

Husbands Love Your Wives

Ephesians

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Well, good morning everyone. Man, does it seem just subdued this morning? Yeah, it does, doesn't it? It's kind of interesting. Isn't it interesting how it ebbs and flows? You guys tired? Wiped out? Exhausted? Depressed? We skipped fall and went straight to winter. Yup, okay.

Well, there's a lot of stuff that I wanted to say. I really really wrestled over what I was going to preach on. You know, our world is broken, isn't it? Our world is hard, it's full of sin, and it's full of suffering. We need truth. We need hope. We need clarity. And so I contemplated many different things. I wanted to talk about suffering, we need a better understanding of suffering. I thought about dealing with anger and bitterness and forgiveness, biblical communication, gossip and slander and all of those things, what does it mean to actually care for one another in our communication. There's so many things that need clarity and, you know, I've been given extra time today not just because of daylight savings, you know, I've got an extra hour to preach. I'm just kidding. No, just kidding, but I do have a few extra minutes.

So before we get into the message I want to talk about, there is something that I want to talk about with regard to suffering. Why is it that we suffer? And I think one thing that we don't fully understand and this is a side note before we get into what I really want to talk about today, the issue of suffering, why do we suffer, okay? Well, one thing, number one is this, we suffer because life in a fallen, it's the reality of life in a fallen world, right? We suffer because of Adam's sin and it has affected and infected everything and everyone. That's why we suffer, okay? So we are in this world where sin is still infecting and corrupting everything around us. Why does God not bring an end to our suffering? Why doesn't he do that? Okay, think about this. Why are we suffering today? It's because God has not brought a full end to sin yet. Okay, for him to eradicate suffering from our life, he has to deal fully and completely with sin which means that he needs to bring the final judgment and usher his kingdom in, which means that there will be no more people being born after that point, right?

So think about this. The apostles, when Jesus was going to be ascended into heaven, they said, "Lord, is now the time that You're going to usher in the kingdom?" And he said, "Now's not, you don't, it's not for you to know. Go and be My witnesses." If he had

brought the kingdom in at that time, that would have been the end of suffering, that would have been the end of suffering in the world, but that also would have meant that you and I would not have been included in that kingdom. So those apostles, all of them, were persecuted and all but one of them were executed so that the Gospel could make its way through the centuries to us. They suffered for us.

If you look in the book of Hebrews 11, the prophets, it was revealed to them, it was revealed to them that all the things that were being, or actually it's 1 Peter, no, Hebrews 11, that they, that the prophets of old, the saints of the Old Testament were not going to be made complete without us. So they endured suffering in their life for our sake. Suffering is the reality of a sinful world, that suffering will not be gone until sin is done away with and once sin is done away with and that will be the end of new people being born, which means, why has God continued to allow us to suffer? It's because there's people that he has chosen that have yet to come to him. Why do we suffer today? It's because we're here to pass the torch on to them. We suffer for them.

And one key component of this is that the suffering that we are enduring today is making us more like Christ. Yes, it is sharpening our character. Yes, it's causing us to love Christ more. Yes, but why does that matter? He could make you, he could take you home right now, the second you die you will be made complete and perfect in him, he could take you there and the whole thing would be over. So your suffering today is not just for your own personal self-improvement. I don't know about you but, I mean, just, "Oh, this is making me a better person. Great. Wonderful. Wow, that was painful, you know, and now I feel so much better about myself because I'm a better person." Is that really what that's all about? No.

Who are the people that take the Gospel to the world around them? Who are the people that are most effective at doing that? It's those who are like Jesus. Those who are like Jesus are unselfish. They are concerned about the glory and the kingdom of God. So when your character is sharpened, when your character is strengthened, when the sin is removed from your life, you become a more effective tool at advancing the Gospel of God in this world. You became a brighter light in the darkness.

What is it that keeps you from sharing the Gospel with the people next to you? It's your selfishness. It's your preoccupation with yourself, with your comfort, with your pleasure, with money, all of these things, and God brings suffering to remove your grip on this world so that your love is primarily for God and your loyalty is to him. You deny yourself and when you do that, you begin to care about other people genuinely and when you endure suffering in this life and the love of Christ and the hope in God shines through you, it gives opportunity for the Gospel to go forward because then people ask, "How do you have hope in the midst of this suffering?" That is when you are to be ready to give a defense for the hope that is in you. It's not an argument, it's a reason that you have hope.

So why are you suffering? It's because suffering is the reality of a sin-cursed world and God is making you more like his Son for your joy to be made complete and because he's

going to use you to bring others to him. That's why you're suffering. That's why we must endure. We endure all the pain and the turmoil and the suffering of this life, we endure for them. Do you see?

Wives, if you've got a husband who is just an absolute jerk, why do you endure that? I know that doesn't apply to anyone in here. Hypothetically, why? What greater testimony is there to your children than a woman who hopes in God? Who cherishes God? What greater testimony is there than a man who patiently loves his wife? What greater testimony is there in the workplace than a Christian who puts up with unjust treatment and returns good instead of evil? What greater testimony is there than a family of believers who are visiting their loved one in the hospital singing hymns to God? What greater testimony is there than that? When does the Gospel explode in a culture? It's in the midst of persecution. When do people get saved? When do Muslims get saved? Seeing Christians suffer with hope.

Why are we suffering? It's because God has not brought an end to this world yet because there's still people out there who have yet to come to know him. That's why we suffer. Alright, that is for free. I feel like we can just pray and go home but I have studied too much to let you do that.

So I chose today's passage for two reasons. 1. I want to live it better myself. I want to live this passage more faithfully myself. 2. If what I'm preaching on today is faithfully pursued and applied by my target audience, it will eliminate probably 80% of my counseling and I have no hope that that will actually happen but I know that this is what we all need.

Just a few statistics to set the stage a little bit. You know that nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. That's more than 10 million men and women. 20 people per minute. 85% of domestic violence victims are female. 15% are male. Most domestic violence cases are never even reported to the police, so statistics are difficult to assess.

Do you know that pornography is 30% of the internet? 30%. In 2015 it was a 3.3-billion-dollar industry. 64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women say they watch porn at least once a month. You know, I say Christian but I don't think that's too far off in even solid circles. The effects of that are dire. Prolonged exposure to pornography leads to, based on studies, diminished trust between intimate couples, obviously, and it leads to an increase in the belief that promiscuity is a natural thing, that that's the norm, and it leads to a lack of attraction to family and child raising. Pornography deadens relationships, deadens your attention to them, deadens your care for them. I think that is the primary reason why our culture is drifting further and further away from marriage because it's so pervasive, more than ever.

90% of people marry by age 50 and half of those end in divorce, and many more are those who don't get divorced, remain married but are miserable and unhappy in their marriage. Think back to your parents' relationships. Some of you had good relationships,

some of them had good relationships but many of you did not have good examples in the home of marriages where they loved each other, where they were committed to each other. Some of you remember fathers being drunk, angry, depressed, distracted by work, sports, money, and anything else on the planet. Maybe you witnessed arguments and verbal abuse and physical abuse, sexual abuse. Maybe things were kind of okay but they never seemed good, right? It's quiet in here.

You know, this world is infected with sin and the church is infected with sin and it is destructive. There's a reason why it took in order to make this world right, it took absolute wrath and fury to be poured out on the perfect Son of God to deal with it, and God has to completely do this thing over in order to deal with it. It's not some benign thing and it affects every relationship and every person.

Think of your own marriage if you're married. Are you happy? Are you content? Is it thriving or are you just getting through? Are you surviving? Are you roommates? Are you just going your separate ways, maintaining a joint bank account maybe? Just trying to stay out of each other's way?

Well, this is why I've chosen this message because I was thinking to myself, if I had one shot, okay, I've got one, I've got one message, this isn't a series, I've got one message, if I had one shot to change the world, where would I direct that shot? And it's this, it's summed up in this verse, Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church." If you want to impact an entire church, if you want to impact a home, if you want to impact a society, the husbands are the key. The husbands are the key and so I want to focus on that today and I'm gonna do the very best I can because this is so important. This is gigantically important.

You know, you look through the book of Ephesians and Paul is addressing all the believers there but he specifically targets husbands and he gives the longest section in there, the longest, the people group that gets the most attention is the husbands. So let's read this and let's focus on this today.

Ephesians 5:25,

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his

own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we come to You as the author and perfecter of our faith, we come to You as the one who sees all and knows all. We come to You because You care deeply for Your church and You care for Your people, and You have given us instruction and, Lord, we want to follow it, we want to understand it. So Lord, I realize that I can't change even my own heart apart from You and I realize, Lord, that for us to change, You're gonna have to work, You're gonna have to convict. Lord, I pray that the words that are spoken today, that You would apply it to each person as there is application for all of us, and may we humbly receive it and may we run to You out of that conviction, Lord. So Lord, I pray, I beg You, that You would work in our husbands today, work in me, and work through me, that Christ would be lifted up and that we would be like Him. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

God's word is amazing. This is a paragraph, just a few short verses but books and books have been written on this and they continue to be written on this. The truth is contained in a small paragraph and it includes the Gospel, leadership, character, and a proper understanding of gender roles and the biblical priority of marriage. It includes all of these things in one small paragraph but don't let the simplicity of these phrases pass by and don't treat them flippantly. You've heard them before, but do you understand them? Do you grasp them and do you think about them? Does it impact how you think about life? I want today, I don't want you to assume that you already know. I want you to take a new and fresh approach to it with fresh eyes and a hungry spirit to learn from the Lord.

Now just a little bit of background on the book of Ephesians. It was written around 60 AD by the Apostle Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. He had been imprisoned for preaching the Gospel, the Gospel that angered his countrymen, the Jews in Palestine, and rather than accept the decision of the local court in Caesarea, he appealed to Caesar who was the Emperor Nero, and so he was sent on a voyage to Rome where he was placed under house arrest while he awaited trial, and while he was there he wrote letters to the churches around the city of Colossae, Ephesus, and also Philippi. So he was actively ministering here. People brought reports to him of what was going on in their churches and he would correspond with them.

So he writes the book of Ephesians and he throughout this book, he really describes the amazing love of Christ towards his people. It's really amazing. If you just go through, as you read it, read through it one time and notice the adjectives that Paul uses to describe the love of Christ and the grace of God. It's not benign. It's not clinical. It's not encyclopedic. It is passionate and he uses incredible descriptive imagery when he describes the love of God. You can see his zeal for that bleeding through.

So he talks about how Christ loved his people and how this love is undeserved in chapter 2. It's by grace through faith that you're saved, and this Gospel is the Gospel that brought

us peace with God and with every other believer and broke down the dividing wall. That means that between believers there is nothing that should be able to separate you, that every wall can be broken down because you have unity with Christ, in Christ. I mean, look, if you have unity with Christ, that barrier between you and Jesus is way bigger than any barrier between you and another human, and if you can have peace with Jesus Christ, you can have peace with anyone through the Gospel.

So then he urges the churches in and around Ephesus to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. They've been called to this. Walk in a way that makes sense with the Gospel, that makes sense with the calling to which you've been called, and it's done by humbly seeking unity, in chapter 4, speaking the truth in love, putting off the old man and putting on the new, the new man being Jesus Christ, forgiving one another and imitating the love of Christ. Then we repent of our sins, you know, immorality, impurity, greed. In chapter 5, we're to pay close attention to our conduct, seeking to know the will of God as we walk in his Spirit.

In fact, why don't you go ahead and turn to verse 15 of chapter 5. I want to start there to set the context of it because you cannot just parachute in and say, "Well, I'm gonna be a good husband separate from all this other stuff." He says, verse 15, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise." Okay, men, do you typically tend to be flippant and careful, or flippant and careless, or do you tend to be careful about what you do? Generally as a general rule, guys tend to not think a whole lot about what they're doing before they do it, right? They tend to be over-confident. They tend to trust in their own ability, their own understanding. It says here, "Be careful how you walk. Pay attention to it, not as unwise men but as wise." Okay? A wise man pays attention. A fool does not.

Verse 16, "making the most of your time, because the days are evil." Okay, again, think about this. It has application to your marriage. This says make the most of your time. That means put it to its best use. Okay? How many video games do you think is in that verse? How many Netflix binges? Obsessed with the stock market? Football games? I'm not saying any of those are sin in themselves but are you careful to make the most of your time? Why? Because the days are evil. Don't walk around with your head in the sand like everything's just great and peachy and the American dream is bright and sunny.

The days are evil. We see that more and more. I mean, that's one of the benefits, I think, of social media and the constant news cycle is we are more and more aware of how wicked and dark and depraved this world is. We can't hide from it. It's everywhere, and so we must be careful and make the most of the time.

"So then," verse 17, "do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Seek that. Pursue that. Is that the subject of your contemplation? Okay, so be careful, make the most of your time and understand God's will.

Verse 18, "And do not get drunk with wine," why? "For that is dissipation," it's wastefulness, it's a waste of your time, talent, energy, focus, and you do so many dumb

things when you get drunk. Put that away. If that is a problem for you, put it away. "Do not be drunk with wine." The Scripture is commanding you this. Put it away and apply its application to everything else, "for that is dissipation." What else is wastefulness in your life? What else is sucking the life out of you and depriving those around you of your time and attention and love? Remove that. That is dissipation. Instead, "be filled with the Spirit." Be filled with God's Spirit.

In the book of Colossians there's a parallel passage, it says, "Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you." So to walk in the Spirit is to let God's word, to be filled with the Spirit is to let God's word control you, every part of you. It's like when you're filled with wine, it goes in through your mouth, through your head, and it goes out into every part of your body. It affects your thinking. It affects your limbs. It affects how you feel. It affects everything. If you're to be filled with the Spirit, that means you're to be absolutely controlled by the Spirit, which means you're controlled by the word of God. That defines everything you do.

"Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord." If you are filled with the Spirit, that's not some boring drudgery, this is a joy and it results in singing, it results in singing praise to God and singing praise to God for the benefit of other people, to encourage them. I really like how Martin Luther talked about next to the word of God music is, it's like right up there, just right up underneath the word of God in terms of its importance. When you are Spirit-filled, you sing songs of praise. It fills your heart. It comes out in joy and you encourage one another with these things. That is making the most of the time. There's no time for other stuff when you are filled with the Spirit. There's no room for anything else when you are filled with the Spirit.

And then what else does this look like? Okay, not just making melody in your heart, not just joyful singing, verse 20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Thankfulness. If you are walking in the Spirit, you are thankful. If you're unthankful, you can rest assured you're not walking in the Spirit. Thankfulness is this thing that God produces in you when you're filled with his word and that controls how you think, it informs what you do. Thankfulness will overflow and it will, and you will give thanks in all things, for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. Why? Well, it's just like what we talked about earlier. Whatever suffering you're going through, God has a good purpose for it, a genuinely good purpose, and it isn't just self-improvement. Giving thanks for all things is a sign of someone walking in the Spirit.

Then verse 21, "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." So if you walk in the Spirit, you will willingly submit yourself under the authority that God has placed you under. That takes humility. That takes trust in God. That takes thankfulness. That takes someone who is committed to the will of God above their own. Trusting where God has placed them. 1 Corinthians 7 talks about to whatever place you were called as a believer, be faithful in that station. It even said to slaves in that society, if you were called as a slave, don't worry about it. Honor Christ in that station. If God gives you the opportunity

to be free, then take that and use that opportunity but don't concern yourself with needing to get out of your circumstance. God has called you to that to be a light to show the hope of the glory of God in that circumstance. And so we are to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. We're to submit ourselves under, to one another in the fear of Christ. And that last thing, the fear of Christ governs everything that we do. He is the one that guides and governs and defines all of these things and so we're to do this in the fear of Christ.

Okay, so husbands, that is the context, before now you are called to love your wife as Christ loved the church. If you are a Spirit-filled man walking in the Spirit, giving thanks, putting all these other things aside, these foolish things aside, you are set up better to love your wife, and now this command comes in. We're going to go ahead and observe these things now but I want you to know just as we focus on the husbands, we are gonna look at 22 and 23 but I don't want that to be the focus of what we do. We will talk a bit about the wife's role but that's not the main point but I want you to think about these three things. Husbands, if you're gonna love your wife as Christ loved the church, this is what you need to understand in order to be a godly husband. 1. You need to understand your role. Understand your role. 2. Understand your call. 3. You need to imitate the right examples. Imitate the right examples.

So 1, you need to understand your role. Look at verse 22 through 23. It says, "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." Husband, if you're going to fulfill your call, you need to understand this role that God has given you. You are the head of your wife. You are the head of your wife. Do you understand that? Have you considered that? You know, I've heard this my, almost my entire life but it's not something I have given a whole lot of thought to, but here the Scripture says that this is the reality, that the husband is the head of the wife. This means that you are her leader. Her well-being is your responsibility and you are the representative of your family.

You are the head of your wife. Head does not mean, as some would say, the source, okay? So some feminists today want to say it refers to source, it doesn't have anything to do with authority. But this is not coming from a straight and forward interpretation of Scripture. That's driven by an agenda to eliminate differences in gender roles. But if you look at the rest of Scripture, it's very obvious. Listen to 1 Corinthians 11:3, "I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ." So you can see that our headship is compared to Christ's headship over us. So you can see that it clearly is an issue of authority. You can also see that the passage, that the differences in roles do not refer to intrinsic value, okay? This is not, "Husband, you are more valuable than your wife." This is a matter of roles. Christ is shown to be subordinate to the Father in his role, but Christ is just as much God as God the Father. That's why the wife's role to submit or subject herself to her husband is because he is her head, not because she's less valuable, not because he's smarter, not because he's more qualified. It's the reality of who he is. He is her head.

Peter O'Brien says this, "This is a case of voluntary submission in recognition of God-appointed leadership of the husband and the divinely ordained hierarchical order in creation. Submit has to do with the subordination of someone in an ordered array to another who is above the first, that is, an authority over that person." Okay? So you subordinate yourself under the authority of another. "At the heart of this submission is the notion of order. God has established certain leadership and authority roles within the family and submission is a humble recognition of that divine ordering." That's a key phrase right there, it's a humble recognition of the divine ordering. "The apostle is not urging every woman to submit to every man, but wives to their husbands. The use of the middle voice of this verb," the way that the Greek works in this passage and in Colossians 3:18, "emphasizes the voluntary character of the submission." Okay? You do it voluntarily. "Paul's admonition to wives is an appeal to free and responsible persons who can only be heeded voluntarily, never by the elimination or breaking of the human will, much less by a means of servile submissiveness." Okay, so what's he saying there? The wife willingly submits to her husband. That is her responsibility to do that. It is not the husband's responsibility to enforce that. It's not your job to force your wife into submission. It's not your job to stamp her down, control her, step on her neck. That is not your job. But wives, it is your job out of fear, out of the fear and reverence for Christ, that you subject and submit yourself under the headship of your husband.

Colossians 3:18, as I said before, says, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." 1 Peter 3:1-3, it says, "In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives." Titus 2:5, the younger women were to be urged to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God might not be revealed.

And it says here that they are to subject themselves in everything. What does that mean? It doesn't mean every detail, it means every sphere of life is to be subordinated under their husband's headship. O'Brien says this again, "It should be read within the flow of the argument of the chapter that by God's design the husband and wife are one flesh and the divine intention is that they should function together under one head, not as two autonomous individuals living together." Hey, do you see this? You are to pursue unity and oneness in your marriage and the husband does this by acting and fulfilling his role as the head, and the wife does this by submitting underneath that and not bucking that. But you are individuals working together, voluntarily doing this.

Now what are the boundaries of submission? It's important to say this because I don't want to be misunderstood. Submission in everything means in every category but there are limits. Acts 5:29 shows how the apostle said that we should obey God rather than man. So if the husband is asking you to sin or to violate your conscience, you must kindly and respectfully decline because your loyalty is primarily to God, to Christ. You submit to your husband out of reverence for Christ. If Christ commands you in Scripture to do something and the husband is telling you to do something else, you must obey Christ and endure whatever the husband, however he responds to you.

Scripture does not obligate a wife to endure physical abuse or sexual unfaithfulness. Okay? If he is abusing you, then you have the right to remove yourself for your own safety and to bring in the appropriate leaders and authorities to deal with that. When a husband who claims Christ is involved in sin, the wife is to lovingly correct him because that's what Matthew 18 says, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault." Husband, you do not have the right to tell your wife that she cannot confront you with his sin. That's violating what Christ has called you to do as a Christian. She also has the right that if you persist in sin, she has the right to seek outside help, not in a destructive way, not in a gossipy way, not in a slanderous way, but she has the right to seek outside help.

Some husbands often misuse their authority when they're involved in sin and they want to prevent their wife from doing that, they want the wife to cover for them, they want their wife to lie for them, and in doing that he is violating his role as her head and he is violating his relationship with Christ, and he does not have the right to do that. You cannot force your wife to submit.

You do not force your wife to sin. You do not keep your wife from seeking help. The husband doesn't have the right to force you to get drunk with him, force you to lie, to watch pornography with him, to hide their sin. Husband, you do not have that right and, wife, you are not required to submit to that. I want to make that very clear. The husband, you need to understand what your role of headship really means, that your job is the well-being of your wife, not the servitude of your wife.

How are you using your authority right now? Some men love to be in charge. They love to order people around. I know people like that. Is that you? You love to control others? Keep them off-balance? Make them do your will? Manipulate them? Is that you? How are you using your authority because Christ will hold you accountable for how you use it.

Our God is a consuming fire. We don't like to think of him that way, but if you misuse your authority to abuse people, God will deal with you. I've seen men treat their wives like slaves, demeaning them, controlling them. 1 Peter 3:7 says this, "Husbands, you're to live with your wives in an understanding way, showing them honor as to the weaker vessel since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." You are the head but this headship is to be thoughtful, it's to be done with understanding and consideration for her weakness. She's typically physically weaker than you. She typically emotionally feels things more strongly than you do, typically.

Do you understand your wife? A lot, it's kind of a joke among men that it's impossible to understand women and, you know, I think they just don't want to that bad. It's not worth it to them to put the work into it. They'd rather do all the work to put a man on the moon which is basically useless. Yeah, we made it to the moon! Now what? But they will not put the work into understanding their wife.

You may have a wife with a strong personality but she's still to be treated with delicate care, consideration, thoughtfulness. She's not a man. She's not one of your buddies. She's

not just a friend. She's not just a roommate. She is your wife and you are her head, responsible for her well-being. If you dare mistreat her or dishonor her, if you don't understand her, it says here that your prayers will be hindered. Your relationship with God is hindered if you do not understand your wife, if you do not love your wife, if you don't show honor to her. I know men that think they're very spiritual and yet they dishonor their wives. That is a farce. You think you're a spiritual man while you dishonor your wife. That is a farce and your prayers are hindered. God doesn't listen to your prayers because you are abusing or you are misusing your authority as a husband.

What is prayer? Think about that. It is communication of your desires to God, right? You make known to God what it is that you want and it says here that God does not answer the prayers of a man who does not treat his wife with honor, understanding and consideration. That means, as it says later in 1 Peter, that God opposes the proud. He's actively opposing you. Your role as head of your wife is a solemn responsibility that you bear before God to take care of her in the way that God has prescribed. Your authority is a delegated authority. You can't do whatever you want. Your authority is the exercise of God's authority. God tells you how to use it. You must function within that. You represent God in your marriage. You don't represent your own interests.

I remember talking to one husband who was very mean to his wife. He would get angry about things and would blow up, and I asked him, "Well, what about the fact that, you know, she doesn't really spend any time in the word?" And he said, "Oh, that doesn't bother me." Bingo. You see, you treat your house as though you are the authority, you are the standard. You're not bothered by what bothers God, you're bothered only by what bothers you. You have determined what's important and what's not and instead of wanting to take care of the things that actually matter, you are enforcing and manipulating in order to get your way. And the person who is like this thinks they're spiritual and has a relationship with God, they use the Scriptures to their own advantage in order to manipulate, in order to get their own way, their goals. That person does not have a relationship with God as much as they pray, as much as they read, as much as they feel so spiritual. That is not, that person's prayers are hindered. The headship is to be governed by God and he says that you are to love your wife.

He tells us how leadership is to be exercised. Listen to Luke 22:25-26, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant." You're to be a slave, husband. Your headship is a responsibility to God for your wife's well-being and you're to exercise it like a servant, not like a king. You're not the king of your house, sit on your sofa and bid people make you sandwiches and bring you Coke and the remote control.

1 Peter 5:2 says of this is how elders are to shepherd the flock, this is godly leadership, they are to shepherd the flock among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. Your authority is to be used

for their good, not for your own purposes, and you're to do it that eagerly, not rolling your eyes and doing it as an example of godliness within your home.

Romans 12:8 says this, that the one who leads is to do it with zeal or diligence. This role in your life, husband, that role in your life is your primary responsibility. It is your job to make sure that she's well cared for physically, relationally, spiritually. That's your job. That is the primary role. That's the most important thing on your plate.

If you are the leader, the head, does your wife know where you're heading? Does she know your goals? Does she know what you think God is calling you to do? Does she understand what your priorities are? Does she know how she can best fulfill her role as your wife or do you leave her to herself to figure it out? If I were to ask your wife to give you a grade for your leadership, what grade would she give you? In fact, a husband's leadership in the home is one of the primary qualifications that qualifies him to be an elder in the church. You cannot be an elder in the church if you don't, if you're not a good leader of your home.

Reverence for Christ is the only way that you'll be able to fulfill your role as a leader. While there are some men who are abusive, my experience in the church is that far more men are afraid of their wives. They're far too concerned about keeping their wife happy or off their back, or afraid that she will disapprove of them and they're controlled by this, and therefore they don't actually lead. The fear of man is a snare. This leads them into debt, over-commitment, worldly pursuits, distractions from the Lord and his purpose for their life all in the purpose of just keeping his wife happy. I've seen this many times. New cars, new furniture, new clothes, vacations and all this kind of stuff, not actually looking out for her well-being but just trying to keep her happy with him. Our leadership is to be governed by the Lord. Often men are too lazy to give enough thought to leadership and they would rather put the responsibility of thinking through things on the wife. "Sure, babe, whatever you want. Yeah, just don't bother me. I don't want to think about it." They just let her decide. They don't want to have to interrupt their game in order to think about things.

This is why your headship needs to be defined by reverence for Christ and sacrificial love and that's what brings us here to point 2. That was the husband's role. You are the head of the wife. Number 2 is the husband's call. "Husbands," verse 25, "love your wives." Your call is to love. This is the common word "agape." It means "to have a warm regard for; an interest in another; it's to cherish or to have affection for; it's to have high esteem for something; and to find satisfaction in something." That's what it means to love, okay? It's not all emotion but love without emotion, I mean, I'm not sure how much that would be appreciated. "Yup, babe, did that. It was my duty. Here's some flowers. It was the loving thing to do." That's not the kind of love. It's a deep love. It is an unconditional sort of love. It's not the kind of love that comes and goes, but it does involve valuing that person, esteeming them, cherishing them, having an affection for, and it's an inward disposition that is proven by action. It's not just a feeling. Love without the corresponding action is not really love and God is the one that defines real love.

1 Corinthians 13. You guys know this. I'm just gonna read it quickly. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." It's just irritating. "If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing." Apply this to your marriage, by the way. Okay, you can be gifted but if you don't have love, you're irritating. You can teach all these things and have so much knowledge that you just want to relay to your wife, but if you don't love, you don't have anything. Verse 3, "if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing." You can be sacrificial. It's possible to be sacrificial without love. How do you know it's love? Love is sacrificial and we'll get into that but you can be sacrificial without love. You can do it out of pride.

So how do you know it's love? Verse 4, "Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly," so it's not rude, "it does not seek its own," or does not insist on its own way. "It is not provoked." If you love your wife, she might try to provoke you and all she wants, if you really love her, she can't provoke you. She can't provoke you to anger. Your anger is selfish pride and you can't blame her for that. Now she's got to do her part, right? I'm not saying that. We're not focusing on her today. You don't have to be angry. You don't have to be provoked. You don't have to insist on your own way and if you do, what you lack is love. Don't call it love if you are easily provoked.

"It does not take into account a wrong suffered." You don't sit there and mull over what the other person has done against you over and over and over since you were in college and you're just holding that against them, taking, you know, and seething on that and seeking how to punish that and how to bring that out and use that against them at the right moment. That is not love. You, husband, are called to love your wife.

"Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Romans 13:10, "Love does no wrong to a neighbor." Romans 12:9, "Let love be without hypocrisy." Don't pretend. Let it be real. Let it be genuine. Let it be sincere.

Love is the defining trait of a Christian, 1 John 4:16, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him."

If you love God, if you love God it will show itself in the love that 1 Corinthians 13 type of love. 1 Corinthians 14:1, "Pursue love." Colossians 3:14, "Above all things put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony." And Hebrews 10:24, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works." That should start in your home with your wife, how do you stir up love and good works, not stir up anger.

Husbands, if you are to love your wife, your conscience needs to be informed, that no matter what kind of a woman you are married to, you must love her at all times. No matter what kind of a woman she is, even if she's an unbeliever. Even if she's not committed to Christ. You are called to love her, to serve her, to do her good all the days of her life until death do you part. There is never an excuse for failing to love your wife. Never an excuse.

And you will fail but you must never defend your failure and excuse and explain it away. You must never do that. If you fail to love your wife, you must take responsibility for that and confess it to the Lord, confess it to your wife, get another brother involved to help you with that.

So that is the husband's call, to love your wife. So understand your role, understand your call, and number 3, imitate the right examples. It gives us a couple of examples here in this passage. Chapter 5:25, you see Christ's love for his church is the first example, and number 2, a man's love for his own body. You have two examples that you can look to for how to love your wife.

Example 1, Christ's love for the church. So husbands, love your wives, verse 25, "just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Now I wish I had all day to camp on this. Jesus did more than just to pay the penalty for our sins. His life is the example that we're to follow. It's the model. It's the blueprint. And we are called in Scripture to imitate him. We are to be like him. Has that crossed your mind in your love for your wife, that your love for her is to be like Jesus? That's what you're supposed to do? Do you admire Christ or is he just your bus ticket to heaven? Do you think about his example? Do you think about how he loved? Does that inform how you live? Do you try to live like he did?

Here in Ephesians Paul prays in chapter 3, verse 19, that we would know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge and that we would experience it and be filled with all the fullness of God, and then we're to walk worthy of that. The goal of all that we do as a church is summed up in this, chapter 4:13-15, we are growing in the knowledge of the Son of God to the fullness of Christ. We are to be like him. We do this by putting off the old self and to put on the new. We're to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ has forgiven you. Chapter 5, verse 1 through 2, we are to be imitators of God and we are commanded to walk in love just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us.

So everything that we do is done in relationship to what Christ did. Wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ. Husbands love the way Christ loved. Children, obey in the Lord. Husbands, bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Servants, obey your masters as to Christ. And masters are to stop threatening their servants because they have a Master in heaven. Everything we do relates to Christ. Everything. And he governs and defines and he's the example of everything that we are to do. So we are to imitate the love that our Lord has for his church and this is

to be lived out especially in relationship to our wives. So our love is to be Christ-like and if it's not Christ-like, then we need to change.

So what are the characteristics of this Christ-like love? Well, it is self-sacrificing. He gave himself up for her. The Greek word is "paradidomi." It means "to hand over; give over; deliver and trust." It was used of Jesus giving up his spirit. It's even used of betraying someone, right? The same word. He gave up his body. He gave up his life for others. It's the idea that you possess something of great value and you relinquish that. It's illustrated in Philippians 2 where Jesus did not hold on to his divine rights, instead he emptied himself to take the form of a bondservant and obey to the point of death. Jesus' entire life was one of giving up himself for the good of his bride, the church.

His entire life. Every moment. Think about that. He knew his entire life that he was heading for a cross and he was heading there to bear the sins of the world, and his entire life Satan was tempting him to avoid that. All the temptations in Matthew 4 where Satan tempted him personally was trying to short-cut the cross and to avoid the suffering, to give him the glory and the worship of the world if Jesus would just bow down and worship Satan rather than go through the cross. He was always trying to get him to avoid that and Jesus, think about that, deserved that glory. He deserved to be well-fed. He deserved all the praise and honor. He deserved all the comfort in the world and yet he submitted his will to the Father and to the Father's word. And this wasn't just a one-time act. He didn't just give himself one time. Every moment of his life was like this. Every single word, every bite of food, every act of healing and teaching and walking and fishing and feeding and confronting and comforting, he constantly gave himself up for his people, for his bride, for his church. Every moment. Then after a lifetime of self-sacrifice, he went to the garden of Gethsemane greatly troubled by the pain and wrath he was about to face, begging the Lord to remove that cup from him but he said, "Not My will, Your will be done."

That's the love you're to imitate. That's the love that you're, that's who you're to be like, facing pain and anguish and yet submitting himself to the will of God. Then the soldiers came to arrest him and Peter tried to defend him by cutting off that guy's ear, remember that? And then Jesus says, "Do you know that I could call a legion of angels to defend Me?" It's like Jesus knew he had the spiritual eyes to know, here's these puny men mocking him and Jesus is surrounded by a legion of angels and all he had to do was, "Get'em, boys." It would've been over, right? He could've done that. He could've avoided that. He could've lit them up. He could've shown his glory. He could've dominated them.

Instead he endured that shame hurled at him by arrogant men, men who he created, men who should have been worshiping him. He endured the insults of the soldiers who mocked him and beat him. All the while the angels were just standing there waiting for the order to rescue their Master and yet he never called upon them. He was determined to glorify the Father and to save you and me. He went to the cross and he willingly laid his hands down and took the nails. They hung him naked and bleeding between two criminals who insulted him too, and yet he never insulted back. He never reviled back. He never returned evil for evil. He asked the Father instead to forgive those who insulted

him, they didn't understand what they were doing. And he continued to look out for his mother while he was hanging there by those nails, remember that? He told John, "Look out for her. You're now to treat her like she's your mother. Look out for her." And he promised salvation to the thief that had just been insulting him, who repented on the cross and he says, "You're gonna be with Me in paradise." And then he gave up his spirit.

Why did he do this? To sanctify her, it says in Ephesians 5. To set her apart for him. To cleanse her through the washing of water with the word, which is the Gospel, the word there that it's speaking of. It's not just the Bible in general, it's not cleansing her through the reading of a genealogy. No, it's cleansing her through the word of the Gospel of salvation that cleansed her of her sin, cleansed her of every vile wicked thing. Then it says he beautified her by removing her spots, her wrinkles, her blemishes, and he's making her holy and blameless so that in the future when his kingdom comes, she will be presented to him like a bride in all her glory. Perfect.

Christ's love for his church was the kind that didn't just leave her to her devices, instead it was truly for her good, for her benefit and, husband, you are to love your wife as Christ loved the church. Think about the people that Christ loved this way. Romans 5:8, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. Back in Ephesians 2, "while you were dead in trespasses and sins in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath." Those are the people that Jesus loved. Those are the people that he laid his life down for. Those are the people that he endured a lifetime of suffering and self-denial for. Can you not love your wife? Can you not at least love your wife? Can you not at least lay down your life for her benefit? Can you at least be patient with her even when she insults you? Are you greater than Christ? Are you greater than your Master?

It says he was rich in mercy, verse 4. Rich in mercy. He did not judge. He did not condemn his bride. He forgave her and gave her grace that she did not deserve because of his great love with which he loved us. That's mega-love, right? Big as it gets even when we were dead in our transgressions.

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. He was rich in mercy and then he did this to unite us to himself. Verse 6 says that we were raised up with him. You know, it's so interesting, you and I are in union with Christ and husbands and wives, in marriage you are one flesh and we are to relate to one another in the same way. He united us to himself, raised us with him, and he did this, okay now this is really big, okay, and we might need to end on this and then I might need to preach again sometime. There will be like five people here. This is huge. Look at what he did in verse 7, chapter 2, verse 7. Did you read that? Read that for a second. Contemplate that. This is his attitude towards his bride. He did all that "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." That word "surpassing," it means "extreme; extraordinary; excessive."

He saved you. He endured all that to forgive you but not just to forgive you so that you could be roommates in heaven, right, but so that in the ages to come, not in this life but forever he will show the surpassing, the extreme, extraordinary, excessive riches of his grace. Grace means favor. If you belong to Christ, you are in his favor and he wants to show the extreme riches of that favor in kindness to you, which means goodness or generosity forever. That's his attitude towards sinners who have rebelled against him, who constantly forget him, who rebel even now after they've been saved. And yet his grace towards you and his heart towards you, his attitude towards you is, "I am going to work in their life to bring them into union with Christ, to remove their blemishes, to remove their spots, to remove their sin and to present them holy and blameless forever so that we can live together in eternity," so that he can for the rest of eternity dump the excessive riches of his favor on you in generosity.

That's his heart towards you. That's his heart towards you. That's his heart towards his church. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Forgive. Be generous. Show your favor towards her without holding back, without self-protection, without self-interest. Deny yourself for her good. Lead her. Love her. Understand her with humility and gentleness and patience and tolerance for her differences. Love as Christ loved his church.

I'll just give you this just so you know what it means. So that first example is love as Christ loved the church. 2. Love as you love your own body. How do you love your own body? You nourish and you cherish it. That means to nourish means to provide food and tender care. It's the same word used for bringing up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, bringing them up, raising them up, doing what's needed for their growth and well-being. And cherish, to comfort them. It's the same word used in 1 Thessalonians 2:7, like a nursing mother caring for an infant. You're to nourish and cherish your wife without qualification.

You are her head, she is your body. You are united to her. You are one just as if she was your own flesh. So the way you treat her directly affects you. Guys, when you're hungry, what do you do? You pull up to the closest drive-through, don't you? Or you pick your favorite spot and you go eat. When you're cold, when you're hot. Think about this the man-cold, the notorious man-cold, "Oh, I'm so sick." Right? Guys, they're so gentle with themselves. You're to treat your wife as your own body. If you don't nourish her, it's like you're refusing to eat. If you don't comfort her, it's like sleeping out in the cold.

Okay, well, we need to stop, but ladies, are you struggling with disappointment? Well, Christ died for you and you are a member of the church, his body. He loves you in this way and it says in Revelation that his bride is making herself ready and in that final day, Revelation 21, the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man." God will dwell with you like a husband. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God and he himself will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more,

neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away.

It's for him and it's for that day that we endure, and we do his will even if it causes us trouble in this life. Man, I mean, this is really, for me honestly, this is huge. I want to have this attitude towards my wife. I want to love her like Jesus. I want to lavish her with grace. I want to be patient with her weaknesses and differences and sins. I want to forgive. I don't want to hold onto anything. I don't want to ever be easily provoked. I don't want to be angry ever again because Christ was that way for me and what joy is there in being like Jesus. I want that and I want that for my wife and I want that for you guys as well so that Christ would be lifted up and our joy would be full and our hope would shine forward and people would be saved, and we'll all gather on that, at that wedding feast of the Lamb.

Let me pray.

Father, please help us. Please change us. O Lord, we know we can't do this without You and yet, Lord, we want to be like this. So Lord, work in our hearts. Help us to forgive. Help us to be patient. Help us to love like Christ. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.