

Marriage (6) "Duties of Husbands" - Ephesians
5:22-33

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Texts that Transform
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Bible Text: Ephesian 5:22-33
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Our Father in heaven, we are grateful for your word which is given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and therefore authoritative and infallible. It is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, training in righteousness, indeed it equips us for every good work. Teach us this evening, O Lord, we pray and give us open and receptive hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 5. This is the sixth in a series of messages on marriage and so if you're jumping in here at the end, you just need to know that you can go online and you can hear the other five. I'm gonna pick up the reading at verse 31, after giving the instructions to wives, their duties for three verses, and then the duties of husbands in all of the following verses. He says, that is the eight succeeding verses, verse 31 he says,

31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast [or cling] to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Now what verse 31 indicates is that when marriage takes place, an independent household is established for which the husband is responsible and what the Bible has done throughout, it consistently does and what's vital to recognize is that the Bible itself recognizes that men and women are different, God made humanity both male and female, they are distinct from one another, they have their own properties, they have a lot in common as well, they're made in the image of God and they're co-heirs of the grace of life in the words of the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter, and yet there is that which is male and there is that which is female and they are different, physically different and as a consequence have differences in outlook and priorities and those differences should be accommodated and that's exactly what the Bible does, it accommodates and celebrates the differences between men and women.

So one final question that I want to ask and answer in this series is why is it that men must repeatedly be told to love and lead their wives? Why are the three verses to the

women repeated by eight verses to the men, why is it repeated then in Colossians 3:19, repeated again in 1 Peter 3:7, repeated again in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, repeated again in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35? Why does that have to be repeated so many times? Why do men have to be told to lead and love their wives? So I would like to provide a twofold answer to that question.

1. Because tend to shirk their responsibility. I think it's fair to say that women will tend to usurp responsibility for the home, the family, and men will tend to shirk that responsibility and avoid doing anything beyond their own pleasure and comfort and ambition. The fall has affected us differently and nevertheless those effects can be followed, they can be traced. In the Bible itself, we can go all the way back to Genesis 3:15 and when Adam and Eve sin against God and God confronts them, Adam's response to the confrontation is to say, what? "The woman. It's not my fault. It's the woman. And in fact, it's your fault, God, because that's the woman whom you made. So if you hadn't made the woman, if the woman hadn't been here, none of this tragedy would have taken place." So what's he doing? Well, he's shifting blame. He's denying responsibility. The truth is that he failed to lead, that he followed instead, and this is something that men have been doing ever since, that is, shirking responsibility, avoiding responsibility.

You say that that's a gross generalization? No, it's proverbial wisdom. We all know it. What is behind the underwear and the socks that are left on the floor every single day? What is it? It's proverbial, isn't it? This is what they do. This is what we do. I'm not saying every man, no, but you can generalize and generalize basically, you know, if we can get away with something, we're gonna get away with it. If we can avoid taking responsibility for something, we're gonna avoid taking responsibility.

I remember as my sons were progressing through their teen, now two of them are here so this probably isn't talking about them, of course not, but what I recall was that it was just typical for them when I would walk into their room and I would find their clothes just sitting a heap. They just stepped out of the clothes and left them right there and then walked on like they were two years old. This is when they're teenagers, they just step out of their clothes and there they are just sitting there just like they dropped them and walked out of them like, of course, they have servants who are gonna run behind them and pick up all that and take care of that for them. No, no, no, no responsibility for that.

I work out regularly almost every day at the YMCA. I don't work out hard. I don't want to sweat too much. I try to avoid, basically I try to avoid perspiring. I feel like it's a successful workout if I have but I do go every day and do a little bit and it's amazing how the men never put the weights back where they belong. Now, now, never, that's too strong and I acknowledge that, but very typically, you know, you have these jump rope things, these stretch ropes and all, and they'll use them and there they are, they're just lying over there by some other section of the work out area. They just drop them right there on the spot. They don't move the weights around, they just leave them, they just expect somebody else to come behind them and it's the men, it's not the women at all. The women always put everything back where it belongs. You just watch, you follow up,

just watch, that's what happens. The men, well, some of them may, many of them don't do it.

The young millennial in the basement, the young male millennial in the basement of the house watching videos, playing video games, become proverbial. That's just something that is commented on all the time. It's probably not entirely fair but these things become proverbial because there's an element of truth. There's a real problem right now with 20 somethings being disoriented, not knowing their place in society right now, being confused about the role of men, and so having withdrawn and, again, avoiding responsibility, refusing to take responsibility, avoiding the responsibility and leaving these things for others, according to recent statistics, 56% of all college students now are women. That's a remarkable revolution that's taken place. If you go back 30, 40, 50 years, the vast majority are men. That means a whole generation of men have been dislocated and you might surely want to say, "Well, that's a good thing that women can go to college." Yes, but you also have to pay attention to what's happening to the men and the young men are falling out, the young men are going to the basement in appalling numbers and playing video games. Fifty percent of all the law school students are female. Over 50% of all medical students now are women. That's a great thing for women, what's happened to the men? What happened to what used to be 90%? Where are all those other men? Well, they've been dislocated. Many of them have given up. Many of them are avoiding responsibility. Many of them are living off of their parents.

This is not sort of right-wing fundamentalist Christianity talking, this is a much commented upon sociological reality that you can read about in the newspapers almost on a daily basis and it's part of this whole tendency that is built into the male psyche to avoid responsibility where one can do so. What Christianity taught men to do for centuries was to use their strength on behalf of the weak. That's the whole code of chivalry which gets mocked and ridiculed and all, but what the code of chivalry said was that you have strength, how are you to use that strength? Well, for centuries men used their strength to oppress other men, to conquer women, to do whatever they wanted to do with their strength because they had the power to do it, and so they exercised that strength for their own benefit, for their own prestige, for their own comfort, for their own pleasure, strength being used for their own well-being, and what Christianity said was, "Oh no, you knights in shining armor, you go rescue the damsels in distress."

Now that's a bit of a parody but behind that is the reality of what does a Christian man do with his strength? He uses his strength on behalf of those who are weaker than he is. So he uses it on behalf of his wife. He uses it on behalf of his children. He uses that gift that he has, that gift of strength, he uses it for the benefit of others who don't share that strength. With the decline of Christianity, it's not surprise that responsibility is being shirked and that strength is now being used again for the benefit of the one who is strong rather than for the benefit of the weak. Forty percent of all births in the United States today are illegitimate, outside of marriage. That's an unprecedented number. That's an absolutely shocking and appalling number. It's just been a generation that that's taken place. You can get to the mid-1960s and very very little illegitimacy rate. What does it mean? It means that massive numbers of men are fathering children and taking no

responsibility for them. Forty percent of all live births are outside of marriage, children being born to women who are not married to the fathers of their children.

Why is it that almost all criminal activity is undertaken by men? Consider some of these statistics. Ninety percent of all violent crimes are committed by men. Why is that? Are we to imagine that desperate outcomes, unequal outcomes mean a bias in the system? Is that what it is, is that there's a bias against men and some men are being arrested and accused of crimes, or is it that nine times as many men are in jails and prisons because men are committing nine times as many crimes as are women? That's really the answer, isn't it? So what gives with that? Why, why is there this extraordinary difference? You want to say that men and women are exactly alike? Then why are men committing nine out of 10 crimes and why are nine out of 10 people in prison men? What's with that? Why are $\frac{3}{4}$ of the victims of violent crime women? What's going on with all of that? Why is it that men are the customers of prostitutes? Why is it men are the vast majority of the consumers of pornography? Because there's this strain of irresponsibility in men, the tendency to get away with whatever they can for the sake of their own pleasure and comfort and ambition and as Christianity declines in its influence, no longer teaching men to use their strength and their considerable energies on behalf of others, they are using those energies, channeling those energies on behalf of themselves.

And really one of the great questions facing every civilization that ever has been is what, how are they, how are those, the energies of those young men to be channeled for productive social ends? That's the question in America's underclass right now whether it's in the inner city or in the Appalachians, whether it's among blacks or whites or browns or anyone else. How are we to channel the energies of young men to productive ends? And if a society cannot answer those questions, then that society is in trouble and that's the problem that we have right now, we're in a post-Christian civilization and so where are those energies being channeled? Well, what typically happens with young men who are not finding an outlet for their energies in civilized social activity, they go antisocial and they try to establish their manhood with violence, promiscuity, and through the consumption of alcohol.

Let me give you some biblical examples of this. Isaiah 3:12, God speaking through Isaiah says, "My people--infants are their oppressors, and women rule over them." That's a word of condemnation. The men were shirking their responsibility. The women had ceased control. This is not a good thing, that men are not taking responsibility for the direction of the nation but are avoiding that responsibility, they're shirking that responsibility and so Isaiah, God complaining through Isaiah, the women are ruling over them rather than them providing leadership in the family and in society, in the nation.

Isaiah 5:22, "Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, and valiant men in mixing strong drink." Okay, there you go. Some things never change. How do you establish your manhood? Ah, you do it by holding your liquor, as they used to say. You're able to drink and not be affected by it. You can out-drink, you can drink that other guy, you can drink him right under the table, right? That's how you show what a man you are by the volume of alcohol that you're able to consume and to still maintain your stability and coherence

over against that wimpish guy, who he has a couple of drinks and he's good for nothing. That's how we do it.

Isaiah 5:8, or rather Jeremiah 5:8, speaking of the men of Israel, "They were well-fed, lusty stallions, each one neighing for his neighbor's wife." So there, how do you establish your manhood? Well, by the number of women that you're able to conquer.

So in a post-Christian, post-biblical civilization, male ego building comes through dominating men conquering women and controlling liquor. This is toxic masculinity where you prove your manhood by immoral, violent behavior and by your ability to consume large volumes of alcohol. Men sense this need to prove their manhood where as it's interesting, women don't seem to need to prove their womanhood. It just is. It's a natural. It just develops as their bodies develop and they grow. They clearly are women and they have nothing really to prove. Men, however, have to, so it seems, prove that they are men. Their manhood is always in question. Their manhood is always in doubt. Their manhood is always up for challenge in a way that it is not for women. So we don't say, "Hey, you need to woman up." Never been said, has it? But we do talk about manning up, right? Or that we don't ever say to a woman, "Be a woman." Right, we don't say that? Do we say, "Look, you need to be a man"? Or one other, circumstances, "That'll make a woman out of you." No, we don't say that, do we? But we do say, "Look, that'll make a man out of you." Why? What's behind those common expressions that we use? What's behind it is that a man's manhood is in question. He has to prove it. He has to demonstrate it.

In a Christian society, he demonstrates it by being a responsible husband, a responsible father by providing for his family and protecting his family, looking out for their welfare. He's got his fingers on the pulse. He's got his ear to the rail. He's looking out for his wife and his children. He channels all of that energy in that direction. In a post-Christian society, again best exemplified by the inner cities and by Appalachia, by the direction that those cultures are going, your manhood is produced by violence, by dominating other men, by promiscuity, by conquering women, and by your ability to manage alcohol, by drinking and carousing and carrying on in these antisocial behaviors. In a Christian culture, a real man is a family man. He marries. He wants to have children. He protects those children. He provides for those children. He takes on his God-given responsibilities.

So how has the fall affected us? Why must men be told repeatedly to love and to lead their wives? Number 1, because men tend to shirk responsibility and what the Bible is doing is reminding them over and over again, "You have this responsibility. You are to love your wives as Christ loves the church." That means you practice sacrificial love, even to the point of rendering your own life on her behalf. He goes on in chapter 6, "Fathers, teach your children. You take responsibility for your children as well. You love your wife with sacrificial love, you lead your wife, you're concerned for her sanctification. You nourish her. You cherish her." You take responsibility for that which is the foundational building block in any society, you take responsibility for the family."

Secondly, men tend to abuse authority. So back to Genesis 3, now to verse 16, your desire, God speaking to Eve says, "Your desire will be for your husband but he shall rule over you." I don't think that's a positive statement. I think that that's a statement about the fact that the pendulum is going to swing and your desire is going to be to control your husband but he's going to dominate you. I don't think it's a friendly expression, so that on the one hand there's a shirking of responsibility, on the other hand there is this tendency to dominate, to use, again use strength on behalf of one's self, and even simultaneously to deny responsibility but then to demand one's own way. So, again, proverbial are the domestic tyrants who terrorize their wives and their children, who use their strength for themselves and not for others.

So, again, most physical violence in this world is against women. In our society they're beaten, they're raped, and if it's not physical violence of which men are guilty, it's verbal and emotional, subjecting their wives to ridicule and criticism, mocking their intelligence, mocking their appearance, refusing to prioritize providing comfort and security and safety for the family, refusing to address her concerns and her anxieties and her needs. Refusing to show initiative, not putting his fingers on the pulse, not putting his ear to the rail, not sacrificing his own comforts and pleasures on behalf of the family, but rather making everything serve his pleasures and his comforts. And what the Bible says is, "Oh no, no, no, you have been given authority but you have been given the authority not to terrorize, not to tyrannize but you've been given that authority in order to serve, in order to sacrifice, in order to love, in order to lead into the paths of righteousness and into the green pastures, and to the still waters, to lead your families in the righteous direction."

So I think this is the best that I'm able to surmise about why the Bible keeps pounding away at the men, why she gets three verses and he gets eight verses, pounding away. Why? Because men tend to shirk responsibility and then they tend to tyrannize and it's only been Christianity that has channeled those male energies, that has taught them to take responsibility, assume responsibility and then to use their gifts and abilities and opportunities for the sake of providing loving leadership for the family.

Now let me just try to summarize where we are. I think that the future in the Western world is to a significant measure bleak for Christianity. Our numbers are shrinking, at least the nominal part of the Christian church, those numbers are shrinking. There's a committed core that isn't shrinking. You know, by the polls and their criteria for measuring, the really devoted Christian, serious Christians, you know, in church on Sunday Christians, seeking to practice Christianity, evangelical Christianity, traditional Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, those numbers are not really shrinking but shrinking is the nominal middle that used to identify themselves socially as Christian, that group sometimes called the nones, not n-u-n-s but n-o-n-e-s, the ones who are no longer affiliated, that group is shrinking. That big large middle that once thought of itself as Christian increasingly is not seeing itself that way and that's why the culture is moving so rapidly right now in a way that's contrary to Christian civilization over the last 1,500 years. And as mentioned a couple of weeks ago, really that the center of the culture conflict right now, the center of it is all matters regarding the family, the home, and

sexuality. That's where the devil is attacking. That's where the world is attacking. That's where the pressure is.

That's where we are tempted to capitulate and the thing is about the devil, we're not to be ignorant of his schemes and what he does is he picks targets. We can see this historically. He picks areas of weakness and exploits them and these take place on a civilization-wide basis where he targets. You know, say the late 19th century, very much rational and intellectual. The intellectual credibility of the Christianity was at a very low ebb at that time with higher criticism and evolutionary theory and Freudian psychology and Marxist theories, Christianity was battered intellectually. That's where the devil was attacking at that time. Faithfulness meant holding the line in terms of the doctrine of Scripture and traditional doctrines of Christianity. Well, in my opinion, the field of the battle shifted. It's not an intellectual battle, it's a moral battle now.

So if we compromise there, we are buckling to the pressure due to the heat of the battle and we are being unfaithful. It's vital that we continue to affirm what Christianity has always taught about the family, about the home, about marriage, and the new issue, gender identity. We need to hold the line and we need to do so remembering that, you know, in the words of Proverbs, take note of these, "The way of the transgressor is hard." Look, you don't break God's laws, they break you, and those who break God's laws, they will suffer. Maybe not today and maybe not tomorrow, but they will suffer because again and again they are battling with reality and reality doesn't give.

You know, a member of our family put a bottle of water in the freezer, filled it to the top, put it in the freezer. If you don't accommodate reality, the properties of reality, right there properties of water, right, you can't negotiate with those properties. They are what they are. You accommodate them. You may even celebrate them and you might want to ice skate on the top of that water sometime, but if you don't accommodate the realities of water, you will pay a price, right? And so, of course, the bottle was shattered. The ice expanded and that ice will shatter anything that gets in its way when it expands.

So you deal with reality. You deal with the real world. You've got to deal with gravity. That's reality. You can't negotiate with gravity. You have to deal with it. You're building a house, you've gotta deal with it. You're throwing a football, you've gotta deal with gravity, you've got to accommodate it, you've got to take it into account. That's the real world. It doesn't negotiate with us. So it is the way God has made us male and female, men and women, and what he's designed for human sexuality, what he's designed for marriage, what he's designed for children, they all have a purpose, they all are designed to accommodate the reality of human nature.

So, again from the Proverbs, not only do they say that the way of the transgressor is hard, it's hard because you're battling reality, you're trying to defy gravity, you're trying to defy the properties of water, you're trying to plant a garden and you're not taking into account the sun and the need of water and the properties of the soil. You're just demanding that things grow but you're not dealing with reality. Proverbs 12:10, the compassion of the wicked is cruel. You see, in this culture of death, all that's being accommodated is being

accommodated in the name of compassion. "Oh, we need to be compassionate." Well, the compassion of the wicked, it's cruel. That way is hard. The compassion is cruel. It ruins lives. You want to just say that we're just made for any kind, any form of sexual expression and identity. No, that's cruel. That's harsh. That's destructive. That's harmful. That leads to heartbreak. That will lead to sadness and sorrow. When you fight against the reality that God has created in the physical world and in what constitutes humanity physically as well as what accompanies that physicality emotionally and spiritually, you go that way it's a broad path, it looks good, everybody's jumping on that path, everybody's going down that road, you're over here on this little narrow path and everybody's looking over at you like you're some kind of a nutcase because you're not going along with the big crowd that's on the big happy road to destruction. That's the situation that we are in and in this culture of death, we need to be pro-children. We don't abort. We welcome children in the world. We need to be pro-marriage. We don't divorce. We're pro-family. We welcome children that God gives.

The last time I mentioned Rodney Stark's book, "The Rise of Christianity." He's a sociologist looking at an historical question but he examines it from a sociological point of view and he asks the question, "How is it that Christianity conquered the Roman Empire?" His basic answer is the marriage bed. He said, look, the Roman Empire was a culture of death. Just look at the gladiatorial games, these orgies of slaughter were entertainment for the first century Roman Empire. And he points out that birthrates were plunging throughout the Roman Empire. Why? Well, because of widespread abortion, widespread infanticide, men and women dying because of those abortions. Men avoiding marriage and divorce being easy, just a matter of the man kicking the woman out of the house, and so the lives of women were very unstable. They had virtually no rights. They were the property of their husbands. They could be disowned in a minute. In addition, widespread homosexuality, widespread pederasty, widespread bisexuality. And the Christians came along and here all this erotic energy is being expended and wasted in this culture of death, and Christians came along and they said, "No, abortion is a sin." Infanticide. Why the practice, especially young girls were the victims, perfectly healthy infant girls were often left out to die because of the preference for little boys.

So the Christians came along, they said abortion is a sin. Of course, infanticide is a sin. Christians married whereas the pagans were not marrying. Christians didn't divorce because Jesus said they were not to do that, and Christianity forbid homosexuality and every other form of deviant erotic expression, and Christianity said you're to love your neighbors, and you're to love your enemies. So when the massive epidemics hit in the first and second centuries, or second and third centuries, Christians stayed behind and they took care of people, so Christians survived at rates greater than their pagan neighbors did. So their pagan neighbors when evidence of these epidemics came, they just abandoned the sick and left so that they wouldn't catch the disease. So many died that otherwise would have survived if somebody just provided food and water, but Christians stayed behind and took care of the sick, so their people survived and then the unbelieving people that they took care of often became Christians.

So in a culture of death, Christian birthrates skyrocketed and Christian survival rates were very high, and so what Stark points out that if you project just basically a growth rate of 4% per year, if you look at, which is not extraordinary, a little bit under 4% a year for Christianity. He says that the best estimate is there are about 8,000 Christians in the year 100, he said by 200 there were 217,000 Christians, by 300 there were 6.2 million Christians, by 350, 33.8 million out of the 60 million people in the Roman Empire, 56% of the whole population. The Christians had taken over. Why did Constantine convert? Because he saw the handwriting on the wall. The Christians had become a majority. They had overcome the Roman Empire. How? Because of their sexual ethics. They didn't abort. They didn't commit infanticide. They didn't divorce. They married and stayed married and they welcomed children into the world and they loved their neighbors because God, the God that they worshiped is love and so he commanded them to love and so they did. And so they survived and were able to conquer.

I don't think every problem facing the family, the home in our day and extending that out over society, I don't believe it is the problem of men only. I'm not saying that at all. I don't want to be misunderstood. I think there's plenty of blame to go around across the sexes. Men and women both are responsible for the situation that we're in where we have a 40% illegitimacy rate and a 50% divorce rate among new marriages. Unsustainable numbers, by the way. Society will not survive that, not in the long run unless something gives, and what's needed is for Christian men, dare I say it, to man up. Take responsibility. Channel those energies into constructive ends: your homes, marriages, children.

I think the greatest service that many of us can perform for the kingdom of God is to raise godly children, to establish Christian homes that with that witness and then just sheer numbers. Again, the unbelieving world, they are not having children. We are below replacement rate right now in the Western world, way below it in Europe. People are just not having children mainly for material reasons they're not, and a point in the history where we are the richest people in the history of the world, people are not having children because "they can't afford them." There's tremendous irony in that.

In the words of a hymn we used to sing in this church, "Rise up, O men of God, be done with lesser things. Give heart and soul and mind and strength to serve the King of kings."

As we pray together.

Our Father in heaven, we pray for the Christian home, we pray for the Christian family, we pray for our marriages. O, that our marriages would be strong, that husbands would love their wives and lead their wives, and that wives would honor and respect their husbands. We pray that you would bless our homes with children, even as we've just sung in Psalm 128. And we pray, O Lord, that our homes might be a witness to the world of human flourishing that they might see this is the God-approved path and indeed it is the path of human flourishing. Hear us, O Lord, as we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's join together in singing hymn 476, "It is well with my soul." When we finish singing, we'll pronounce the benediction and then we'll be treated to Frankie's annual direction giving.