"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."
Philippians 2:3-4

The second fundamental of Christian marriage is *service*. Paul commands that we follow in the example of Christ by serving. This attitude of service should characterize our lives toward all people, but especially toward our spouse. Sadly, familiarity does often breed contempt, but the first person we should serve should be that person we love the most – our spouse.

"Do nothing from selfishness…" The "nothing" part of this verse should be sobering and jump out to us. There is no room for selfishness in Christian marriage. There is no "me" time. There is no, "I deserve this and am going to do this / buy this / go here no matter what my spouse thinks or needs." The Christian life in general, and Christian marriage in particular, is about dying to your selfishness. There is no more <u>me</u>, there is only <u>us</u>. Two have become one in marriage. Because of the redeeming work of Jesus, each spouse is laboring to out-serve the other. Nothing is done from selfishness that would harm, offend, or take from the other spouse. Does selfishness characterize your marriage? Do you act in ways that are all about you, and leave your spouse to pick up the pieces?

"Do nothing from…conceit…" In the union of Christian marriage neither spouse should act in a way that is proud or conceited. Vanity exalts the individual. Pride is self-focused. Nothing in Christian marriage should be related to individual vanity because the pride of one spouse is always at the expense of the other. One is raised up and the other left behind. It appears to the watching world that the one spouse accomplished what they did all by themselves, when any married couple knows that accomplishments come as a team. The married couple is 'yoked' together. They pull together to accomplish the work of the day and meet the needs of life. For one spouse to take the credit of work done by both is an act of pride and leads to resentment and division. Has pride entered into your marriage where you no longer openly praise and appreciate your spouses' contributions to the family? If so, then pride has corrupted your heart.

"In humility count others more significant than yourselves…" As an everyday fundamental of Christian marriage, we count our spouse as more <u>significant</u> than ourselves. Wow! Really? Yes. The servant heart comes from actively putting yourself in the second place. Your spouse gets the first place – everyday. Humble servant-hearted love looks for ways to meet the needs through service. The mind of the loving spouse keeps drifting back to, "What can I do for you?" not "What can you do for me?" These are unconditional acts of loving service, not transactional. Christian love is NOT, "I'll do this for you, if you do this for me." Christian service walks in the way of Jesus, "I'll do this for you, even if you do nothing for me in return." Then it goes even further, "I'll serve you in this way because I love you, even if you return this act of humble service with anger and ungratefulness." This is the Christ-like service of Christian marriage.

To accomplish this, you must observe your spouse. It's still selfish to do something for your spouse that just you want to do for them. You enter into service when you do for them something they want you to do for them. This shows you are listening and observant. Be a

student of your spouse. See their needs and hear their desires, then work with a heart of love to count them more significant than yourself with the limited resources of each day.

You may be thinking that this is an impossibly high standard, and you would be right! The world fails at each of the fundamentals of marriage because they do not have the abiding work of the Holy Spirit to work out the sanctification necessary to make progress in marriage. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, we will be selfish people, and selfishness kills marriage. The number one phrase I hear in marriage counseling of troubled marriages headed toward divorce is, “This person doesn’t meet my needs.” This is fundamentally a selfish statement. Couples that are devoted to serving each other and counting the needs of the other as more important than their own, don’t make statements like this.

Christian marriage can thrive because each spouse goes to Jesus – the fount of living water that will never run dry – to meet the needs of their soul. From being with Jesus, the soul is full and able then to pour into others by acts of service. When we run dry, we go back and abide near Jesus to be strengthened for another day. When you go to your spouse for what only Jesus can provide the equation will not work out.

For more on the mandate of service from Jesus read and consider the account of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet in John 13. Ask yourself, “Does the heart of Jesus in this passage describe how I treat my spouse?” If not, realize that you are not above Jesus. Return to the fundamental of service and demonstrate to your spouse a Christ-like heart.

Holy Spirit give us a servant heart toward those most dear to us,
Pastor Vic