

Husband, Love Your Wife, Part 4

Ephesians 5:25-33

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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me again to Ephesians 5. And as you do, let me make just a couple comments. First of all, let me say that I'm sorry about my voice. Just this morning, Texas allergies have decided to act up a little bit, and it was strong first hour, but it's getting a little weaker. Hopefully it'll hold up. You ignore it, and I'll ignore it, and we'll just look at the truth of the Word of God if you can do that. Also, let me give you husbands a word of encouragement. This is the last morning that we'll be looking at what Paul has to say about our responsibility as husbands. So, buckle up and let's look again at what the Lord has to say to us.

I don't know about you, but I personally enjoy the coast, and I like the lighthouses that dot the coastline. There are some seven hundred and fifty of those lighthouses that guard the shores of the United States. It was in 1789 that the first Congress instituted the Bureau of Lighthouses, placing all of them under federal control. Since then of course, various governmental departments and agencies have been responsible. It was only in 1939 that the United States Coast Guard took responsibility for the lighthouses.

I like though a little bit of the history that predates that back in the 1800's when, before electricity, sort of the responsibility and the importance of that was so much greater. In those days the typical lighthouse was assigned three lighthouse keepers. Each one of those workers had an eight-hour shift so that the entire twenty-four-hour period was covered and the light from the lighthouse was always visible. The United States Lighthouse Service was honestly run a bit like another branch of the military. There was a clearly outlined hierarchy. There was military-type discipline; in fact, they could only wash their clothes on a certain day of the week, and a keeper would receive demerits if his laundry was found hanging out to dry on a different day.

Before electricity, U.S. lighthouses used a huge lantern fueled by some kind of oil, and through the history of the lighthouses, it varied. In ancient days, it was simply wood burning on the coastline. But in the days of the 1800's they went through whale oil, to vegetable oil, to eventually kerosene. During each man's shift, he was responsible to take the necessary oil up the lighthouse to fuel the lantern. In some cases, the large lighthouses, that was anywhere from ten to

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thirty pounds of kerosene that he was responsible to carry up. Now if you've ever climbed a lighthouse carrying your own weight, you know that that alone was a tremendous responsibility. When the man was on duty during his shift, he was responsible to not only do that but also to trim the wicks. In a large lighthouse with those lanterns burning, there would be anywhere from two to three large wicks by which the kerosene was lifted to the flame, and he had to keep those trimmed so that they would ensure the brightest possible flame.

By far, the most time-consuming part of the lighthouse keeper's job was to keep the lens clean. You see, the light from that oil lantern was concentrated and directed across the water by means of a huge, thick (in the early days) glass lens. The lens sat at the top, and the light through which it was propelled was turned by a weight-driven clockwork assembly, kind of a weight-driven thing like on a sort of a cuckoo clock, you know, where the weights drop, and as they fall, it causes the function of the clock. In the same way, that's how the lantern turned, by means of those weights and pulleys. And the keeper was responsible to keep that wound; in some cases, as often as every two hours, so that the light would keep turning and rotating for those who were on the sea.

The average weight of the lens like the ones used on our coastline is about thirty-five hundred pounds. The lens itself is about six feet high, about as tall as I am, and inside diameter is about five feet. It is a huge, massive lens. And as the oil inside the lamp burned, and especially with the kerosene and those other oils, you can imagine how quickly that lens became clouded. As the oil burned in the lamp, it produced a large amount of soot that covered the entire lens inside. So, the keepers had to constantly be cleaning off that soot and the burnt oil using rags, and, in some cases, soft wood that had been carefully shaped to fit the contours of the lens. Every sixty days, they used wine and cleaned the whole lens. Once a year, they polished it with jeweler's rouge.

Now why was cleaning the lens so important? Because a clean lens could project the light from that lantern twenty miles at sea. But if the lens was dirty, it kept the light contained. It kept it from being projected as far out into the darkness, and that in turn put ships and cargo and crew and passengers at risk.

When I think about that, I think about our marriages, and I think about Ephesians 5 because our marriages, in the same way, are a kind of lens through which the world sees our faith. Or more importantly, I could put it like this: our marriages are a kind of lens through which the world sees our Lord. When our marriages are right, they project the light of Christ to those around us. But when our marriages are not what Christ commanded here in Ephesians 5, the light is obscured,

the image is darkened, the picture clouded. The message that Paul delivers to us as Christian husbands and wives in Ephesians 5 is this: keep the lens clean.

Beginning here in chapter 5, Paul deals with three examples of submission to authority, submission to human authority. He alludes to it in verse 21, and then he begins three different examples. The first example is that of wives to husbands. He begins in 5:22, runs down through the end of the chapter. After he explains the wife's duty in just three short verses, in kind of an aside but a very long aside, Paul addresses nine verses to husbands. The gist as we've seen of those nine verses is this: husbands are required to love their wives as Christ Himself loves the church.

Let me read it to you again for the last time in our study through this book. Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 25:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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. So, husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. 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. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 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.

Now as we've worked our way through this passage, we began by seeing the command, very simply put at the beginning of verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives..." Paul proceeds from that command to a couple of pictures, two pictures to help us understand what that looks like. The first picture is a picture of Christ's treatment of the church and the second picture is the picture of our treatment of our bodies. And from those two pictures, we learn something of what our love is to be like. We've seen those, those clear lessons that are here. Paul gives a couple of qualities of Jesus' love for the church that we're to copy. He said Jesus loves the church in a self-sacrificing way, in the same way as husbands, we are to love our wives in a self-sacrificing way. We're to put her needs ahead of our own. We're to love our wives as Christ loves in a sanctifying way. That is, we are to have her spiritual progress as our primary goal. Marriage is

not about us. We are to pour ourselves into our wives to pursue her spiritual progress. So, it's to be a self-sacrificing love. It's to be a sanctifying love.

When you look at our treatment of our bodies, we learn two other qualities of love from that. We learned that our love should be a nourishing love. We looked at this last week. In verse 29, he says we nourish our own bodies, our own flesh. In the same way, we are to nourish our wives. That means we are to provide for all of their physical needs. We are responsible to provide for their physical needs.

It's to be a nourishing love, but it's also to be a cherishing love. This is another lesson we learned from how we treat our bodies. Again, in verse 29, we cherish our own flesh. We cherish it, and we are also to cherish our wives. We're to cherish them in the same way we pamper our bodies. We're supposed to cherish and care for them with the same tender affection that we show ourselves. And the only other passage in which this word "cherish" is used in the New Testament, we saw last week, is the context of a nursing mother caring for her newborn. We are to treat our wives with that same kind of tenderness. We're to cherish them.

So, those are the expressions of our love. That's what that love we're commanded to give looks like. So, so far in this text as we've studied it together, we've addressed the command itself. We've seen the two pictures which we finished with last week. The third part of this text and the part we come to today is found in verses 31 and 32, and it is the reasons, the reasons.

We've seen the command, the two pictures and now the reasons. Why is this so important to Paul? And remember, not just to Paul. Paul is an apostle, a "sent one" of Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking here for our Lord. So, why is this issue of how we as husbands and wives relate to one another, why is it so important to Christ? Well, there are many reasons he could have cited, but here he mentions two reasons. The first reason that he gives us is in verse 31, and we'll call it the original design of marriage. We're to take our marriages seriously. We're to love our wives, wives are to submit to their husbands because of the original design of marriage.

Notice verse 31 in the *New American Standard Bible* is in all caps. When you see that in the New Testament, that means it is a quotation from the Old Testament. And here, what you have in verse 31 is close to a word for word quote from the Septuagint; that is, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that was around in the New Testament times, and they cited it often. It's from Genesis 2:24. What you have in the quote he brings here is the original divine prescription for marriage. It was given at the very first marriage ceremony ever held. And interestingly enough, it was the second Person of the Trinity, our Lord Himself, who performed

that wedding. He was the One who walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. It was through Him all things were made, and He's the One who brought the woman to Adam and there, on the sixth day after creating both of them, performed their wedding. And at that wedding, this divine prescription was given.

Now let's look at it together, this original design of marriage. Verse 31 says: "a man shall leave father and mother..." Now that translation "leaves" suggests that the man should move away from his parents and set up his home somewhere else. The truth is that isn't how it happened even into the first century. Israelite marriage was usually patrilocal; that is, the man continued to live either in his parents' house or near his parents' house. It was the wife who left home to join her husband.

The idea behind this word is forsake. In fact, the Hebrew word back in Genesis 2:24 can be translated forsake: forsaking not in an absolute sense, not in turning your back on your parents, but in a relative sense. It's used like these kinds of expressions. In Hosea 6:6, the Lord says, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Now did that mean that God only cared about mercy and He didn't want them to sacrifice anymore? No, it was a comparison. He's saying, "Compared to My desire for you to exude mercy in your treatment of others, sacrifice is relatively unimportant." The same thing our Lord said when He said, if you're going to come to Me, you have to hate your father and hate your mother. You have to hate your wife and hate your children in Luke 16:26. He didn't mean you are actually going to hate them. We're commanded to love everyone including our enemies.

What He meant was in comparison to your love for all of those family members, your love for Christ should be so great that your love for them looks like hate. That's what Moses meant when he wrote this passage in Genesis 2. The point is that in marriage, a man's priorities change. Beforehand, his first obligation is to his parents; after marriage, his first obligation is to his wife. And he is so committed to his wife that it looks like he has forsaken his parents. He doesn't forsake them. We all have ongoing responsibility to our parents, but compared to his commitment to his wife, it makes his commitment to his parents look like he has forsaken them. It's in that sense he is to leave mother and father.

Verse 31 goes on: "and be joined to his wife..." If I were to take you back to Genesis 2, I would tell you that the Hebrew word in Genesis 2 here for "join" literally means to be glued to or stuck to. It's used in 2 Samuel 23 of one of Eleazar's, or of Eleazar, one of David's mighty men, who fought the Philistines, and he fought them all day, and he fought them so hard that the text says

his sword stuck to his hand. It clung to his hand. He couldn't get his hand loose from it. This word "joined" or "glued" suggests both the passion and permanence that should characterize true Biblical marriage. In the Old Testament, Shechem's love for Dinah in Genesis 34 is described as his soul stuck to Dinah. The tribes of Israel are assured that they will stick (this same word) to their own inheritance. In other words, it'll be theirs permanently. Israel in Deuteronomy is repeatedly urged to stick to the Lord.

So, we are to leave our parents, we are to make our wife our primary commitment, our primary obligation, and we are to be glued to her, we are to be joined to her. And when that happens, notice verse 31 says: "and the two shall become one flesh." Now in the context of Ephesians 5, this is the phrase to which Paul was driving and the main focus of his comments. The two shall become one flesh. Now what does that mean? Our Lord cites this same verse from Genesis 2 and He adds this commentary to it in Matthew 19:6. After He quotes it, He says: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." You thought that was in the marriage ceremony because somebody made that up. That's our Lord. When marriage happens, God joins the two together so that they are no longer two. In the mind of God, they are one.

Now there are several interesting observations that come out of this "two shall become one flesh." One of them is that while the Old Testament permitted polygamy, that was never God's original design. From the beginning, it was for two. When Jesus Christ initiated the first wedding, it was Adam and Eve. Two shall become one flesh. But what does the phrase itself mean? Obviously in part, this idea of one flesh refers to the sexual union that is part of marriage.

Paul makes this point in 1 Corinthians. Look over at 1 Corinthians 6. He quotes this same passage, and he makes this very point. It includes the physical relationship. First Corinthians 6, in context here, Paul is telling the Corinthians that they have misunderstood the seriousness of sexual sin. Apparently, some of them were quoting verse 13, this proverb: "Food is for the stomach and stomach is for food." In other words, listen. What goes on with the body is for the body. It doesn't really affect the soul, so you don't have to worry about it. Just do whatever you want. And particularly in the context of the pagan environment of Corinth, this was part of the worship of the gods. And so, he makes this comment to them, in verse 15:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? [And then he responds in the strongest possible language.] May it never be! Or do you not

know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For ...

[and here he quotes it] “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.”

And verse 18, “Flee immorality [because of that].”

Now here obviously, Paul is saying that part of what “one flesh” means has to do with the physical union in marriage, but it means more than that. Being “one flesh” is more than just the physical. You can be joined physically to someone and not truly be one flesh in the full sense of that Biblical expression. In marriage, the physical is only a picture. It’s a picture of the reality of two lives sharing everything, working together seamlessly as a team, committed to each other, committed to total intimacy and a profound unity.

What is this one, one flesh? Well, it’s interesting. If I were to take you back and trace you through the Old Testament, the Hebrew word that’s used in Genesis 2 for “one” refers to a complete unity of parts making one new whole. For example, it’s used in Deuteronomy 6:4 of the Trinity: “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one!” And yet, we discover both on the pages of the Old Testament as well as the pages of the New that God is one in three persons, three persons together making a complete whole. It’s used in Numbers 13 of a cluster of grapes. You have those individual grapes but when they’re joined together, they make a complete whole, a cluster. So, the idea of “one flesh” is that two distinct parts come together to form a complete whole. That’s what it means to be one flesh. It’s physical, but it’s more than physical. It’s also the combining, the uniting of two spirits, of two souls.

We should be able to say, men, if we understand this and live in accordance with this, “I can’t tell where I stop and my wife begins. I don’t think about myself anymore separate from my wife. She’s part of me.” It also means our marriage should be superior to all other relationships. We’re to leave our main relationships before marriage, our parents, and forsake it in the sense that we’re to be so committed to the new relationship with our wives.

Not only is this relationship superior in kind, but it’s also to be superior in permanence. This is another message for another time, but let me just say in passing that there are only two Biblical grounds for divorce, in Matthew 5 and Matthew 19, when there is sexual sin with another entity. The Greek word that’s used describes any sexual deviation with another entity, whether it’s adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality. When there is unrepentant sexual sin with another entity, that is grounds, Biblical grounds, for divorce. It doesn’t require divorce, but it allows for it. In the other passage is 1 Corinthians 7. The second reason is when there are a believer and an unbeliever who are married together, and the unbeliever wants out of the marriage. Paul says you

are no longer bound. Let them leave. Apart from those two exceptions, God hates divorce and will not tolerate it among His people. God intends that marriage be life's supreme, permanent relationship. A man and a woman who are distinct in marriage are inseparably united and joined together. And they are so inseparably united together that to try to rip them apart is to damage both of them.

I do some woodworking occasionally and, and I am reminded of the picture of gluing two pieces of wood together. If you glue them together properly, you can never really get them apart at that seam. If you try to rip those two pieces of wood apart, you will do damage to both pieces. That's how it is with marriage. So men, one reason we are to love our wives in marriage is that they have actually become a part of us. We are one flesh. They are united together with us. That was the original design of marriage itself from the very beginning.

But then Paul offers us a second reason here that's even more profound. Not only the original design of marriage itself, but secondly, the ultimate goal of marriage is the reason that we ought to practice this, the ultimate goal of marriage. Look at verse 32: "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." Now let me stop and make a textual note here that's important for you to understand because of how this verse has been misapplied and misused.

In the Latin Vulgate which Jerome translated, the Greek word for "mystery" he translated it with the Latin word "sacramentum." Now the Greek word "mystery" is easy to understand because let me give it to you in Greek. It's "mysterion ..." You recognize it. It's the word from which we get the English word "mystery." We just basically carried it over. He used a Latin word that, at the time, its older meaning meant "mystery," "sacramentum." So, Jerome didn't teach in this verse that marriage is a sacrament. That isn't what he was trying to teach. He used the word "sacramentum" for mystery. Nor does the original Greek text teach that marriage is a sacrament. But from that one Latin word, "sacramentum," the Roman Catholic idea of marriage as one of the seven sacraments later arose.

But that's not what Paul means. He says it's a mystery. Now what's a mystery? We've already encountered this idea of "mystery" several times in Ephesians. Turn back to Ephesians 1 and look at verse 9: "He has made known to us the mystery of His will..." Now notice the similarity between each of these occurrences. Here, "He has made known to us the mystery of His will," and he goes on to talk about Christ. Look over in 3:3: "by revelation there was made known to me the mystery.... (verse 4) By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight

into the mystery of Christ....” And then down in verse 9, he says I’ve been given the responsibility ... “to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God ... [but is] now made known (verse 10).”

Now what are the similarities in all of those occurrences? What is a mystery? A mystery is a truth that used to be known only by God and that we would never have discovered on our own, but that God has now revealed through Christ and through His apostles. He has made it known to us. That’s a mystery in Biblical terms. Get the English word “mystery” out of your mind. In Greek terms, the word “mystery” is something that was previously known only in the mind of God that we would never have discovered on our own but, now by revelation through the apostles in Christ, we now understand. It’s been made known to us. Paul says, “Here is a great mystery.”

So, what’s the mystery? What was it that only God used to know and we would never have come to, to discern on our own, but has now been made known to us? What is it? Well, Paul has just quoted Genesis 2:24. And Genesis 2:24 has to do with (what?) marriage, human marriage - one man and woman united together in unity and intimacy of soul that’s pictured in the physical relationship in marriage.

Here is the mystery. Moses was speaking in that verse of a man and his wife, but Paul literally says this. Let me give to you what Paul says the second half of that verse from the Greek text. Here’s what he says: “But I myself am saying to you....” Now does that sound familiar to you? It should because it’s exactly the same as occurs six other times in the New Testament, and all six times it’s in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, “You have heard this is true, but I am saying to you this.” You heard this, but I am saying this. The other six times this phrase occurs in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus says that, when He is authoritatively interpreting the Old Testament.

That is exactly what Paul is doing here. He is authoritatively, under the inspiration of the Spirit, interpreting Genesis 2:24. He’s saying that Genesis 2:24 has reference to Christ and the church, but I am saying to you it’s about Christ and the church. Now what does that mean? Obviously, it means that human marriage is a picture of the relationship between us and Christ. He’s made that point throughout this passage, but I think he’s making an even more profound point here. He’s saying that when Moses wrote Genesis 2:24, he was not only speaking about human marriage (certainly he was), but he was also speaking about Christ and the church.

You say, “Wait a minute. How can that be? There was no church. The church didn’t come till Pentecost.” Well, think with me for a moment. Before God created anything, He had already determined what He was going to do spiritually. Is that true? What does Ephesians 1:4 say? “He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world....” What does the Bible say about Christ’s crucifixion? He was a Lamb slain (when?) before the foundation of the world. That means that in the mind of God, before He created anything including marriage, He had already decided what He was going to do spiritually through Christ. That means that the physical things God created were often to illustrate spiritual truths about Him and about His plan.

Now file that away for a moment and stay with me. This is very important. Usually, when we say that marriage is a picture of Christ and the church, what do we mean? Here’s kind of what we mean. We mean one day in 60/61, Paul was sitting in a Roman prison cell with nothing better to do than sort of meditate and think about all that he was trying to teach the churches, and he was thinking, “You know, I really need to come up with a good illustration of what the relationship between Christ and the church is like.” And he thought about it, and he thought about it. He, you know, fell asleep for a while, woke back up. He’s still thinking and, and then finally it comes to him: “Aha! I got it! Of course! The best illustration is marriage.”

That’s not how it worked at all. That’s completely backwards. Let me tell you how it really happened according to Paul in this text. In eternity past, God decided to save sinners through the work of His Son. And He decided to create marriage to put a living illustration around us all of the time of what that relationship could be like. God created marriage not only because it was not good for man to be alone, but also as a powerful illustration of the relationship that believers would have with His Son. Listen, your marriage does not exist primarily for you and your needs and your desires to be met. Marriage exists to be a living illustration of Christ and the church.

Now, before I get to the hard side of this, let’s talk about the really encouraging side. There’s a rich encouragement here. Think about this with me. Marriage exists to show us how Christ thinks of us. He thinks of us as His bride, as part of Himself – not just collectively as the church but, according to verse 30 of this chapter, individually as individual members. You know what that means? Listen carefully. This is for not just husbands; this is for all of us who are in Christ. That means everything in this passage that’s demanded of husbands, Christ does for you. Christ thinks like this toward you. Christian, Christ loves you as a good husband loves his wife.

Think for a moment with me about the best marriage you know. I hope it’s your own. But if it’s not, think about the very best marriage you can conceive of that you’ve ever encountered where

there's true love and true joy and unity. That's how Christ loves you. He loves you as if you were a part of Him; in fact, you are. That's how He thinks of you. Jesus thinks of you as part of His body. He never hates you as this text says just as He would never hate His own body. He may hate your sin but never you. Christ nourishes us. That's what this text is saying. Christ nourishes us. He provides for us physically. He takes care of us. You remember what Paul said in Philippians 4? "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory (how?) in (or by) Christ Jesus." He meets your physical needs.

Now don't misunderstand. That doesn't mean that we will never face difficulty or deprivation in this life contra the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel or contra, you know, Joel Osteen, and your prosperous best life now. Listen. Our Lord put His own physical body through suffering to accomplish spiritual ends. He may at times choose to put us through suffering for spiritual ends. The same Lord who cared for Paul and nourished him also had him in a prison cell when he wrote these very words to us. But through Christ, our physical needs are met just as a husband does for his wife.

And spiritually, He nourishes us, He provides for us. How? He gives us His Word. He gives us His Spirit to help us understand His Word. As we saw in Ephesians 4, He gives us the gifted men who help teach us the truth. He gives us the fellowship of other Christians. All these things nourish our souls, provide for our souls. Christ cherishes us, that word of tender affection. It's not by accident he uses the illustration of a bridegroom and his bride. As I've said before we who are married and those of you who aren't can picture and feel the enthusiasm and the joy and the delight of a bridegroom as he stands at the front of the church and waits for his bride to come walking down the aisle. He delights in her. That's how Christ thinks of you, an attitude of tenderness.

You see, in God's plan, marriage exists not only to deal with God's observation on the sixth day that it was not good for man to be alone, but it exists primarily to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the church. Paul says, "But I am saying to you," it has reference to Christ and the church. That means Christ loves us with a self-sacrificing love. He loves us with a sanctifying love that longs for our spiritual progress and works that in us. It means that Christ loves us with a nourishing love and a cherishing love. This is how He thinks of every true believer. And how do we respond to that? The true believer loves Christ in return and submits to Him. That's the picture.

Now that brings us to verse 33 and the summary, the summary statement of all that Paul has commanded husbands and wives in this passage. This sort of caps everything, brings it together. Look at verse 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.” Now as Paul sums this up, before this he spoke generally and sort of generically to all the husbands and all the wives, but here he makes it very direct, very personal, very individual. He begins with the word “nevertheless.” He does that because of course in the previous verse he was talking about Christ and the church, and just to make sure we understand that that doesn’t mean the human relationship between a man and his wife isn’t important, he comes back to that theme: and nevertheless. Even though it has reference to Christ and the church, don’t lose sight of your responsibility to each other.

“Nevertheless, each individual among you....” That’s a good translation, but the Greek text is more explicit than that. It has the idea in Greek something like this. It’s as if when the reader was reading this letter to the Ephesian church and the Ephesian believers were sitting there, it’s as if Paul was saying something like this: “So I want each one of you, each husband, you Tom and you Bob and you Joe and you John, I want each one of you to love his own wife even as himself. In the same way you find it natural to care for your own needs, I want you to care for your wife.” That summarizes the whole passage because she is part of you. You have become one flesh. She’s a part of your body.

And then he says to the wives, verse 33: “and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.” Again, he’s speaking individually to each wife, and he adds something here. With the husband, he doesn’t really add anything; he just recaps. With the wife, all he’s told the wife so far is to submit, but here he adds another thought. You see, you can submit on the outside and not have the right spirit and attitude on the inside, and so, Paul catches that in his summary, and he addresses that. You know, it’s like the little kid who said, “I may be, I may be sitting down on the outside, but I’m standing up on the inside.” That’s not the idea at all. It’s not a submission that’s only external. “... [each] wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband.”

The Greek word is “fear.” She fears her husband. That doesn’t mean an abject terror. She shouldn’t fear him like that. It means instead, it’s used in the context of recognizing that authority. It means to rightly acknowledge and consider the position of leadership into which God has placed him and to respond appropriately. You remember, we’re told in other places to fear the king. Why? Because he’s any better than us? No, but because he’s in authority. He’s in a leadership position. That’s the idea here. There is to be an attitude of respect that then, as a

result, causes her to submit her will to him in everything except that which is contrary to the Word of God. There's the picture.

Now it comes down to this, and I want you to listen carefully. Like it or not, your marriage is an illustration. It may be a bad illustration. It may be a good illustration. But it is an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the church. Let me start with you men. Your marriage today, the state of your marriage today is teaching something about Christ and the church.

One author puts it like this: "Every marriage everywhere in the world is a picture of Christ and the church. Because of sin and rebellion, many of these pictures are slanderous lies concerning Christ, but a husband can never stop talking about Christ and the church. If he's obedient to God, he's preaching the truth. If he does not love his wife, he is speaking apostasy and lies, but he is always talking. If he deserts his wife, he is saying this is the way Christ deserts His bride – a lie. If he's harsh with his wife, he is saying that Christ is harsh with the church – another lie. If he sleeps with another woman, he is an adulterer and a blasphemer as well. How could Christ love someone other than His own bride?"

Understand this, men. How you treat your wife, whether you like it or not, is saying Christ is like this.

Let me talk to you ladies. How you respond to your husband is teaching. It's teaching your husband. It's teaching your children. It's teaching others about how the church responds to Jesus Christ. If you gladly and joyfully with your whole heart submit your will to your husband's will and follow his leadership, you are showing exactly how the church responds to Christ. But if you refuse to do that and if you will not submit your will, if you're going to have your own way, then you are saying that that is an appropriate way for Christians to respond to Christ – a lie. If you live for yourself and for your own interests and for the advancement of your own career rather than for your husband and family, you are saying that the church does not have to center its life in Christ. If you are unfaithful to your husband, then you are saying Christ doesn't really satisfy, He's not enough. If you are critical and demeaning and lacking in respect for your husband, you are not just making a statement about your husband. You are making a slanderous statement about Jesus Christ. If you are critical and demeaning and lacking in respect for your husband, you are saying Jesus Christ is a joke, He's a buffoon, and He doesn't deserve respect.

We end where we began. Your marriage and mine is a lens. It is a lens through which the glory of Christ and the gospel shines. May God help us to be diligent to keep the lens clean.

Let's pray together.

Father, forgive us - forgive us because we are so selfish, that we always see everything as about us, including our marriages. Lord, we keep rehearsing what we get out of it or don't get out of it, and we fail to see that there's so much more at stake. Forgive us, O God, for slandering Christ in how we respond to our spouses.

Father, I pray for us as men that You would help us to exercise that self-sacrificial, sanctifying, nourishing, cherishing love toward our wives so that the whole world could see this is what it's like to belong to Christ. This is how He loves us and treats us.

Father, I pray for the wives here or those who will be that You would help them to embrace that role of joyful submission, submitting to their husbands as to Christ so that the glory of how the church responds to Jesus is clear.

Father, I pray that You would give us the commitment to pursue these things. And yet, Father, even as we think about our responsibilities, our minds come back to the rich encouragement that it is to know that Christ does all of these things for us, to know that His love for us is beyond fathom, that He loves us in this way: self-sacrificially and with a sanctifying purpose, that He provides for all of our needs, physical and spiritual, and that He cherishes us as a part of His own body.

Lord, drive these truths deep within our hearts and may our understanding of His love bring out our love for Him in return.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.