

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

The Life and Ministry of Paul

Beth Moore

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The Author

Beth Moore realized at the age of 18 that God was claiming her future for Christian ministry. While she was sponsoring a cabin of sixth graders at a missions camp, God unmistakably acknowledged that she would work for Him. There Beth conceded all rights to the Lord she had loved since childhood. However, she encountered a problem: although she knew she was “wonderfully made,” she was “fearfully” without talent. She hid behind closed doors to discover whether a beautiful singing voice had miraculously developed, but the results were tragic. She returned to the piano from which years of fruitless practice had streamed but found the noise to be joyless. Finally accepting that the only remaining alternative was missions work in a foreign country, she struck a martyr’s pose and waited. Yet nothing happened.

Still confident of God’s calling, Beth finished her degree at Southwest Texas State University, where she fell in love with Keith. After they married in December 1978, God added to their household two priority blessings: Amanda and Melissa.

As if putting together puzzle pieces one at a time, God filled Beth’s path with supportive persons who saw



something in her she could not. God used individuals such as Marge Caldwell, John Bisagno, and Jeannette Cliff George to help Beth discover gifts of speaking, teaching, and writing. Twelve years after her first speaking engagement, those gifts have spread all over the nation. Her joy and excitement in Christ are contagious; her deep love for the Savior, obvious; her style of speaking, electric.

Beth’s ministry is grounded in and fueled by her service at her home fellowship, First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, where she serves on the pastor’s council and teaches a Sunday School class attended by more than two hundred women. Beth believes that her calling is Bible literacy: guiding believers to love and live God’s Word. *To Live Is Christ: The Life and Ministry of Paul* grew from her fervent desire that women know greater intimacy with God.

Beth loves the Lord, loves to laugh, and loves to be with His people. Her life is full of activity, but one commitment remains constant: counting all things but loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus, the Lord (see Phil. 3:8).

Foreword

A few years ago a beautiful, vivacious young lady came to see me and shared what God had laid on her heart. As I sat there talking to her I never *dreamed* God had planned such an awesome future for her.

Beth Moore had always led the early morning slimnastics class for our Women’s Retreats. She did it beautifully, so of course I asked her to do it again this particular year. She agreed to lead the class and then said: “Marge, I’d love to do a seminar on something else besides slimnastics.”

I asked what she would speak on.
She replied: “Why, Jesus, of course!”

That sounded wonderful to me, so she did her seminar. It was so real and humorous and warm. She exuded vitality, energy, and zest for the Heavenly Father! I knew then that God would use her in a mighty way.

Beth’s desire to help others know Jesus and His Word is contagious. She is the same wonderful person in her personal life as you will see on the video and get to know through the book. What a treat to journey with Beth in the footsteps of Paul the apostle.

Marge Caldwell
Author, Speaker, Marriage Counselor

Contents

Introduction	6
Week 1 The First Footprints	9
Week 2 Finding the Way	30
Week 3 Miles and Missions	52
Week 4 Unexpected Sojourners and Wider Paths	73
Week 5 An Unfamiliar Road	94
Week 6 Travel Ties and Hard Good-byes	115
Week 7 A Walk of Faith	137
Week 8 The Pathway to Rome	158
Week 9 Letters Bridging the Miles	180
Week 10 Going Home	201
The Christian Growth Study Plan	223

W E E K 1

The First Footprints

Day 1
Set Apart from Birth

Day 2
The Childhood of a Pharisee's Son

Day 3
At the Feet of Gamaliel

Day 4
Strangled by the Law

Day 5
Meanwhile in Jerusalem

When a little boy named Saul played make believe with his friends in a Jewish neighborhood in Tarsus, he could never have imagined the real life drama that awaited him. As God carefully watched the small child at play, at school, and at worship, I wonder if He thought, *Someday, My child, you will work for Me.* You and I have the opportunity to witness the unfolding of one of the most dramatic stories in Christendom. Our journey begins with some safe suppositions based on chronicles of ancient Hebrew life, but we will quickly move into well-documented scriptural accounts. This week we will imagine what Paul's childhood and upbringing might have been like, then we will set our sights on Jerusalem where strange twists of events will take place. We will seek to answer the following questions.

Principal Questions

- Day 1: How would you describe the events surrounding the circumcision of an infant boy in an ancient Hebrew home?
- Day 2: What are a few ways the ancient Hebrew home emphasized Scripture in the life of a young boy?
- Day 3: How would you describe Gamaliel, Saul's primary teacher in Jerusalem?
- Day 4: What would you imagine Paul's life was like as he attempted to live by the law faultlessly?
- Day 5: What important event occurred in Jerusalem in the years following Saul's assumed departure?

I hope you'll jump into this journey with both feet. May the pages of Acts and Paul's Epistles have our footprints all over them by the time we complete our last mile. Let's get started. I'll meet you in Tarsus!

Set Apart from Birth

Today's Treasure
"God, who set me
apart from birth and
called me by his grace,
was pleased to reveal
his Son in me so that I
might preach him
among the Gentiles"
(Gal. 1:15-16).

Through the next 10 weeks we will explore the life of the apostle Paul in a respectable degree of chronological order. To understand the man who was struck blind so he could see, we need to grasp the impact of what it meant to go from Saul the persecutor of Christians to Paul the first Christian missionary. Paul grew up in an orthodox Jewish home in a Gentile city. The Bible gives us only a few pieces of information about his upbringing; but based on those tidbits, we may draw a number of conclusions.

We know that Paul was reared as closely to the letter of the Jewish law as possible (see Phil. 3:5-6); therefore, based on Scripture and the traditional Jewish code of law, we can describe many details of his young life. We will begin our study of the apostle in the most appropriate place—his cradle.

Today I depart from my usual style of Bible study to paint a portrait of Paul's inauguration to Hebrew life. The following narrative describes the events which most likely began soon after his birth. The story line is fictional to help you picture the events, but the circumstances and the practices are drawn from Scripture and the Jewish code of law. At the conclusion of today's lesson, I will ask you to review a number of terms and find the biblical basis for several of the practices you read. Sit back and imagine the beginning of one of the most significant lives in all Christendom.



"I thank Thee, O living and eternal King, Who hast mercifully restored my soul within me; Thy faithfulness is great" (Code, I, p.1).

The words fell from his tongue while his eyes were still heavy from the night's rest. His morning prayers invited unexpected emotion this particular dawn as he soberly considered the honor that lay before him. Eight days had passed since the birth of his friend's son. Today would be the child's *Berit Milah*. He would stand beside the father at the infant's circumcision as the *sandek*, Jewish godfather, assuming solemn responsibility—second only to the parents, over the child's devout religious upbringing.

Adorned appropriately, the *sandek* and his wife made their way through the busy streets of Tarsus toward the home of the new parents. Tarsus was a beautiful city—a difficult admission for any man of the *diaspora*, separated from his Jewish homeland. Other than being Gentile, the city had everything a man could want. Scenic? Like few others. The refreshing Mediterranean breezes seemed to ricochet off the Cappadocia mountains, filling the air with a natural, sweet incense. No, this was not Mount Zion. But the mark of the Maker was most assuredly engraved on the countryside.

The moment was suddenly disturbed by the Greek merchants, obviously amused at the peculiar attire of the Jewish couple. The *sandek* thought to himself, *It would behoove us at times never to have learned their language*. Impossible, however. After all, Tarsus was their city. The Hebrew people within this Gentile city's walls were blessed to enjoy a relatively healthy community of God-fearing men. He would not complain ... although he might be tempted. Not today, anyway. He had far more important things on his mind.

"I think they are naming him Saul," said his wife.

"We shall not presume his name until we hear it from the lips of his father," he responded.

He had intended to arrive first so he could assist the father with preparations; but a few members of the *Minyan*, a quorum of 10 Jewish men, had already gathered at the door. Normally, the woman of a Jewish household would offer warm welcomes to visi-

diaspora—the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine following the Babylonian Exile

tors at her door, but the newborn's mother was treated with utmost care during the days following her delivery. Friends and relatives assisted the father in any preparations that had to be made for *Berit Milah*, a tiny infant boy's first initiation into Judaism.

The small house was filled with people. The father, a Pharisee and Roman citizen, was an impressive man. He was one of a few men in the community who seemed to command a certain amount of respect from both Jew and Gentile. When all had finally gathered, the ceremony began. The *sandek* took his place in a chair next to the father who remained standing. The new father was not a particularly tall man, but the *sandek* couldn't help but notice that his stature seemed particularly stretched today. And why not? What could make a Jewish man stand taller than a newborn son?

The infant was placed on the *sandek's* knees, and the father leaned over him with greatest care to oversee the circumcision of his beloved son. He then handed the knife to the *mohel*, the most upright and expert circumcisor available in Tarsus. The father watched anxiously for the interval between the cutting of the foreskin and its actual removal. He could not help but smile as he competed with his wailing son for the attention of the quorum as he spoke the benediction, "Who hath sanctified us by His commandments and hath commanded us to bring him into the covenant of our father Abraham" (Code, IV, p.43). With the exception of the *sandek*, all who gathered stood for the ceremony and responded to the benediction with the words, "Just as he has been initiated into the covenant, so may he be initiated into the study of the Torah, to his nuptial (marriage) canopy, and to the performance of good deeds" (Code, IV, p.44).

No one could deny the blessings of good health God had already bestowed on the infant boy. The *sandek* had to hold him securely between his calloused palms to keep the child from squirming completely off his lap. His tiny face was blood red, his volume at full scale. This may have been his first bout with anger, but it would not be his last. Had the ceremony not held such sober significance, the *sandek* might have snickered at the infant's zeal. He did not dare grin, but he might wonder if God would. Tears of joy stung his eyes. The child laying on his lap was yet another piece of tangible evidence that God was faithful to do as He promised. In a society where a child could be discarded as rubbish, nothing was more important to the Jew than offspring. Yes, God had been faithful to a thousand generations.

The circumcision was completed but not soon enough for the master of ceremonies. The *sandek* cradled the child with a moment's comfort, and then handed him to his father whose voice resonated throughout the candlelit home, "His name is Saul!"

As if only a few could hear, the guests rehearsed the words in one another's ears. "His name is Saul! His name is Saul!" A perfectly noble name for a Hebrew boy from the tribe of Benjamin, named for the first king of the chosen nation of Israel. A fine choice met with great approval. While a great feast ensued, the mother slipped the agitated infant from his father's arms and excused herself to nurse the child.

Custom demanded that the father host a feast to the limits of his wealth. A man who offered less than he could afford at his son's circumcision was entirely improper. If baby Saul's father was anything at all, he was painfully proper. Yes, this would indeed be a child well-reared. "I have much to learn from the father of Saul," the *sandek* surmised.

Darkness was quickly falling when the *sandek* and his wife finally reached their home. The day had been long but the fellowship sweet. Gathered with those who feared God and worshiped Him only, he had almost forgotten this city was not their own. Tarsus, the city of the Greeks, had given birth to another Hebrew. "Dear wife," the *sandek* thought out loud, "Our Saul seems special, does he not?"

"Dear man," she teased, "he looked like every other eight-day-old infant boy I've ever seen: mad as a wronged ruler!" They both laughed heartily. She prepared for bed as he reached for the Torah, trying to fight off the sleep quickly overtaking him. He repeated

the words of the *Shema*; and then he walked over to the *Mesusah*, fastened to the doorpost of the house, and placed his fingers on it. The *Mesusah* was a small, longitudinally-folded parchment square, on which twenty-two lines some of the most vital Words of God were written. He responded to the touch with the familiar words of his own father every night of his life, "The Lord is my keeper" (Code, II, p. 62). He crawled into bed, remembered their words, and smiled once again. Then he whispered as his thoughts drifted into the night, "I still say he's special. Full of zeal, he is. Just something about him...."



Each of the following are Hebrew terms shedding light on the life of Paul. To understand the ancient orthodox Jew is to understand much about the apostle Paul. Based on the information given through contextual clues in the narrative, match each of the following terms to their definitions.

<i>Berit Milah</i>	The newborn's chosen godfather
<i>sandek</i>	A quorum of 10 Jewish men
<i>Diaspora</i>	Scripture on parchment attached to doorpost
<i>Minyan</i>	The ceremony of circumcision
<i>Mesusah</i>	The separation from the Jewish homeland

1. In Today's Treasure Paul spoke of being "set apart from birth." Read Genesis 17:1-11 and describe the significance of circumcision. How did circumcision set any Jewish male apart from others?

2. Based on Psalm 127:3-5, briefly describe what a newborn son would represent to a Jewish father.

3. The *Shema*, the Hebrew word *hear*, remains one of the most important biblical phrases in Jewish life. The words of the *Shema* are found in Deuteronomy 6:4. Write them in the space below.

4. The home of any devout Jew in Paul's generation would have been marked by a *Mesusah*, which actually meant *doorpost*. The parchment inside the *Mesusah* contained the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and

Deuteronomy 11:13-21. These Scriptures were the absolute watchwords of the Jewish faith. Read both passages carefully and explain why you think they were nailed to the doorposts.

5. Search the narrative and find the factual response of the gatherers to the father's benediction during the circumcision ceremony. Based on their threefold blessing over the newborn, what were three obvious priorities of the devout Jew?

- marriage
- the homeland
- separation from Gentiles
- blessings
- good deeds
- studying the Torah

6. Based on God's command in Joshua 1:8, the devout Jew read Scripture just before he went to sleep. Do you ever read Scripture just before going to sleep at night? Yes No If so, what benefits have you discovered?

+ Based on what you've read today, in what ways is an orthodox Jewish home of Paul's generation like a Christian home of our generation? How is it different?

How does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?

I hope today's lesson spurred some distinct images of the ancient Jewish home and Paul's probable beginnings. We have so much to learn together. You're off to a great start! Let's conclude by considering how we've been personally affected by our glimpses into history. Answer the question that appears in the margin. Note that I will ask you to answer this question each day of our study.

D A Y 2

The Childhood of a Pharisee's Son

Today we will draw more conclusions about Saul's childhood based on traditional Hebrew practices. The familiar utterances of Proverbs 22:6 were not mere words to the ancient Hebrew. The passage represented one of the sternest commands of God toward the Jew. "Train a child in the way he should go." To the strict Jew, only one way existed

Today's Treasure
"Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it"
(Prov. 22:6).

W E E K 9
Letters Bridging the Miles

Day 1

Don't Be Kidnapped!

Day 2

A Profound Mystery

Day 3

A Ready Warrior

Day 4

A More Excellent Way

Day 5

A Rare Gem

We will finally see Paul in his long-awaited destination. He had faith to believe God would send him to Rome, but surely he would never have guessed how! We can sometimes relate, can't we? As we approach our ninth week of study, I am reminded how many remaining riches we won't have time or space to discover. God appointed the great apostle to pen 13 books of the Bible. I have chosen to emphasize His life and passion for Christ rather than his writings; however, this week we will seize an opportunity to glance at 4 letters believed to have been written during Paul's house arrest in Rome. Each of them is like a plate overflowing with rich foods. We will only get to sample and taste, but I pray our appetites will be kindled to return to them after our study. We will discover the answers to the following questions.

Principal Questions

Day 1: How can we protect ourselves from being kidnapped by hollow and deceptive philosophy?

Day 2: What are a few things submission does not mean?

Day 3: Which exhortation spoke most clearly to you in your battle against an unseen enemy?

Day 4: How did Paul demonstrate wisdom as he sought reconciliation between Philemon and Onesimus?

Day 5: What are the thieves of contentment?

Allow this week's study to cause a little soul-searching—a little reevaluating. Strive not just to attain further knowledge, but seek the courage to adjust your life to His truth! Let God get very personal with you this week!

List a few truths you feel are foundations to our faith by completing this sentence. In my opinion, every new Christian needs to know:

You named roots that help us stand strong when winds of strange doctrines blow.

4. **Grow up in Christ.** In verse 7, the apostle exhorted believers to be “rooted and built up in him.” After we’ve grown roots, we’re ready to grow up.

Hebrews 6:1 strongly exhorts believers to a progression in Christ. Fill in the blanks.

“Therefore let us leave the _____ teachings about Christ and go on to_____.”

The Hebrew Christians knew the basics, and the writer knew they were ready for more. Paul suggested the same progression by a different analogy. In 1 Corinthians 3:2 he wrote: “I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.” Paul was not implying infants in Christ should start with anything but milk. He was frustrated because people who should have been mature were still infants.

What will be the result if we “continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him”? We will be “strengthened in the faith” (Col. 2:6-7). Savor the definition of the original Greek word for *strengthened*: *bebaiōo* means “to make firm or reliable so as to warrant security and inspire confidence.” Satan is looking for victims. As we stay close to Christ, grow deep roots in the basics of our faith, and press on to maturity to become spirit-filled, power-packed believers, we won’t be easy targets.

I understand that attackers target vulnerable-looking people. Being confident provides protection. The more you know about Christ, His Word, and His ways, the more confident you will feel. You will be the dread of those peddling strange doctrines.

A kidnapper is on the loose. If he tries to get his grasp on you or someone you love, Paul’s exhortations can be easily summed up in the words of Christ in John 8:32.

Write them below and ask God to seal them in your heart forever.

How does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?

Today’s Treasure
“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church” (Eph. 5:22, 25).

D A Y 2

A Profound Mystery

For the next two days we will concentrate on the letter to the Ephesians. Most scholars believe Colossians and Ephesians were written early in Paul’s two-year imprisonment, because he never hinted of a possible release as he did in Philemon (see v. 22) and Philippians (see 1:19-26).

The letter to the Ephesians differs from his letter to the Colossians. He never warned of deceptive philosophy; rather, Paul wrote about a greater knowledge and experience in Christ. We can easily deduce the reason for the omission of several basics. Remember, the Christians at Colosse had never met Paul while the people of Ephesus benefited from his teaching and an unparalleled demonstration of power for several years.

What did Paul say about his ministry in Ephesus in Acts 20:20? Choose any that apply.

- He preached house to house.
- He preached publicly.
- He convinced the Jews.
- He laid hands on them.
- He did not hesitate to preach anything helpful.

Obviously, Paul found receptive soil in Ephesus, even in the midst of terrible hardships. Publicly and house to house, he didn't hesitate to preach anything helpful. His lengthy and effective ministry in Ephesus not only resulted in deep bonds of love (see Acts 20:37-38), it also freed him to proceed to great depths in his letter. If you have a translation with chapter or paragraph headings, turn to Ephesians and look at the subjects Paul explored in his letter.

Space limits me to choose only two subjects from the Book of Ephesians. We will examine the subject of marriage today and spiritual warfare on day 3. (Perhaps you thought marriage and warfare were synonymous!)

† Stop and pray for an open mind and freedom from the hindrances of negative preconceptions. After you have prayed, read Ephesians 5:21-33 and complete the following.

In one statement, write Paul's primary directive to wives.

In one statement, write Paul's primary directive to husbands.

What does Paul consider a profound mystery?

This portion of Scripture revolves around the biblical roles of three distinct figures intimately involved in marriage: wives, husbands, and Christ. We will approach each role individually today. Ladies, let's get the painful part over first!

Part 1: The Role of Christian Wives--First, notice verse 21. The attitude of all Christians is to be submissive to each other. No discussion of this topic can stay on track apart from that spirit.

How does the principle of mutual submission play itself out in marriage? The way I see it, Keith has to worry about things I don't. He sometimes has to come up with answers when I can't. He's responsible for things I'm not. Many times, I'm very happy to pass the proverbial buck. Keith would say the same about me. He really doesn't want to drive a car load of teenagers all over the city nor sit for hours on the end of our

daughters' beds discussing matters of the heart. Usually we defer to each other on our "turf issues." When I'm not in agreement with Keith, I usually speak up, and we pray and work it out—at times less easily than others! This spirit of praying things through until we can come to consensus on important issues is the essence of mutual respect and the opposite of "lording it over one another."

You noted above that Paul's primary directive to women dealt with submission while his primary directive to men dealt with love. Could it be that he was targeting the area most likely to be our weaknesses? Before we learn what submission means for Christian wives, let's learn what it does not mean:

1. Submission does not mean women are under the authority of men in general. I love the *King James Version* rendition of Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." Guess what? Wives aren't asked to submit to anyone else's husband! Just their own! While I make this point somewhat tongue-in-cheek, many women assume the Bible teaches their general inferiority and subjection to men. Untrue. Paul is talking about marriage as a matter between each husband and wife.

2. Submission does not mean inequality. Paul, the same man who taught submission, made a statement in Galatians 3:28 pertinent to today's study.

Read the Scripture; then fill in the blanks.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, _____,

for you are all _____."

Spiros Zodhiates' definition of the original Greek word *hupotasso* explains that submission "is not due to her being inferior to her husband, for they are both equal before God."

3. Submission does not mean wives are to treat their husbands like God. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* explains: "'As to the Lord' does not mean that a wife is to submit to her husband in the same way she submits to the Lord, but rather that her submission to her husband is her service rendered 'to the Lord.'"¹ I think most of our husbands are fairly relieved they are not called on to be God to their wives!

4. Submission does not mean slavery. Let's release a few old notions and fears! Paul uses an entirely different word in Ephesians 6:5 when he instructs slaves to obey their masters. This Greek word for *obey*, *hupakouo*, embraces more of the meaning people often mistakenly associate with marital submission. *Hupokouo* means "to obey, to yield to a superior command or force (without necessarily being willing)." The term draws a picture of a soldier saluting his officer, not a wife submitting to her husband!

Were any of these four statements news to you? If any, which?

Now that we've learned a few things *submission* does not mean, just exactly what does it mean? *Submission* means "to place in order under." The Greek word for *submit* is *hupotasso*. *Hupo* means "under" and *tasso* means "to place in order." The compound word *hupotasso* means "to place under or in an orderly fashion." Paul didn't dislike women, he liked ORDER! He advocated order in the church, order in government, order in business, and, yes, order in the home. I'm convinced he even kept his cell in order! Galatians 3:28 and Ephesians 5:22 could spill from the same man's pen because Paul regarded husbands and wives as spiritual equals but with functional differences.

The concept of a submissive wife used to really go against my grain until I began to learn more about God. Two realizations have changed my entire attitude:

- God is good and loving. He would never give approval to meanness or abuse. Any misuse of submission by either the husband or wife is sin.
- God granted women a measure of freedom in submission we can learn to enjoy. It is a relief to know that as a wife and mother I am not totally responsible for my family. I have a husband to look to for counsel and direction. I can rely on his toughness when I am too soft and his logic when I am too emotional.

Certainly, I haven't just delivered the definitive dissertation on submission, but I believe I'm offering you sound doctrine. I hope it helps. Now, let's take a brief look at the role of husbands, according to Ephesians 5:25-31.

Part 2: The Role of Christian Husbands—Thus far Paul probably had the Ephesian Christians nodding their heads in agreement. Submission of the wife to the husband was codified Hebraic law. Nothing new here. Now Paul raises eyebrows in a hurry. He tells husbands to love their wives. The original Greek word for *love* is *agapao* meaning “to esteem, love, indicating a direction of the will and finding one’s joy in something or someone.” Notice the phrase indicating a direction of the will. A husband is called by God to exercise his will to love his wife. Love is not simply an emotion or a feeling. Love is a willingness to continue in devotion and goodness toward the spouse.

For a society where women were little more than property, passed from father to husband, the command to love their wives was a radical idea. Paul knew few role models existed for the men to follow. He gives them the best role model possible: Jesus Christ.

1. Husbands should love their wives sacrificially “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (v. 25). Just as a husband must be careful not to abuse his wife’s exhortation to submission, a wife must not abuse her husband’s exhortation to sacrifice. Some men work several jobs sacrificing time at home in an effort to continually raise the standard of living for their families.

2. Husbands should love their wives in ways that encourage purity. Christ encourages purity in His bride, the church, desiring for her to be holy and without stain. God calls upon husbands to treat their wives as pure vessels even in physical intimacy.

3. Husbands should “love their wives as their own bodies” (v. 28). I have to snicker when I think about verses 28 and 29. I wonder if Paul might have been thinking, “If you love yourself at all, Mister, then love your wife—because life will be far more pleasant under the same roof with a well-loved woman!” I also have to wonder if Paul’s reference to a man treating his wife as he does his own body, feeding and caring for it, implies that husbands are supposed to cook for their wives. Don’t take me too seriously, but I would submit to my husband’s cooking any day!

I would like to suggest one last responsibility for both husbands and wives based on the final phrase in Ephesians 5:31: “and the two will become one flesh.” The original Greek word for *flesh* in this passage is *sarx* which means “flesh of a living creature in distinction from that of a dead one.” May I interject that our marriages were meant to be alive not dead! Is your marriage more like romance or roadkill?

In all seriousness, where would you place your marriage on this scale?

Lifeless and dull

Alive

No matter where you have charted your marriage on the scale, list several reasons why you think you are there.

Too

We were much too young
 Much too selfish
 Much too blind
 To make it

Much too wounded
 Much too frightened
 Much too hurt
 To take it

Too much we said
 When love seemed dead
 To go on
 And forget

Too little learned
 From anger burned
 Too much
 We both regret

Yet God’s been

Much too good
 Much too faithful
 Much too kind
 To walk away

Much too patient
 Much too present
 Much too able
 Not to stay

Too much harm
 To children’s charms
 To tear our home apart

Too much time
 For nursery rhymes
 To give away our hearts

Too much we’ve shared
 With no one else
 To go on and forget

Too many years
 Of drying tears
 To do what we’d regret

Too many laughs when
 thinking back
 Remind me what is true
 I find that I still love you
 And I think you love me,
 Too.

Think of marriage as a three-legged stool. The legs are a submissive wife, a loving husband, and Christ. All three legs must be in place for marriage to work as God intended. A wife submitting to an unloving husband is as lopsided as a loving husband sacrificing for a domineering wife. When Christ is not the head of the marriage relationship, the stool falls indeed. Paul pictures for us God's ideal marriage relationship. Sadly, many Christian women are trying to keep their stools balanced with only one leg in place—their submission.

Over the course of the last 20 years, my marriage has been at both extremes and everywhere in between, but Keith and I have never been the types who could tolerate dull for very long. God has always been faithful to restore the life, passion, and active care to our marriage, and we have worked very hard to cooperate. You may need help from a real marriage expert like we have at times. I'd like to recommend the one who saved our marriage. His Name is Wonderful Counselor, and His office is open 24 hours a day. He also uses human Christian counselors to help with His caseload!

Part 3: The Role of Christ in Marriage—Not only has Christ set the standard for a good marriage and the example of a loving husband, He offers sound counsel. Then He supplies every ounce of power necessary to make a marriage work.

How does God want you to respond to what He showed you today?

Read Colossians 1:16-17. Fill in the following blanks based on the first phrase of verse 16 and the last phrase of verse 17.

“For by him all things were _____:

“... and in him all things _____.”

Beloved, God created marriage (Gen. 2:21-24). Figuratively speaking, before Adam and Eve said “I do,” God did. No one helped Him. Only God created marriage, and only He can hold it together. Many people live in the same home and share a joint checking account under the same name, but they don't have a clue about the true covenant of marriage. Marriage as the institution and wonderful mystery God created cannot exist nor hold together without Him.

I want to conclude today with a poem I wrote for Keith a number of years ago after a difficult season of our marriage. I pray God will use it to speak to you or encourage you. It appears in the margin on page 187.

D A Y 3

A Ready Warrior

Today's Treasure
“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes” (Eph. 6:11).

You may recall we dedicated day 2 to “Helps for War in the Home” and, as promised, we'll dedicate today to “Helps for War in the Heavens.” Paul had specific reasons for teaching on spiritual warfare to the Christians in Ephesus. Please review the paragraph with the heading, **God made His power over the occult obvious**, on page 112.

Read Ephesians 6:10-20. What is God's general responsibility in warfare?