

How to Change Your Husband
Marriage Series
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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:33
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NOTE: This is a transcript and not a manuscript of Dr. Stewart's sermon. Since we speak differently than we write, a transcript will not be as smooth or as polished as a manuscript would be. This transcript has the style of an oral presentation not a written presentation. In order to reflect as much as possible the original presentation of this sermon, Dr. Stewart has chosen to retain the transcript format.

Take your Bibles and turn over to the book of Ephesians chapter five. Let me start off with a few questions this morning, ladies. First, is there anything about your husband you would like to change? Don't answer the question out loud. Have you tried to change your husband? How many of you have met with long term success in your efforts to change your husband? How many of you upon trying to change your husband have been met with this response? "Honey, thank you for pointing out my shortcomings. I appreciate that, I so want to change and I want to be the best husband I can be. Thank you so much. Feel free any time just to point out any of my short comings you would like to."

Or perhaps you have been greeted with anger, with resentment, with resistance and maybe a verbal outburst like, "You are always trying to change me. You are never satisfied. Just get off my back. Just quit nagging me, please."

Truth is, ladies, you cannot change your husband. I tell ladies in premarital counseling, I say, "If you don't love him like he is, don't marry him, because you will not be able to change him." Now, for some reason during the dating and engagement phase women get the idea they can change their husband. And, guys, we are partly to blame because during that dating and engagement period we will make temporary changes to get what we want and that is for them to marry us. But once that happens, we go back to our old ways, don't we?

So, ladies, the truth is, you cannot change your husband and though you cannot change him, God *can* change your husband. And, in fact, God wants to use *you* in a major way to change your husband.

But I'll warn you. It is not in the way that you think. Remember, God's ways are not our

ways. So God's way to change your husband is not the way *you* would go about changing him. But let's face it. Your way hasn't worked, has it? Some of you have been trying for over 30 years and it hasn't worked. So let's give God's way a chance and see how it works.

That brings us over to Ephesians chapter five. We are going to be looking only at one verse in this passage and then we will be looking at another passage in 1 Peter. The verse we will be looking at is verse 33.

In this chapter Paul deals with the husband and wife relationship and gives some of the greatest teachings about marriage that we have in all of Scripture. One of the things that you need to keep in your mind from the forefront is that in this chapter Paul likens a marriage of man to his wife to the relationship of Christ to the Church. Just as the man is to be the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the Church. So we need to keep that analogy in mind. It will help you to understand God's truth and to make much better sense out of God's truth.

God desires that the marriage be a picture, a mirror of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. God desires that your marriage is a reflection to the world of the relationship Jesus has to the Church.

So that question needs to be foremost in your mind. Is my relationship to my husband, a reflection of the Church's relationship to Christ?

In respect for the Word of God, let me ask you to stand as I read verse 33 of Ephesians five. "Nevertheless, each individual among you is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

In this passage it deals with the husband and wife relationship. Nowhere does Paul tell a wife to love her husband. You may find that rather strange, ladies. But he never tells a wife to love her husband. But he does tell her is to *respect* her husband. The most important words that you can speak to your husband are words of respect.

Why is it that God tells a wife to respect her husband? Because one of your husband's greatest needs is to be respected and to be admired by you his wife. We men had rather be respected by our wives than loved by our wives. You say, "But I love him." Well, to us if you love us but don't respect us that doesn't matter. We want your respect. We want your respect so much that wars have been fought over a man trying to get the respect and admiration of a woman. It is a driving force within us. God made us this way.

How many times have you seen little boys and girls playing and the boys start trying to show off for the girls? They want the girls to notice them. They want the girls to look at them. They want the girls to admire them. Notice cheerleaders are girls. Those guys out on the field playing, they want to impress those girls over there that are cheering for them. It is innate within us. We desire the respect and admiration of the woman that we love more than anything.

Now there are positive aspects to this. The drive to achieve in many men is based on a desire to have their wives appreciate and respect them. A husband will seek to live up to his wife's respect. When he knows that you respect him he will seek to become more worthy of your respect. That is the positive aspects to it.

Now there are some negative aspects to his need to be respected by you as well. And the primary negative aspect is if you are not giving him the respect at home that he so desperately needs, this makes him susceptible to the admiration and respect of other women; that secretary at work, that lady at the health club, that co-worker who respects him and admires him. All of us have heard of more than a few cases where a boss ends up running off or having an affair with his secretary. She is much younger than he is but I can promise you, her admiration and respect for him was what won him over. In fact, it is so dangerous that Scripture warns us against just this in Proverbs chapter two verse 16, "To deliver you from the strange woman, From the adulteress who flatters with her words."

Ladies, God says your husband so needs your respect and admiration that if he is not getting it that makes him especially vulnerable to that flattery, that admiration of that strange woman. So the Scripture says, "Respect your husband."

Do you want to see your husband change? Respect him. Admire him. You might be saying, "What are words of respect? What are words of admiration? I don't quite understand, preacher." Over in Ephesians 5:33 the Amplified Bible does a great job of amplifying the meaning of this verse and I put the translation up for you on the screen. Now let me read it, "Let the wife see to it she respects and reverences her husband that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates and esteems him and that she defers to him, praises him and loves and admires him exceedingly."

Now, I didn't write that. I agree probably there were all men on that translation committee, but nevertheless what the Amplified Bible does is it recognizes that no single Greek word can be adequately translated into the English and so it tries to give several English words to express the deep meaning of the Greek. And that word for "respect" in the Greek carries the ideas that are expressed in the Amplified Version in that verse. Let that soak in, ladies. "Regards him, notices him, honors him, prefers, venerates and esteems him, defers to him, praises him, loves and admires him exceedingly."

And your words that express these attitudes and these emotions will be words of respect. You honor, you esteem, you prize him. You treat him with high regard. Do you notice the negative reaction in you right now to saying those words to your husband? Do you notice that? Is it just my wife that has it or do you have it, too? "What? He'll get the big head. I am not going to tell him all those things. He is hard enough to live with like it is." I want you to know that reaction is your sin nature reacting. I want you to know the Bible, first of all, makes it clear and you need to realize that Satan does not want you to speak words of respect to your husband. And when you resist doing it, you are falling right in line with what Satan wants.

Secondly, I want you to realize it is God who is telling you to speak these words of respect to your husband, not me. He is the one that says you ought to see to it that you respect, that you honor, you esteem, you regard your husband, not me. The Bible also says that, "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you." So he will give you the strength to do it. And the Bible also says, "To him who knows what is right and does not do it, to him it is sin." Words of respect, words of admiration.

Now there are four areas that your husband especially needs to hear your words of respect. First is masculine, physical masculinity. He needs you to admire, he needs to have your respect with his physical build, maybe his broad shoulders, maybe his strong arms.

I was teaching this several years ago to a group of ladies and I told them about this, and this one lady in particular, her husband, I knew him and he was rather tall and thin and I told her, I said, "You know guys need this." I said, "In fact, if you go up to your husband," say he's there with a t-shirt and you say, "man, your muscles sure look big!" He's going to flex, he's going to flex. And she thought to herself, "Nah, not my Jerry." Well, a week later she came back and she said, "You were right!" She said, "I went up to him and said, man, your arms really look strong today and the first thing he did was flex."

We need that. You know, truth is, ladies, inside of this big body is a little boy. Inside of that man that you live with is a little boy that needs respect and he needs admiration. And when you speak words of admiration about his physical masculinity, this builds him up.

Second, in his mental masculinity: about his dependability in his job, about his sound judgment, about how he makes good decisions, how he is good at problem solving, words about his determination and his steadfastness in what he does. All of these he needs to hear.

Third, then words of respect about his spirituality: his courage to stand on God's Word or his honesty, his commitment to be a man of God, his hunger for the Word, his spiritual insights. He needs to hear words of respect and admiration.

And then finally his role as a husband and father, how he provides for you and the family, about his commitment to your kids, about his protection that he provides and his leadership in the home.

Now, when you start expressing these words, you need to keep two things clearly in your mind. First of all, they must be sincere. He will pick up on any words that are not from a sincere heart. He will detest and he will resent false praise. So that means that you have to take time to cultivate true admiration and respect for him.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking, but trust me. Brains, brawns, skill, every man has got one of those three. Find the one your husband has and ask the Lord to show

you, “Lord, show me what I can admire and respect in my husband.” And then ask the Lord to give you those words of respect and those words of admiration so that you can, indeed, speak those words, show him the respect and admiration that he so desperately needs and desires.

Now here is the thing that you are going to have to take on faith, ladies. When you show your husband respect and admiration, this makes him secure in who he is and he knows you accept him and are not trying to change him. And guess what? Now he is open to be changed by God. Do you see how it works?

Rather than your respect and admiration making it hard for him to change, your acceptance of him makes him willing to change. I know it is counter intuitive, but that is the way it is. The respect that you give him gives him the power he needs to change because he is feeling accepted by you. When he feels like you are just trying to change him all the time, you are trying to make him do something different than he is doing, he is going to bow up. He is going to resist that because you are striking at his security. You are making him insecure and he is not going to budge. But if you start praising, you start admiring him, you start accepting him as he is, then you are opening the door for God to begin to work in that man’s life to change him.

So the number one thing in seeing God change your husband is for you to begin to speak words of respect to him and to act in a respectful way to him. That sets the stage for God to work. That is why I said God would use you in a major way, but not like you think.

And that brings us to our second passage in 1 Peter chapter three. Now these are the most important words that you should *not* speak to your husband. And those are words of correction. And what do you do if your husband is a husband that is disobedient to the Word of God? I mean, he is not living like he should live. Well, Peter tells us in chapter three and verse one. He 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...” Ok, they are living in disobedience. They are not living like they should., “they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be merely external, braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.”

What do you do when your children disobey? You correct them, right? You speak words of correction to them when they get out of line. And you should. But what do you do when your husband is disobedient? No, you should not speak words of correction to him. Haven’t you figured out yet it doesn’t do any good? It is not God’s way. Look at what God says. He says, “without a word.” God is not going to use your words to change your husband. Let me say it again, God is not going to use your words to change your husband. He is going to use something else. He is going to use your submissive and quiet and gentle spirit. He is going to use your chaste and respectful behavior. That is what he says right here in chapter three of 1 Peter, “without a word.”

Now, notice how different this is from your natural inclination. Ladies are generally more spiritually sensitive than men and so you generally see when your husband is doing something that is wrong. So your natural inclination is to say, "Hey, honey that is wrong. You shouldn't be doing that or you need to stop doing that." That is your natural inclination, isn't it? But that is not God's way. God's way is for you, through your submissive spirit, through your quiet and gentle spirit, through your respectful and chaste behavior to change your husband by God's power.

Let me take a great responsibility off of your shoulders, ladies. You are not responsible for your husband's sin. You are not responsible for your husband's disobedience. Eve was never blamed for Adam's disobedience in the garden, but Adam was blamed for Eve's disobedience.

Ladies, it is not your responsibility to correct your husband and tell him where he is wrong. God has not called you to be his live-in pastor to tell him every time he is doing something wrong. That is not your responsibility. You are freed from it. Your responsibility is to concentrate on your life and are you having that submissive spirit, that quiet and gentle spirit? Are you living in a chaste and respectful way before him? That is your responsibility. Let God deal with him about his sins. Let God convict him about his sins. That is the Holy Spirit's job. That is not your job. What God is going to use in you to convict him of his sins is your respectful and chaste behavior. He is going to use your attitude of submission and a quiet and gentle spirit. That is what he is going to use to convict your husband, not your words.

When you use your words you just make him bow up. And, again, I am not saying that it is right, but it is true. No man wants to be corrected by a woman. I am not saying it is right, but I believe it is true. We accept it from our mommas because we don't have a choice at the time. But once we get old enough to have a choice, we don't like it. But God says the way to see your husband change is not with your words, but first with that submissive spirit.

I don't have time to go into what submission is. We do have a tape on our website. You can go to the sermons online and under the sermon finder put in the series "Marriage" and I have a tape there on what submission is and what it is not. But, ladies, God desires for you to learn the true meaning of submission which is not slavery, it is not inferiority. It is placing your abilities under your husband's direction so your whole family can be strengthened. It is that submissive spirit that will change that man. Because when you are submissive, he doesn't have to bow up. You see what he bows up to, what he resists is that pressure that he feels from you to change, to be different. And he resists that. But when he doesn't have that resistance, but he has that quiet and gentle spirit, then he doesn't have that negativity that he has to deal with.

Also the quiet and gentle spirit. This is so important. Quiet means a tranquil spirit that is tranquil from within. Gentle means under control. It means meek, just the opposite of agitated and fearful and anxious and nagging. It is an attitude that puts complete trust in God, in God's ability to work in all situations.

A lady with a quiet and gentle spirit knows her husband needs to change. She knows where he needs to change, but she trusts God so much that she knows that she doesn't have to say a word to him, but she simply needs to live that submissive spirit, that quiet and gentle spirit and that God in his time is going to work on that man and that God can do more in that man's life in a half a second than she can do in a half a century. So she trusts God. She knows that it is not her job to correct him, to be his Holy Spirit. And so she is just going to pray, have that quiet and gentle spirit, trust God and know God can deal with that man in his time and in his way.

And then he says, "a respectful and pure behavior." Now this ties in with the first part of the sermon. Not only respectful words, but respectful actions. As you act in respect for your husband this enables him to be able to see what is wrong with him and change. How do you act in respect to your husband? Well, you go to him first for advice, you don't go to other people for advice first. It means that you don't resist everything he wants to do and second guess every decision he is trying to make. It means you trust him to be able to do what he says he is going to do and what he intends to do. That means you go to him with your biblical questions. That means you esteem him. You honor him. And if you do this he will see Christ in you and your lifestyle will be a powerful, convicting witness in his life.

And here is the way it works, listen. You live in respect of that man. You admire him. You have that submissive, quiet and gentle spirit. You have that respectful behavior. Do you know what he does? He feels accepted by you and he wants to live up to your admiration. He wants to be an even better husband because he knows you respect him and you admire him. And because you are living this chaste, respectful life, he sees his own sin in reflection against your righteous life. And God uses that to convict him. And because you are not trying to change him he doesn't have all these negative emotions and his ego hasn't gotten involved and so God can just work on him straight because he sees in you that righteous life and he knows he needs to change. And because you are being obedient, God works in his life and he changes. God's way, God's time to God's glory.

Don't think, "Well, I have been submissive for one week and he hasn't changed, preacher." You let God deal with the when and the how, you just be responsible for yourself. Switch your attention from trying to change that man to trying to change yourself to be the wife God has called you to be and you will be amazed how God will work on that man, not through your words, but through your life.

Now I want to recommend a book to you. It is called *Created to be his Help Meet*. It is by Debbie Pearl. And my wife is just about finished reading this book and she tells me it is the absolute best book she has ever read on the subject of being a godly wife. She says, "Warn the ladies, though. It will convict them. It will challenge them. And if they are not really serious about being a godly wife, don't pick it up because you will through it down. It is that straight. But she is on target." She said, "She is not saying anything you haven't said, but she can say things harder than you can say it because she is a woman."

So it is a woman speaking to women, an older woman talking to women. I encourage you to buy this. You can get it at Amazon, around 10 dollars plus shipping. I'm going to put it down front and you can come down and take a look at it and write down the information. But if you are not serious, if you do not really have a heart to be a godly wife, don't get it. It is a waste of your time. But if you are a woman who is saying, "You know, I want to be that. I want to be that godly wife. I want to be that wife of Ephesians 5:33. I want to be that wife of 1 Peter three. I really do. I want to be that wife so that my marriage can be the best it can be," then get this book. You will not be disappointed. Husbands, pray your wife will get this book. My wife it likes it so much we have gotten a copy of it for every one of our daughters and our daughter in law. We think it is that good.

I am going to end with the same question I started with. Ladies, is there anything you would like to change about your husband?

Let's pray.

Father, we do thank you that your Word is so true. We thank you that it convicts us, it instructs us and, yes, it gives us hope and encouragement. I pray you would take your truth now and work in the lives of each of our ladies here that you might be honored and glorified in Jesus' name. Amen.