

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
October 23, 2016

In the Love of Christ

1 Peter 3:7

3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1. Source of Love

Last time, we have learned the “lessons for wives” from verse 1-6. Today, we’re going to learn the “lessons for husbands.” We, however, have more wives than husbands, more singles and unmarried than married couples here at our worship service. Therefore, let’s think about some points over human relationships – wider viewpoints than just for husbands, through today’s verse.

At the beginning, I would like to point out the word, “likewise” in this “lesson for husbands.” This means that, likewise wives submit themselves to their own husbands; husbands may do the same to their own wives. We also cannot pass over that the Bible taught wives before, saying, “Likewise the servants submit themselves to their own masters; wives may do the same to their own husbands.” Moreover, “The servants may submit to their own masters likewise Jesus submitted Himself to us,” taught in the Bible before the lessons for wives. Husbands likewise wives, wives likewise servants, servants likewise Jesus. In any relationships, the conclusive lesson is that Jesus

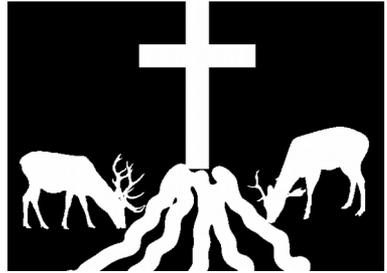
submitted Himself to us. Here it says, “likewise,” this word teaches us that we may submit ourselves to others LIKEWISE Jesus did to us.

Ephesians 5:22-23 teaches in detail about the relationship between husband and wife. Here mentions to wives, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.” (5:22) Yet to their husbands, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (5:25) Wives would not achieve to submit themselves to their own husbands as to the Lord without faith; but husbands need much more faith to achieve their lesson to love their wives as Christ gave Himself up for the church. Moreover, the “faith” is to believe that Jesus gave Himself up for the church, as well as believing in Christ atoned us, and living in the love of the redemption. It’s all based on the redemption that Jesus Christ gave Himself up for sinners to be saved through His atoning, that servants submit to masters, wives do the same to their husbands, and husbands also to their wives each other.

The Cross is always the center of all lessons in the Bible, that’s why it even teaches about husband and wife based on the Cross of Jesus Christ. Gospel, the good news of salvation, is called “verses of the Cross.” Churches have been preached the Cross, and remembered the Cross at the Lord’s Supper. This is because all of things about salvation are in the Cross. One kid’s song sings, “Deep and wide, Deep and wide, There's a fountain flowing deep and wide. Plunge right in. Lose your sin. There’s a fountain flowing deep and wide.” This song is from Zechariah 13:1, "On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.” All of that we

need, forgiveness, grace, and life, are come flowed out from the Cross.

Here we have a drawing describes a deer drinking water flowed from the Cross. It implies that the Cross-is the comfort and healing for the drought souls. Anytime you have troubles or sufferings from relationship, you have a place to rest. You will be comforted beside the Cross.



2. Knowledge of Faith

Next, we would like to pay attention to today's verse "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way" This "knowledge" or "understanding" is not about the knowledge of the world or academic knowledge. It is the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ. "Knowledge of faith" is not "Yes, I understand, I remember". It's to know Christ personally and to experience power of God through Christ. Not only the human relationship but also the problems that we face, will be solved by the living knowledge of faith which we know God rationally, emotionally, and physically.

Many years ago, an English writer, John Gray wrote a best seller book, titled "Men from Mars, Women from Venus". It is translated into Japanese as well. This book tells that there is a clear difference like aliens between men and women. So you must be able to understand each other; otherwise, the marriage will go wrong. There are many similar kind of books, and some of them are useful; however, what the Scripture is teaching us is not the "wisdom",

“knowledge”, or “skill” for successful marriage or happy family. The Bible teaches us the knowledge of faith.

According to the Bible, the marriage of Christians represents the relationship of Church redeemed by Christ. In other words, the relationship between people and people represents the relationship between God and His people. The marriage of Christian taught in the Bible is more than just staying with your beloved one or having a comfortable place. It is to understand the love of Christ for Church. The Bible teaches us to build your family and the human relationship by the love of Christ.

In the US or Japan, half of the married couple face to the risk of divorce. It is necessary to understand the love of Christ in order that husband and wife can serve each other. Church should serve Christ; however, Christ served Church and dedicated himself. There is no bigger love that Christ dedicated himself to the churches. According to John 15:13, “ Greater love has no one than this”. The human relationship supported by this love will be able to be recovered more than one time by our prayers, patient, and efforts according the knowledge of faith and prayer even it broken.

3. Protection of Weaknesses

Lastly, let’s think about the word “weakness” in today’s verse, since it is crucial to recognize other’s weakness and accept it in order to maintain the interpersonal relationship.

Every person has strength and weakness, which mixes up well and makes personality. Those with strength but no weakness are not appealing in a sense, because those with weakness understand God’s

blessing. Therefore, they can thank God for His blessing without being haughty. Because they have weakness, they can feel other's pain and suffering and they can stand by them.

Weakness and sins are different. Needless to say, it is wrong to switch sins to human weakness and blame diseases or genes. But it is also wrong to blame weakness without sins. Usually, those who have a big sin are strong. Since weakness is not equal to evil, it should not be blamed, but should be protected.

Women in the old days when the Bible was written, they were put in a weak position in many circumstances. We often see strong and talented people criticize the opposite for their inability to do or understand things. When they are criticized, some people immediately snap back and say, "you will see !!", and some may be hurt and leave the work or school. We have to remember that when you love and respect someone, you have to include every thing, including her/his weakness.

When we first came to the US, we were very worried if my children would like the school. But their teachers did not criticize their weakness but praised their strength, and my children soon became to love the American school. Since the Japanese schools were opposite, I was surprised to see the way the American society, which I thought followed the merit system, welcomed people with weakness. But I soon learned that it came from the love of Christ and I was very thankful for that.

I am not saying that America is an ideal country in every aspect, but it is true that there are many people who already know the love of Christ and put the love into action. Moreover, each individual is

respected and the people who know the love of Christ are supporting this country. We cannot love each other with a mere humanitarianism. We need the love of Christ. We need that the love of Christ, which he threw himself away for sinners and for people who stand against God. Romans 5:6-8 is speaking to our heart, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person--though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die-- but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Let's return to the source of love! Let's engrave it in our heart. Let's put this into action at home, at work and in various personal relationships.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, we live in the world where people forget to love each other, care each other or support each other. Please help us build a relationship with the love of Christ that you have given to us. Please help us not to forget that you accept us through the love of Christ so that we can accept others into our life. May the relationship we build reflect the love of Christ. Through the name of Lord Jesus we pray, Amen.