication, when we don't love our spouses like Jesus loves us, when we don't practice forgiveness and reconciliation, then Marital Messiness cakes on and dims our light.

Because of the subtlety of Marital Messiness, relationship experts say that it is a good idea for married couples to remain vigilant about working on their relationships. Even couples who have been married 20 or 30 years need to work always—scheduling regular date nights, attending marriage enrichment retreats or seminars every year or two, and occasionally reading a marriage book together.

How long has it been since you and your spouse really sat down and talked without outside distractions? When did you last go on a date together? Do you know what your spouse is most excited about right now? What does he or she look forward to the most? What are her/his dreams?

Take some time and have an intentional conversation in the next couple of days, and, if need be, working on cleaning up any Marital Messiness that has accumulated.

Trying to get out of the Doghouse from Sunday,

Pastor Michael



Time to Shine in 2009!

P.S.—If you're single, remember that is a vocation (calling) you share with Jesus and the Apostle Paul, and is one to be honored.