

“A Word to Wives – Part 1”
Ephesians 5:22-24
(Preached at Trinity, October 11, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Since the beginning of **Chapter 4** Paul has been pressing our duty to walk in a manner worthy of the transforming grace of the Gospel. The Gospel changes everything in our lives. All things are new.
Ephesians 4:22-24 NAU - "in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."
2. In the latter part of **Chapter 5** Paul is describing the effect of the Gospel on human relationships. This will continue into **Chapter 6**
Christianity is transforming.
 - It transforms the relationships of husbands and wives
 - It transforms the relationships of children and parents
 - It transforms the relationship of masters and servantsWilliam Gouge – “He is no good Christian that is careless in these matters. A bad husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant, magistrate, or minister is no good Christian.”
3. In **Verses 22-33** Paul speaks specifically on the affect the Gospel has upon the marital relationship. Marriage is the first and the greatest of all human relationships upon the earth. In marriage a man and woman become one. This union is indivisible.
Matthew 19:6 NAU - "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."
 - A. As I mentioned several weeks ago, the teaching of the church today is often weak in its teaching on marriage. Too often the church’s teaching on the family is limited to parenting. It is important to give proper attention to training children and we’ll see this in **Chapter 6**. But far too little attention is given today on the importance of marriage.
 - B. Priorities are often confused. Your primary responsibility is not to your children. It is to your wife, it is to your husband.
4. We are going to spend the next few weeks looking at the family—first husbands and wives, then children, and then parents. Within the family there is a particular order. Each member of the family has a particular function, a particular calling – husbands, wives, children, parents.
Paul begins with the institution of marriage. This is the foundation of the family. Without a strong foundation the family will be weak. If wives are disrespectful to their husbands the children will learn to disdain authority. If the husband is abusive and disrespectful towards his wife the children will also disdain her and learn to be rude and disrespectful. Within the family there is a priority of marriage. Before there were children there was Adam and Eve, the husband and wife.

5. Recognizing this priority Paul begins with the unique roles of husbands and wives. This will also be my focus. I'll begin with a focus on the responsibilities of wives and then we'll focus on the responsibilities of husbands.
6. And as we go through this passage of Scripture we'll maintain a high emphasis on our relationship with Christ. Jesus has preeminence through this entire passage. All things in the Christian life are done with an eye to Christ. He is the motivation in all that we do. The Christian has been united to the body of Christ. Paul calls this a great mystery.
Ephesians 5:32 NAU - "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."
7. This morning as we look at the high calling of women in marriage we are reminded once again of the glorious life in Christ.
Ephesians 5:24 NAU - "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything."
8. May we be richly blessed richly as we read God's purpose for woman in marriage. I'm going to divide into two parts. First, we'll look at the duty of a wife as a designated duty this week, and then next week we'll see it as a delegated duty

A Designated Duty – **Ephesians 5:22-24**

With all honor and obedience to Christ Godly wives should seek to honor their husbands. Christ has delegated His authority to your husband and then designated you to submit to your husband's authority.

- I. As we've seen, this points to the matter of headship – **Ephesians 5:23 NAU** - "For the husband is the head of the wife"
 - A. In creation God made man and woman different, distinct, unique
 1. Eve was created as Adam's helper. He was to love his wife by accepting his responsibility for making their partnership a platform for displaying God's glory. He was to show his love by cherishing her, caring for her as the weaker vessel. He was to show his love by knowing her intimately—by studying her needs. He was to show his love for her by sacrificing himself to meet her needs.
 - a. Man was given the authority of headship. Adam was to be the leader of his home.
 - b. As Adam's helper Eve was to display her love by supporting him in his labor of displaying God's glory, by submitting to his leadership, by giving herself in domestic dominion to the glory of God.
 2. As we see here in **Ephesians 5** the woman is given the charge to submit to her husband
 - a. The KJV (TR) translates the word ὑποτάσσω – "submit." It is in the imperative. Other Greek manuscripts do not contain the word. It literally reads, "Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord." "submit to" is in italics in the NASB
 - b. While it isn't in the Greek it is perfectly accurate to insert it in the meaning because of the previous verse:
Ephesians 5:21 NAS - "and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." (wives to your own husbands)
 - c. It is a participle carrying imperative force from **Verse 18**

3. This matter of masculine headship extends beyond the home. The principle is of men in leadership over women. This is God's designated order.
 - a. Paul makes an important distinction here, however. The wife is in submission to "her own" husband. - τοῖς ἰδίοις
 - b. The Greek could literally be translated "her own man." It is from the Greek word, ἀνὴρ which simply refers to an adult male. While men and women should respect one another in their particular roles, a woman has a particular duty towards her own husband.
 - c. This was demonstrated by my wife at her work. She was under submission to her boss, but this did not take priority over her duty to me as her husband.

II. The model for Godly wives is their submission to Christ – "as to the Lord."

- A. Wives are to submit to their husbands because of their submission to Christ; because He commands it.
 1. The original uses the word ὡς which is a conjunction denoting comparison. As she is submissive to Christ she should also be to her husband.
 2. Wives find obedience to this command difficult because they find obedience to Christ difficult.
 3. Sin always makes submission difficult. Adam and Eve did not submit to God's command in the Garden – they ate of the forbidden fruit.
 - a. And then after the fall God charged Eve regarding her relationship with Adam: **Genesis 3:16 NAS** - "he shall rule over you."
 - b. **Genesis 3:16** says more: **Genesis 3:16 NAS** - "Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you."
 - c. This isn't talking about desire in a positive sense. It is referring to the difficulty Eve would have in submitting to Adam. It means she would lust after Adam's authority. The woman has an unwholesome desire to possess and control her husband.
- B. But there is another dimension to this obedience that makes it most difficult.
 1. With our duty to submit and obey Christ we are charged to serve one who is perfect in every way and who loves us with infinite perfection.
 2. With the charge to submit to your husband you are being charged to submit to a sinner who sometimes leads foolishly, selfishly, and with sinful pride.
 3. God understands this perfectly and yet commands: "*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*"
 4. And then to make the charge even more definite God adds: **Ephesians 5:24 NAU** - "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be to their husbands in everything.*"
 5. Husbands often behave foolishly and sinfully. They sometimes lose the respect of their wives. This demands repentance and change on their part. In such cases it demands much grace from the wife.

- C. As a Godly woman you should be seeking to mature in this area.
1. Your husband is sinful. You may feel he is unworthy of your respect, but this doesn't change God's charge to you.
 2. The exception is if he asks you to do something in opposition to God's commands. God always reigns supreme in all things.
 3. Your husband has a high charge upon his life. God has given him great dominion and with it great accountability. But your husband's faithfulness to his commission has no impact upon God's charge to you—"Wives, *be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*"
 4. One of the greatest dangers for the wife is the tongue
 - a. Women are much more expressive than men. They are much more open to share their feelings. It is easy to begin to nag and complain.
Proverbs 19:13 NAS - "the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping."
Proverbs 21:19 NAS - "It is better to live in a desert land, Than with a contentious and vexing woman."
Proverbs 21:19 CSB - "Better to live in a wilderness than with a nagging and hot-tempered wife."
Proverbs 12:4 NAU - "An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames *him* is like rotteness in his bones."
 - b. You must never speak negatively to others about your husband. If he sins reprove him privately and lovingly. Guard your heart against the wrong use of words.
 - c. Your words must always have an eye towards edifying
Ephesians 4:29 NAS - "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a *word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear."
 - d. Men need and appreciate encouragement and affirmation as the provider and protector of their wives.

III. There are many times that the wisdom of a wife has an immeasurable effect upon the wellbeing of the home.

- A. Submission does not imply inferiority
1. The best example of this is the relationship of the Godhead
1 Corinthians 11:3 NAU - "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ."
 - a. Jesus came in obedience to the Father
John 4:34 NAU - "Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
Philippians 2:8 KJV - "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."
 - b. This in no way implies any sense of inferiority – the Father and Son are one and equal, yet in the economy of the Godhead Jesus came in submission to the Father

2. Husbands and wives are equal before God, yet wives are to be in submission to their husbands.
- B. God often blesses men with wives of great wisdom and discernment. Her value is immeasurable.
1. A Godly wife often approaches her husband and expresses her wise counsel.
Proverbs 31:26 NAS - "She opens her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."
 2. But her words must be given wisely and respectfully
 3. Many times in marriage the wife is actually much more able than her husband.
 - a. Perhaps she is better educated or perhaps she just simply has more wisdom.
 - b. This changes nothing regarding her responsibility to honor her husband. God has designated the wife to be in submission to her husband.
 - c. Martyn Lloyd-Jones expressed it well – “Are you saying that such a brilliantly gifted woman has to subject herself to her husband, to a man who is altogether her inferior? There is only one answer to that argument; the person who frames it is arguing against God. God knows all about such cases. What God says is that if that gifted, brilliant woman is not subjecting herself to her own husband she is sinning. Whatever her gifts she is to submit to her partner in marriage.”
 4. The Godly wife recognizes that ultimately, God holds her husband responsible for the well-being of the home. But the wise counsel of a Godly wife has protected many a man from leaping forward with an ill-considered plan.

Conclusion:

1. God gives his model here for marriages and homes as He designed them to be. We find men leading their wives in love and sacrifice and wives following the leadership of their husbands with grace and confidence.
2. Sin always makes this difficult. The solution is repentance for our failures and submission to the leadership of the Holy Spirit as the beauty of Christ draws us above this world.
3. May God bless us in our weakness with His grace and pity and may He help us glorify Christ with our lives.