

Wives Led by Grace-Energized Husbands: Who Lead Like Jesus Ephesians 5:25

God desires every marriage in Christ's church to be led by a husband clothed in humility. That is the goal God has for every man here who is a genuine believer, and is married or hopes to be someday.

All of us husbands are asked by God to represent Him here on Earth. As we saw last time in Ephesians 5:25 our first command is to LOVE our wives. Sacrificially like Jesus. Today we look at the second half of the plan God left for us: we are to LEAD with Christ's humility.

Humility Reflects Christ Jesus

This simple, practical way of modeling humility is the very best way to love our wives (and children)! Paul told us that in our pursuit of Christ we must seek His attitude:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, ... He humbled Himself and became obedient [to the point of] death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5, 7a, 8).

Husbands, decide right now that leading with *humility like Christ's is your goal*—and that you are going to become the greatest servant on Earth to your wife. The rewards will last forever!

How do we get clothed with Christ's humility to even start leading our wives? Living as a humble servant of Jesus Christ is part of what the Bible calls "sanctification" or more simple, "God changing my behavior". We are to agree with God's desires as expressed in His Word, and consciously deny the way we were born (which was selfish) and start living like the new creations we became in Christ. Salvation begins us in a constant process of scraping off the old us and putting on the new us.

Turn with me to the "put-ons", the sanctified behavior we must consciously seek to live out each day. This new us, is described as a wardrobe every believer is to draw from and wear each day. Men, we are to lead the way in wearing Christ's humility.

Colossians 3:12-14 is our Scripture for today, as we turn there, listen to what God asks and consider whether you are obeying Him. We are looking at how this command impacts husbands today, but it is for every believer today, and God wants all of us clothed in Christ's humility!

Please stand as we read God's Word:

Col 3:12-14 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Pray

God has asked each of us to participate in personal sanctification. Everyone in His family, men, women, boys, girls, husbands, wives—are each to get clothed by conscious choice, each day. That act of obedience will transform each of us as we take on our God-given role. For believing husbands, our God-given role is that He designed us to lead, and we glorify God as we lead¹.

As believers, all husbands are to be growing representations of Christ. That means that born-again husbands will seek to love and lead like Jesus. Few words can describe the sheer delights of marriage lived in this manner—one day at a time—just as God designed it to be!

How to Lead Our Wives Like Jesus Led

God designed men to lead, and women to respond. It is the role of men to initiate and pursue, no matter how hard it may be. Christ's example of gentle, compassionate, servant leadership is a model for all of us who want to be godly husbands and dads. The characteristics of Christ's leadership are what each of us men should emulate: transparency, sacrificial service, kindness, strength, tenderness, and praise.

He leads humbly because: Transparency becomes his habit

I John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

A husband who leads with humility will live the way God designed him to live and give his wives complete openness, communication, and vulnerability. This is the basic

¹ You may be asking where exactly does it say that husbands are to lead. Good question, it is explained by God very clearly in I Corinthians 11:1-11. It is all part of Scripture's gender-specific roles that God has laid down for those who seek to honor and obey Him.

requirement God set down in I John 1 as those who 'walk in the light'. We do not hide our lives from those we love, we share our life with them.

Just as Jesus loved His own to the end, so we should love our wives. Just as Jesus will never leave us or forsake us, our wives need to know, feel, and hear from us of our lifelong loyalty. One of the best ways to encourage our wives is to clearly and regularly say how much they fulfill our lives.

I tell my wife, Bonnie, in every way I can think of, just how much I need her help, her counsel, her companionship, and her presence. It is vital that she feels all of her needs are being met in a loving manner.

- If she loves my time—I give her time;
- If she loves gifts—I give her something she'll cherish;
- If she loves words—I give her quiet times of talking about whatever she needs to hear.

Our marriage, over the years, has truly been deepened and enriched by the hundreds of godly couples we have met, known, loved, and learned from in the ministry. Here are four valuable lessons others have shared with us.

Four Steps on the Path of Humble Transparent Leadership

- **Humbly Transparent Husbands: Ask for help.** Some husbands are like cavemen—they mumble, grunt, and go through life in a cloud of silence at home. But the way God wired wives is so that they want to be asked to help because they like to spend time with us. Therefore, we must leave the cave of silence, and let them know what we are doing. We should ask our wives to do things, even if it is something simple like holding a tool we need for a project or going somewhere together to buy this or that. In other words, as our best friends, they should be included in our lives, words, and thoughts, and in doing this, it will make our wives feel like a valuable member of the team.
- **Humbly Transparent Husbands: Share burdens.** A burden shared is cut in half; a blessing shared is doubled. God's math in marriage is perfect. We should share the load, as Galatians 6:2 directs. If we don't, we are robbing our precious wives of what God has made them to be—lifelong helpmeets. If we pray about our burdens with them, soon they will likely open up to us and share their own burdens, so that we can help them better bear them. A marriage is only complete when both partners love one another, fulfilling the law of love God calls us to obey.
- **Humbly Transparent Husbands: Confess struggles.** No one can protect our integrity better than our wives. We therefore ought to share our struggles with them. For example, whenever I think a woman is too friendly, I talk about it with Bonnie. She can see things as a woman I never could as a man. As husbands, we should discuss with our wives any ideas, problems, fears, or

pains we're going through because they want to share real areas of our lives—to know our struggles. Such shared burdens will bind hearts together like nothing else. The vulnerability of sharing honest struggles will do far more to affirm a vital partnership with our spouses than any fancy presents or expensive toys ever could. Our wives will know that we belong to them if we share our real problems in life!

- **Humbly Transparent Husbands: Express needs.** Nothing motivates a godly wife more than knowing that her husband truly needs her. Remember—God designed women to be completers. Wives want to invest their time and strength in what will matter to their husbands in life. Nothing will warm their hearts more than to hear these words: “Honey I really need—(you fill it in).” Perhaps time to talk, time alone with them, to get away for a night, or whatever you really need. **Telling your wife how much you need her is the greatest thing you can do because she longs to meet your needs!**

Husbands, decide right now that *transparency will become your habit*—that you are going to become the closest friend on Earth to your wife. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because: Serving is his plan

“Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be [a] servant ... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26b, 28).

A husband who leads with humility will be his wife and family’s best servant: A servant has a master. Since Christ is our Master, a husband leads his wife, even as Christ leads His church (Ephesians 5:23). Fruitful and satisfying marriages start with the attitude of Jesus. Paul explains that Christ’s motivating heart of servant ministry flowed from an attitude of joyful submission. Paul asks each of us in Philippians 2:3-11 to “let” (“allow, invite, welcome”) the attitude of Jesus to become ours. As we embrace the humility of Christ, we stop being absorbed by self and begin thinking of others.

When Jesus called the twelve disciples, He distilled His plan down to one word. We see this one-word key to discipling in Mark 3:14: *“that they might be **with** Him”* (Emphasis added). We need to spend personal, face to face, heart to heart time **with** those we are nurturing. Jesus was there **with** His disciples when they needed Him. We should follow His example².

We, as servant leaders, need to lead in person—not from afar or by extension, but in the presence of those we serve. If you read the Gospels closely you will see how clearly Christ’s words communicated exactly what His disciples needed. He anticipated their fears; He expected their questions; and He guided their growth. Just like Jesus, we should long to “create understanding,” which is the primary purpose of communication.

² John 1:39, 43; Mark 1:17; 3:14; 4:10; 5:1, 30-31, 40; 6:1, 30-32, 35; 8:1,10,27,34; 9:2,30; 10:13, 23,46; 11:1.

Husbands, decide right now that *serving will become your plan*—that you are going to become the dearest friend on Earth to your wife. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because:

Sacrifice is his method

Matthew 20:28 says, "*The Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve, and to give** His life a ransom for many.*"

A husband who leads with humility will love his wife by sacrificing to meet her needs. Jesus told us that because God loved, He gave. That gift was the ultimate sacrifice. Husbands are to have that type of sacrificial love as their way of life with their own wives. Authors Dr. Gary and Barbara Rosberg report, in a survey of over 700 couples, that wives indicated their top five love needs as follows: **1.** unconditional love and acceptance, **2.** emotional intimacy and communication, **3.** spiritual intimacy, **4.** encouragement and affirmation, and **5.** companionship.³

The Rosbergs make a very valid point: Human nature is strange. Something in us assumes that if we treat our spouse the way we would like him or her to treat us, we are meeting our partner's needs. But when it comes to needs, the Golden Rule ("*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*") does not always apply. Why? Because in many cases a husband's needs are different than a wife's needs. That is why our method must be sacrifice. We learn to love our wife in the way she can feel, know, experience, and receive that love.

It is really true that God wired men and women differently, and this doesn't apply only to sexual needs. For that reason, establishing a routine of intimate dialogue between husband and wife is essential so that each understands how to best make his or her partner feel loved. And then, after learning something that is special to your wife, sacrificially offer that as a gift to her: whether accepting her without reservation, or communicating with her even when exhausted, or reading God's Word to her instead of watching TV or going online, or affirming one thing each day that you noticed that she did, or just following her around until she notices you want to spend time with her. Find which of these 5 she likes and keep at it.

Husbands, decide right now that *sacrifice will become your method*—that you are going to become the closest friend on Earth to your wife. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because:

Kindness is in his touch

*Colossians 3:12 (NIV) says: Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, **clothe yourselves** with compassion, **kindness**, humility, gentleness and patience.*

³ Gary Roseberg, *The 5 Love Needs of Men & Women*, (Wheaton: Tyndale, 2000), p.8.

A husband who leads with humility will practice one of the simplest, yet most neglected ways of communicating love—by the tender touches of love. Husbands who love this humble way are in a constant habit of giving their wife tenderness, chivalry, and courtesy.

If you have never felt the touches of Jesus⁴ through the pages of the Gospels—I invite you to do so. Why not take a few moments and look up those passages and see how compassionate and gentle were Christ's hands as He touched with love so many people. Jesus had a loving touch of kindness.

Jesus didn't just speak, He didn't just heal, He didn't just feed, protect, and provide—He did all those things with the recorded addition of His special "touch". People whether they acknowledge it or not need touching to be healthy. From babies in nurseries to the aged in care facilities: those who never get touched have many more problems and struggles. Jesus knew how much we needed to feel the touches of His love, so He came to His fallen creatures; and stretched out His hands, and touched them.

Husbands, decide right now that *kindness will be expressed by your touch*—that you are going to become the most loving and expressive friend on Earth to your wife. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because: Strength is in his presence

*Ephesians 5:28 So husbands ought to love their own wives **as their own bodies**; he who loves his wife loves himself.*

A husband who leads with humility will love his wife by being there for her, protecting her, and making her feel secure in his love (Ephesians 5:28). Your beloved and precious wife needs to feel that, like Christ, you her husband will never leave her, or forsake her (Matthew 28:20b; Hebrews 13:5). The strength that you can offer your wife is a learned art. Become a student of your wife. Learn her patterns.

- Does she get "the blues" in the gray of winter? Know when that is happening, and surprise her with something she loves.
- Does she need time alone (away from the burdens of home and family) during her monthly cycle? Then send her off to a bookstore to drink tea and read her Bible, or just look at magazines and think.
- How about the loss of a parent in the past—do you remember and comfort her?

These are just some suggestions to start a lifetime of sacrificing your time to show her she is special, loved, and your focus. Be there for her needs by studying her life because you love her so much.

⁴ There are at least 40 passages recording Christ's touches, here are some in Mark: 1:31,41; 5:41; 6:5; 7:33; 8:23; 9:27; 10:16.

Husbands, decide right now that *strength will be offered by your presence*—that you are going to become the greatest student in the world, on your wife's needs. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because: Tenderness is on his tongue

*Colossians 4:6 Let your speech **always be with grace**, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*

A husband who leads with humility will practice one of the simplest, yet most neglected ways of communicating love—by words spoken kindly, warmly, and directly to his wife. Jesus spoke with such grace that even His enemies confessed in John 7:46: "*No man ever spoke like this Man!*"

Do you remember those words in Austin Mile's hymn "In the Garden"? Describing Christ's love for us, he wrote: *He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their singing*

You are probably saying, "I could never talk like that!" But that is just the point, we can't, but Christ in us CAN! Husbands, what effect do you think demonstrating that same spirit might have on our wives? Since women are so responsive, I imagine that such sweet speech would be a beautiful service of love!

Decide today, that by the grace God offers constantly, your words will be seasoned with the salt of His grace (Ephesians 5:28; Col 4:6). That means you will make some choices prompted by gracious love:

- Tenderness means you will refuse to compare her unfavorably with others, especially other women.
- Tenderness means you will not use jokes about her, or make cutting remarks to her in front of other people.
- Tenderness means you will speak to her in a gentle and respectful way, and treat her as you would a valuable jewel.

Personally, I have chosen to believe that Bonnie is the dearest friend I'll ever have on earth—and I treat her that way, think of her that way, and talk about her in that way!

Husbands, decide right now that *tenderness will be on your tongue*—that you are going to become the best voice your wife could hear speaking to and about her. The rewards will last forever!

He leads humbly because: Praise is his gift

*Proverbs 31:28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her:*

Husband who lead with humility will see Proverbs 31:28 as their goal for their marriage. Many people talk about the Proverbs 31 woman; but few men strive to be the Proverbs 31:28 **husband**: "*Her husband ... praises her.*" Shouldn't we likewise practice that grace until it becomes part of our daily life? It is so rewarding to see the long-term results!

Proverbs 31:28 is the only Scripture I know of that describes the way a godly husband speaks in public about his wife. Are you doing what God says? Are you also praising your wife in front of your children? That is the way of the godly, tender servant-leader!

All of us husbands are asked by God to represent Him here on Earth. Our first command is to LOVE our wives, sacrificially like Jesus; and the second half of the plan God left for us is: we are to LEAD with Christ's humility.

God desires every marriage in Christ's church to be led by a husband clothed in humility. That is the goal God has for every man here who is a genuine believer, and is married or hopes to be someday.

How to Lead Our Wives
Like Jesus Led

1. Transparency becomes his habit; and humbly transparent husbands: Ask for help, Share burdens, Confess struggles, and Express needs.
2. Serving is his plan;
3. Sacrifice is his method;
4. Kindness is in his touch;
5. Strength is in his presence ;
6. Tenderness is on his tongue; and
7. Praise is his gift.

Danger Signs of a Man Disobedient to the Word

It is when we are without a growing relationship with our wives as was just described, and are not faithfully following Christ's Word, that we husbands commonly end up with one or several of five common danger signs that will lead to lifelong regrets⁵.

- 1. He doesn't lead obediently: When he abdicates his God-given role:** This husband is nothing but a little boy in search of a mommy, and he seems to have found one in his wife. He is thoroughly self-centered, but manages to appear to others as a loving and devoted husband.
- 2. He doesn't lead obediently: When he disengages his emotions:** This man may be recognized as one of the most stable and even-tempered men in his community. He is frequently asked to serve on the boards of numerous

⁵ Hendricks, *Rocking the Roles* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), p. 156.

organizations because of his organized mind and methodical way of making decisions. However, in his home he is about as detached and emotionally unavailable as a man can get.

- 3. He doesn't lead obediently: When he demands rather than earns:** This man's idea of "head of the household" means that nothing happens without his approval. When his wife dares to question his authority or decisions, he resorts to intimidating tactics and, if that doesn't work, he goes into a blind rage.
- 4. He doesn't lead obediently: When he serves his job not his family:** This man never leaves work mentally or emotionally. He lives under pressure, and sprays his family with his frustrations.
- 5. He doesn't lead obediently: When he refuses to lead spiritually:** This husband is a believer and a church attendee. But beyond that, he's generally unresponsive to spiritual matters; he therefore never exercises spiritual leadership in his home. And that void blocks the intimacy for which his wife yearns.

We have seen, in conclusion, characteristics of both a no-regrets husband and a husband with regrets. Now, let's make this more personal. If I were to ask your wife how your husbandly love compares to what we've just learned, what would she say? Would she categorize you as a no-regrets husband—or a husband with regrets? How would God evaluate the fruitfulness of your primary ministry to your wife?

Get Started Now

You have a specific calling—love your wife, and sacrificially lead her—just as Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us. This is not a fact to learn; it is a lifestyle to live. And as Jesus said, it is not those who say they love, but those who show it—that really love. Matthew 7:21-23

Just as with every other facet of our spiritual lives, we must repent and go back to where we got off the path. Christ's course for each of us to follow is so clear. If you have lost the joy, lost the vibrancy of your daily walk with your wife, repent and go back to where you veered away. Do as Jesus said in Revelation 2:4-5: Go back to your first love—the love of choice, the love of sacrifice, the love of priority, the love that draws you to sacrifice for her. Start today! Make a list, and follow it back to where God wants you to be:

- From this chapter, note what areas you have neglected, or were even unaware of that needed to be done (1 Peter 3:7).
- Humbly agree with God that you have failed. Ask for the cleansing of forgiveness (1 John 1:9; Matthew 5:23-24; James 5:16). Then sit (or even better—shock your wife and kneel with her) and pray for God to forgive your failures and give you a fresh start together.

- Start over again by remembering that God is the God of New Beginnings (Lamentations 3:23). By God's grace, the whole life of a believer is but "a series of new beginnings."
- Realize that marriage is just like every other dimension of our life in Christ—it only works by the power of the Spirit. Yield to Him, and ask for the fullness of His power to bear the fruit of love in your life, your marriage, and in your family (Galatians 5:16, 22-23).

God says so often, "If you love Me, you will obey Me." (John 14:21; Philippians 2:12-13; James 1:19-24) Decide now, in the power of God, to overflow with His love, to begin anew and afresh in this walk with your wife. Ask Him to make His love overflow in your hearts (Romans 5:5). Don't wait—ask now! There is so much that we *have not* simply because we *ask not* (James 4:2b).

What an opportunity to have such a rare and precious ministry. And that is exactly what the Lord offers to each of us. How about it? Are you a no-regrets husband? Is your marriage a no-regrets marriage—or full of grief? Where is your marriage headed? I believe the choice is yours. Why not decide to start in some of these suggested ways—heading toward a marriage that thrills your wife and pleases the Lord?

Why Not Start Two Simple Habits?

Life is so full, days are so short, and time passes so swiftly—so I have chosen two simple habits to freeze time into precious snapshots of my love for my wife and children. Here they are; think about them and try your own version in your family. I'm sure you will be glad you did.

First, I have an ongoing list that I have made for Bonnie. It took about an hour to start, and now I add to it whenever I can. I call it my "**Reasons Why I Love You**" list. I took her out to eat, talked over our wonderful blessings, and then read it to her the first time. Need I say how she received it? She was overwhelmed, overjoyed, and blessed beyond measure. Since then, I add at least one new reason before the special events in the life of our marriage. I give my wife a new and updated list on each of her birthdays and our anniversaries. (I even find the list taped in a place where she can read it over and over each day—to remember just why I love her so much!)

My second simple habit is another important list. Bonnie and I, as a couple, sat together and prayerfully assembled a list we call "**Spiritual Goals for Our Marriage and Family.**" It will bless your wife and children if you do the same; begin simply, and watch the list grow. When Bonnie and I started our lives together, for example, we planned to do the following things with each of our children. And as the Lord allows these goals to become reality in our family, they become praise points that encourage us along the road of our marriage and family. Here are just a few examples of simple goals we have made, prayed for, and will rejoice to see God accomplish through us:

- Lead each of our children to Christ.

- Teach them how to have personal devotions with the Lord.
- Train them in simple Bible study methods (marking key topics, study subjects through the entire Bible like “prayer,” etc.).
- Begin our children’s memorization habits for life.
- Teach them how to mark their Bible with the “Romans Road,” and then teach them how to use that to lead a soul to Jesus from the Scriptures. You will find the “Romans Road” at the end of this chapter; these are the four simple truths I mark in every Bible I own, as soon as I obtain it. I hope you will too, and then help your wife and family mark theirs.
- Read God’s Word aloud with them at the meal table—aim to read the entire Bible before they grow up and head off to college.
- Look for a time to pray every day with them, either as a couple or alone with them, at the start or end of their day.

Guess what? God has given us every goal we had—every goal we prayed over regularly! He loves to respond to whole-hearted praying:

“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek [Him] with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 4:29).

Start with a simple habit like one of these, keep going on it, and you will be amazed at how it keeps your marriage and family focused on what will really last!