

How Your Identity in Christ Makes You a Better Spouse

Greg E. Gifford, PhD

I. Introduction

II. What is Identity?

A. “Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, Christians are united with Christ in his life, death, resurrection, and glorification.”

B. “Union with Christ is a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, Christ is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ.”¹

III. Ephesians 2: Who Were We?

A. Vs. 1: Dead in our Sins

B. V. 2: Followed the Course of this World

C. V. 3: Followed the Prince of the Power of this Air

¹ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, “Union with Christ.”

D. V. 3: Lived in the Passions of Our Flesh

E. V. 3: Carrying Out the Desires of the Body and Mind

F. V. 3: Children of Wrath

G. V. 12: Separate from Christ and Alienated

H. V. 19: Strangers and Aliens

IV. How Does Knowing Who We Were Affect Our Marriage?

A. We know we are sinful

B. We know we need God's grace

C. We cultivate humility in light of our own neediness.

D. Think accurately about yourself

E. Crushes self-righteousness

F. Crushes judgmentalism

G. Crushes haughtiness

H. “50 Logs” To Remove Assignment

V. Who are We Now?

A. “We are blessed” (Eph. 1:3)

B. We are chosen in him (v. 4)

C. We are predestined for adoption as sons (v. 5)

D. We are redeemed (v. 7)

E. We have an inheritance in him (v. 11)

F. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit (v. 13)

G. We are alive together in Christ (2:6)

H. We are his workmanship (2:10)

VI. How Does Knowing Who You Are Affect Your Marriage?

- A. *Illustration: Encouraging the Husband with No Reciprocity*
- B. Knowing who you are in Christ makes you a stable lover of your spouse
- C. You are not dependent on your spouse to fulfill you or keep you happy.
- D. You know who you are in Christ
- E. You initiate love because of your rock-solid love of Christ

VII. Conclusion:

- A. Instead of working on your marriage first, shore up and ground yourself in the love of God through Christ to you (Rom. 8:32).
- B. From a place of stability in Christ, love your spouse well.

Biblical Roles Overflow from Identity

Greg E. Gifford

I. Introduction

II. Paul Establishes a Theology of Identity In Christ Before Giving Domestic Roles

- a. Chapter 1 of Ephesians: New Identity
- b. Chapter 2 of Ephesians: Old Identity
- c. Chapter 3 of Ephesians: The Co-Heirs
- d. Chapter 4 of Ephesians: The Church
- e. Chapter 5—*Roles in Marriage!!*

III. The Husband's Role

- a. "Head": Servant Leadership of Wife and Family
 - i. Spiritual Leadership (Eph. 5:25-28)
 - ii. Financial Leadership (1 Tim. 5:8)
 - iii. Parental Leadership (Eph. 6:1-4)
 - iv. Romantic leadership (Eph. 5:25)
 - v. Communication Leadership (Eph. 4:15, 25)
 - vi. Household Management Leadership (1 Tim. 5:1-10)

- b. "Love": The Husband is Called to Sacrificially and Sanctificationally (I made this word up!) Love is Wife
 - i. Nourish and Cherish (5:29)

 - ii. Maui vs. Mojave Man

- c. "Understanding": 1 Peter 3:7
 - i. Deferring to her

- ii. Considering her as more important

IV. The Wife's Role

- a. "Submit": Place herself under his leadership.

- i. Not the same word as obedience!

- ii. She freely submits from a place of equality (Gal. 3:28)

- b. "Respects": A wife honors her husband

- i. She seeks to honor him to the best of her ability

- ii. She honors him as her husband, as opposed to basing honor on his success or competencies.

V. Parenting Comes After Roles as Husband and Wife

- a. Ephesians 6:1-4

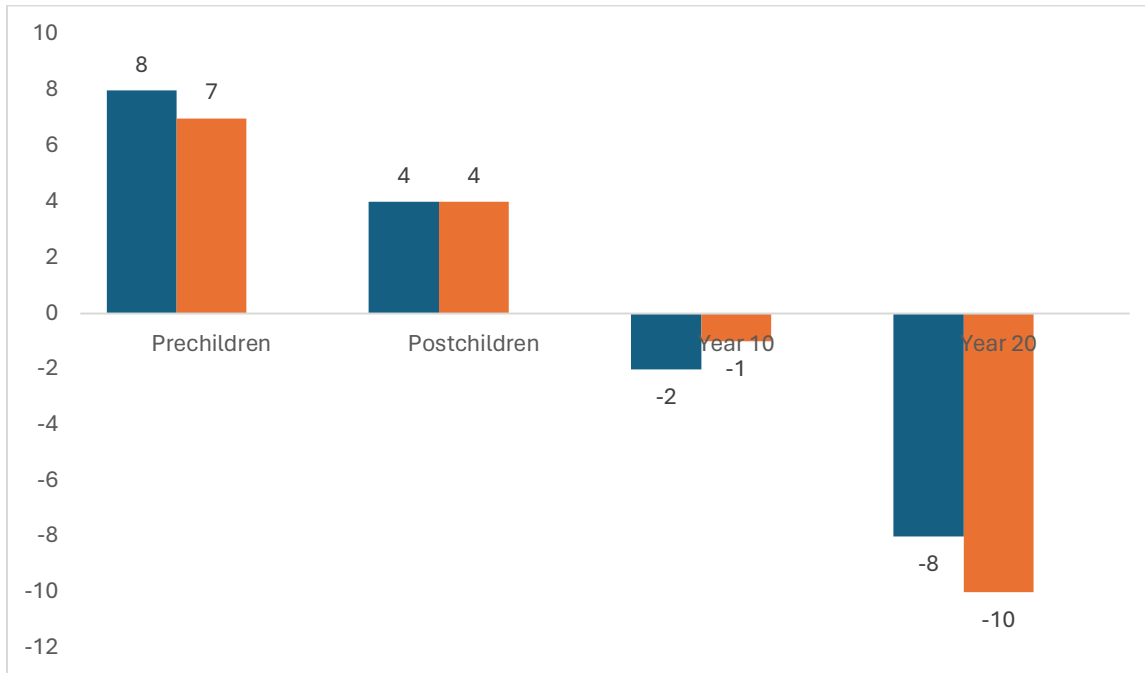
- b. What does this show us? Our role as a parent comes after our love for and commitment to our spouse.

c. Parenting problems reveal marriage problems.

VI. Conclusion

Investing in Us with Time Together and Communication

Greg E. Gifford



I. Investing In Us:

- A. See your relationship as the accumulation of relational equity that grows when we treat each other in Christ-like ways.
- B. The more equity, the more trust, the more intimacy, and the more beautiful our relationship is.
- C. Less equity brings:
 - i. Lack of trust
 - ii. Struggle to believe the best

- iii. Every little thing bothers us
- iv. We are in conflict constantly
- v. Annoyed and easy to provoke
- vi. Passivity for men
- vii. Bitterness for women

II. Keeping our Relationship Grounded in Christ, We Invest In Each Other

III. Investing In Us Through Time Together

A. The relationship skill of time together

- i. Any relationship take time to grow!

B. Time together

C. Prioritizing time makes deposits

D. Principles to Follow:

- i. Four Nights Together
- ii. Dates As Much As Possible
- iii. Serve Together

iv. Weekends Together

E. Ideas to Consider (See Appendices)

i. First fifteen

ii. Date Night Rules

iii. Goals for Us

IV. Investing in Us By Communication

A. Godly Communication

i. Listening to Understand (Prov. 14:29; James 1:19-21)

ii. Speaking to Build Up (Eph. 4:15, 29)

B. Regularity of Communication

i. Chit-Chat Leads to Deeper Conversation

ii. Cultivate Chit Chat in Your Life

C. Husbands Take Initiative to Communicate

D. “Keeping Current” (Eph. 4:26-27; Matt. 5:23).

V. Conclusion

- A. As your time together and communication go, so goes your intimacy. These are way points in the health of your marriage!

Text Each Other One Area You Commit to Growing in Regarding Either Your Time Together or Your Communication

Maintaining a Thriving Marriage and Distinct Roles Amidst the Busyness

Greg E. Gifford

I. Introduction

A. My Life

B. Your Life

i. Marriage Problem Origination:

Mission Creep: “a gradual shift in objectives during the course of a military campaign, often resulting in an unplanned long-term commitment.”²

Mission Creep in Our Marriage = “Our marriage is no longer the priority!”

II. Knit Together with Divided Interests

- A. Matthew 19:3-6 “And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,⁵ and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?⁶ So they are no

² Google Dictionary, Accessed August 2024, <https://www.google.com/search?q=mission+creep&oq=mission+creep&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l7.2341j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>.

longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”³

B. Jesus makes it clear that the weaving of one flesh occurs at the point of marriage—it has happened.

C. God *has* knit you to your spouse. You are knit-together, yet you have divided interests.

- i. **1 Corinthians 7:25-34:** “Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is. ²⁷Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. ²⁸But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. *Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.* ²⁹This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, ³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, ³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. ³³But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, ³⁴and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband.”⁴

D. Pleasing the Lord as Primary Interest

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 19:3–6.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 7:32–34.

- i. “I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord” (v. 35).
- ii. Paul mentions this in varying contexts:
 - a. Glorify God in your body (1 Cor. 6:20),
 - b. Glorify God in your everyday life (1 Cor. 10:31),
 - c. 2 Corinthians 5:9, “Whether we’re home or away we make it our aim to please him.”

E. Pleasing Spouse as Secondary Interest

- i. Yet, this is also the point that Paul affirms: you *should* please your spouse. He never denigrates from the importance of pleasing your spouse. Yes, pleasing God is our first interest, but pleasing our spouse is still an interest.
- ii. There’s a tension now: we are knit together by God with divided interests. Oh, and we’re busy.

III. A Theology of Busyness:

- A. What does the Bible say about busyness?

- i. Busyness is God’s Will ... for us (1 Thess. 5:18).

- ii. Busyness is not the enemy

- iii. “Busyness” as enemy mindset often sees that “tranquility, free time, rest time, inaction” are all more desirable than busyness. However, that is not an intrinsically biblical idea.
 - a. Biblical is “fruitful”:

 - b. Biblical is making the best use of the time:

 - c. Biblical is serving others:

 - d. All of these things require effort and in performing them, we lose free/leisure time.

- iv. Busyness isn’t the enemy; lack of prioritization is the enemy.
 - a. When we mis-prioritize because of busyness, we don’t have busyness to blame—we have our own mis-prioritization.

B. Busyness isn’t forever

- i. Kevin DeYoung says, “It’s OK to be busy at times. You can’t love and serve others without giving of your time. So work hard; work long; work often. Just remember it’s not supposed to be about you. Feed people, not your pride.”⁵ None of us will be extremely busy for the rest of our life.

- a. Summary: There will be seasons of busyness ... and seasons of less busyness. We trust God in these seasons while seeking to be faithful.

IV. Prioritize Pleasing in Busy Seasons

A. Prioritizing of Marriage in Busyness as a Means of Pleasing God *and* Spouse.

- i. What often happens is not that a couple decides to blast a hole through their marriage but that busyness creeps in and chokes out significant marital priorities. We ‘know’ but have simply drifted due to busyness.
 - a. We know we don’t communicate as we should

 - b. We know we are not leading our families as God has called us

 - c. We know that our husbands don’t get more of us than our children.

 - d. We know that it’s been a while since we’ve been away together,

 - e. We know that our intimacy is waning,

⁵ Crazy Busy, 41.

f. But we have not prioritized changing any of these things.

B. Pleasing *God* in the Busyness

i. Not discontent, bitter, or waiting for it to “finally slow down” to be faithful.

C. Pleasing *My Spouse* in the Busyness

i. Although our interests are divided, we know that we are to please our spouse.

a. **How do we do this?** How do we maintain the proper balance in pleasing our spouse during the busyness? Answer: By being who God has called us to be as a husband or a wife!

D. Roles and Role Fulfillment

i. Husband:

a. Provider:

b. Leader:

c. Lover:

ii. Wife:

a. Supporter/Submission:

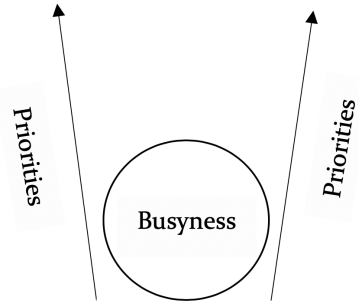
b. Honorer/Respecter:

c. Manager of Household:

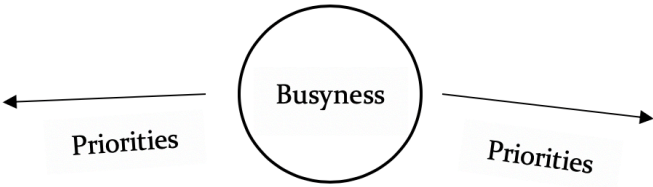
When we are doing what God has called us to as husband or wife, that's a success. That's what it looks like to prioritize well in seasons of busyness.

- b. Even though we also work, as a wife, we ensure that we support our husbands, manage the household, and always respect him—in public and private—amidst the busyness that's a success. Busyness doesn't need to take away from the prioritization of our roles in marriage. Busyness just makes us more intentional in those roles.

Our Priorities Dictate our Busyness:



Not our busyness dictating our priorities:



V. Practices to Prioritize in Busy Seasons of Life

- A. Ask yourself if we do these things now? If so, great! Keep going! If not, especially if you don't do a significant amount of them, pick 1-2 areas that you know you will need focus on.

As you evaluate these areas, if you can say “no” to the question, then develop a principle to help you say, “Yes.” For instance, “Do you regularly eat meals together?” If you say no, then make a guideline for how you will wake up earlier to have breakfast together. Or how you will eat meals together on the weekends. *Make a priority of these things!*

Evenings

- i. Do you and your spouse eat meals together when home? Breakfast? Dinner? Weekend meals? What's that look like?
- ii. Do you try to get home at the same time, or if dad works and mom stays home, wife—do you get home at/before hubby? Hubby, do you try to get home when your wife gets home in the evening?
- iii. Do you pause what you're doing when your spouse arrives home?
- iv. Do you tell each other the highlights of the day?
- v. Do you get off the phone when you get home?
- vi. Do you stay off the phone while it's family time?

- vii. Do you go to bed at the same time and try to maintain the same sleep schedule?

- viii. Do you prioritize Sexual Intimacy? Do you go to bed before you're absolutely exhausted?

Daytime

- ix. Do you communicate throughout the day and about when you'll be home?

- x. Do you know when you're too busy that week? What principles have you agreed upon as a couple to know this?

Morning Time

- xi. Do you talk to each other about your plans for the day?

- xii. Do you pause to say goodbye to each other before you leave?

- xiii. Do you kiss each other each time you leave?

General Scheduling for your Home:

- xiv. Do you ask your spouse if family/friends can swing by before they come?

- xv. Do you go to bed at the same time? If not, do you go to bed at the same time as much as is possible?

- xvi. Do you have a regular date night? At least a time where you can have quality time to invest in each other?

Weekends

- xvii. Do you spend your time together on days off?

- xviii. Are your days off spent running children to separately to various locations while together? Or do you work on projects together, even if their around the house?

- xix. Do you do ministry together? Do you volunteer at the church in the same ministries so that your time isn't divided from your spouse?

- xx. Do you have meaningful times of conversation?

- xxi. Do you talk about things of depth?

- xxii. Do you retreat to a private location for conversation/conflict resolution?

VI. Conclusion:

- A. **Set priorities for your marriage**—time together, role fulfillment, communication, sexual intimacy, and so forth.

- B. **Set non-priorities**: Because you are busy, you must identify what is not a priority in your marriage. Making every cousins birthday party, for instance. Watching television regularly. Perhaps you need to both identify hobby's that are simply not a priority—sorry golfers!

- C. **Let's finish with a few resources**:
 - i. First Fifteen Minutes

 - ii. Date Nights

 - iii. Schedule Time for *Us*!

 - iv. Goals Together as A Couple

First Fifteen Minutes

Scripture makes it clear that our spouses are our number one earthly priority (Gen. 2:24). The first fifteen minutes of being home often can set the mood for the evening. Upon arrival of getting home from work in the evenings, getting the kids settled, and getting through the door, seek to spend the initial fifteen minutes with your spouse. This means that the wife stops what she's doing if she's home, or the husband stops what he's doing and you guys take 15 minutes to talk with each other.

- We have to hang up the phone when our spouse walks in the door.
- We have to put dinner preparation on hold for a few minutes.
- Children—be quiet.
- TV—be quiet.
- Cell phone—be quiet. My spouse is home and they are a priority to me.
- These first fifteen minutes are a priority and often set the tone for the evening so let's demonstrate through what we do first when we get home that our spouses are a priority for us.

Date Night Rules

1. We will have a date night at least once per month!
2. Our date needs to be *mutually* enjoyable!
3. We are going to rotate who picks and plans the date (one spouse picks and plans, and the other spouse plans the next date night).
4. Our date absolutely must be kid-free!
5. Finally, our date doesn't need to cost money!

Schedule Time for Us!

In our normal, weekly schedule, what are the times that we will schedule for us?

1. When will you intentionally not work so you can be with your spouse (not just your family)? Whether that is at home or at the office?
2. When will you dismiss the kids from interrupting you and ask for privacy?
3. When will you enforce a bedtime for younger children, so you have time in the evening with your spouse?
4. Will you call each other on your commute or during your lunch break?
5. How can you arrange for your kids to be at a friend's house so you have time together?
6. Can you take a walk together with your spouse instead of watching television for the purpose of having time together?
7. Will you guys wake up early before work and enjoy coffee together before your day starts?
8. When will you guys have a conversation of depth?

All of us schedule that which is important to us, so what will you do to 'schedule time for us'?

Our Goal for the Upcoming Year

Sit down with your spouse and think of three goals that you have for your marriage in 2020 that would build intimacy and honor God. These goals could correspond to activities together, fun things to learn, a book to read, or a trip to take with your spouse. Really, anything that helps you promote intimacy and to prioritize each other would be a great goal.

For example: “Our first goal is that we would read a book together this year” or “Our first goal is that we would learn a new language together this year.”

Goal #1:

Goal #2

Goal #3
