

The Divine Design for Marriage, Part 1

Scripture: Ephesians 5:22-24

Code: 49-35

Well, this morning we come to Ephesians 5 and the subject of marriage. And this is going to be a very politically incorrect experience for all of you. Some of you need a seatbelt, because at some point you're going to feel like you need to get out of here and avoid any more of this offense. But it's critical that we continue to move through the book of Ephesians and understand exactly what our Lord is conveying to us with regard to living the Christian life. So let me begin reading this portion of Scripture at verse 18, Ephesians 5:18, and I'll read down to the end of the chapter.

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

"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 to also 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, I understand in the culture in which we live the outright offense of a portion of Scripture like this—and there are many others that I will take you to this morning before we're finished. We are living in a culture that is making a complete effort to destroy men, to destroy women, to destroy children, to destroy families, to destroy marriage. This is an all-out, massive assault.

An illustration of this happened just very recently at the University of Wisconsin, where Matt Walsh who produced a documentary called *What Is a Woman?*—a pretty easy question to answer, but amazingly one that engendered tremendous hostility. He went to the University of Wisconsin to speak to the students and to show the documentary.

The protests against him were significant. Students came out defacing monuments, defacing buildings, chanting obscenities—"illogical rhymes," says one writer—and harassing all those who expressed Christian values. Some of the protesters began to harass a young man who had a Bible

there. They stole his Bible, and they began tearing the pages out of his Bible. “At least,” the journalists say, “At least one rotund protester was so enticed by the pages of Scripture that she chose to use them as a mid-afternoon snack.” This unnamed female stuffed the pages of Scripture into her mouth as part of her protest. The mangled Bible, in my mind, is metaphoric for just how this culture feels about the Word of God. They might stoop to such overt blasphemy against the Scripture, but it is the common approach of this society to reject what the Bible has to say.

The young man who had the Bible had some interesting things to say. First of all, he said it was a Legacy Standard Bible, and he said, “I use it every day: at church, at Bible study, to preach.” He said, “I brought it to this event so that I could guide sinners who love their sin and hate God to abandon their sin and turn to Jesus instead.” Well, he and anybody who agreed with him were basically labeled sexist, racist, anti-gay, Christian fascists and told to go away.

This kind of animosity toward the Scripture is a virulent element in this culture. They want nothing to do with the Word of God, or they wouldn’t be advocating the things that they advocate. I’ve never seen anything even close to this. And I can think back twenty-five to thirty years ago when I was preaching on marriage, and even then it was controversial because the world was taking steps to undermine everything God says about men, women, children, family, and marriage. But now it is far, far beyond that.

So this is going to sound like it came from an alien universe; and in fact, it did. It comes from heaven to us. And I want to set the text in its context, so I want you to understand that we begin in our study of Ephesians in the first three chapters—and we’ve done all of that. I just want to remind you, that laid out the gospel; chapters 1, 2, and 3 essentially laid out elements of the gospel.

And then if you’ll go back to chapter 4, arriving in chapter 4 you come to a “therefore,” which is the transition from the doctrinal section of this epistle to the practical. Based upon all of these marvelous doctrines that are celebrated in a doxology at the end of chapter 3, “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all we can ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” That doxology is the capstone to the doctrinal section of Ephesians. And then we move into the practical “therefore,” and we come face to face with, based upon our identify in Christ, based upon regeneration, based upon our new life, we live differently.

When you come to Christ you’re not adding religion to your life, your life is being totally transformed. The language that is used in the Bible to describe it is new birth, regeneration. You become a new creation. Old things pass away; everything is new.

So coming to Christ is not simply adding Christ to your life or adding religion to your life, it is the complete, radical, top-to-bottom, side-to-side transformation of your life; and all aspects of your life are changed. And that’s why chapter 4 begins by saying you need to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called. You have been called out of darkness into light, you have been called into the kingdom of God, you have been adopted as a child of God, you belong eternally to the family of God, and it calls for a completely different life on every level at every point in your life.

It starts with personal virtue. You walk with humility, verse 2, and gentleness, and patience, and showing tolerance for one another. You’re marked by love. You’re marked by a desire to preserve

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And this is all defining our new life, and it has to all be defined. Our attitudes are being talked about there, and our actions will be subsequently talked about, because it affects absolutely everything. We are different.

If you go down to verse 17 of chapter 4, Paul says you no longer walk as the Gentiles—or the pagans—walk. You don't live that way. You don't do that anymore. That life was marked by "futility of mind," verse 17, verse 18, "darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." So you, on the one hand, are marked by humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love, unity, peace, et cetera, and you used to be marked by futility of mind, darkened understanding, exclusion from the life of God, ignorance, hardness of heart, callousness, sensuality, impurity, and greediness.

Verse 20 marks the distinction: "You did not learn Christ in this way." If you have been taught by Christ and received the truth, verse 21 says, you have left behind your old manner of life, verse 22—you laid aside the old self—verse 23, you've been "renewed in the spirit of your mind"; you "put on the new self." You are a different person—completely, radically changed.

And the elements of that difference are marked. For one, the sum of it all would be chapter 5, verse 1, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children." So now instead of imitating your father the devil, you imitate God. Nothing could be a more dramatic exchange.

As imitators of God, as His beloved children, you "walk in love," you walk in love. Your life is completely different. Immorality, impurity, greed never to be named among you, "as is proper among saints." No filthy talk. And he goes on and on with this because, verse 8 says, "You were formerly darkness, now you're Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light." And children of Light, verse 11, "don't participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness"; they "expose them."

And then you come down to verse 15 of chapter 5, and he says, "Walk, not as unwise but as wise." So everything changes; we are different, and the impetus for this is our regeneration. But the present—ever-present power to live this life is found in verse 18: "Be filled with the Spirit." "Be filled with the Spirit." Let the Spirit of God control your life. Spirit lives within you as a believer; He will control your life down the path of righteousness and godliness and virtue.

And there will be some immediate effects of this. The first is personal. We saw that, didn't we, in verse 19. You become a joyful worshiper. When your life has been completely transformed through salvation, you become a joyful worshiper, "speaking . . . in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."

Secondly, you become thankful. Your life—instead of being cynical and instead of being dissatisfied, you become thankful to the degree that you give thanks for everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Those two are personal effects of a Spirit-filled life. You are joyfully a worshiper, full of gratitude to God for everything He has provided for you in Christ.

And then verse 21 moves to relationships. Verses 19 and 20 are about your personal life, your personal attitudes. Verse 21, this is the summation of your relationships to others, "And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." That is the foundational expectation of the believer's life if he is

genuinely converted and transformed. You're going to subject yourselves to each other in the fear of Christ. And "fear" there has the idea of honor, worship, adoration, praise.

What does it mean to submit to one another? Well look to Philippians chapter 2, in that wonderfully familiar portion of Scripture. Philippians 2, verse 3, "Do nothing"—and here's a description of what it means to subject yourselves to others—"do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." That's the first thing he says. If you're going to subject yourselves to others, you're going to have to humble yourself, you're going to have to distance yourself from selfishness and conceit, and you're going to have to regard others as more important than yourselves. Verse 4, "Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." And then he gives an illustration of Christ.

So the spirit that produces—and you can go back to Ephesians 5—the spirit that produces this kind of subjection to one another is the spirit described in Philippians 2. It's a humble spirit. It's a selfless spirit. It lacks the marked conceit of the unregenerate and willingly considers others better than itself, and serves others before it even serves itself.

This is defining; this is defining of all Christian relationships. So when you think about how you relate to other believers, it's all summed up in, "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." For the sake of Christ, for the honor of Christ, for the name of Christ, for the glory of Christ, we all submit.

Now that is a spiritual command—spiritually speaking. We're not talking about roles and functions, we're talking about the essential nature of believers in their relationships. We submit to each other. We subject ourselves to each other.

The wife, we'll find out, subjects herself to her husband; she recognizes his headship in the home. On the other hand, the husband subjects himself to the wife by recognizing her needs and self-sacrificing to make sure they are met. The children submit to the parents in obedient behavior, but the parents also submit to the children by not provoking them, not provoking them to anger, as chapter 6 will point out. The slave, also in chapter 6, submits to the master in faithful service, but the master submits to the slave in kindness and fair treatment.

So the idea of verse 21 is we all submit to each other. We're all concerned more about others than we are ourselves. This is the humble submissiveness that defines what it is to walk in a worthy manner. Now this does not obliterate the idea of authority and order by God's design; that is function. But in the essence of relationships, subjecting ourselves to all those around us is the spiritual standard.

Still, as I said, there is authority and submission; there has to be. We've seen it: Wives, subject yourselves to your husbands; "children, obey your parents," chapter 6, verse 1. We see it, don't we, in the church, where we are to submit ourselves to those who are over us in the Lord: the elders; we're to follow their faith. And we who are preachers and teachers are to teach "with all authority," Titus 2:15 says, and don't let anyone evade that. Don't let anyone think that they are not accountable for obeying biblical authority as brought to them by their shepherds and pastors. Peter points out in 1 Peter 5 that we don't lord it over people. We don't do this to dominate people, but we serve them as loving shepherds.

So there will be authority, and there will be submission in function; there has to be—children to their parents, wives to their husbands, congregations to the elders, citizens to the government, et cetera, for order in human society. But we're going to talk, first of all, right where Paul begins, with the wives. So ladies, this is your Sunday. And I won't get to your husbands, so make sure he shows up next week because he needs equal attention on this subject.

The duty of the wives is described in verses 22 to 24: "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." There's nothing vague about that, nothing hard to understand. You don't need to know Greek words to figure that out; it's very clear.

So I want to talk about the duty of the wife, and let's begin with the matter of submission, the matter of submission. Notice it doesn't say, "Wives, obey your husbands." That's for children (chapter 6, verse 1); that's for slaves (chapter 6, verse 5)—obedience.

This is a softer word: "Be subject to your own husbands." And to soften it even further, "subject to *your own* husbands"—there's a sense in which you own your husband. He belongs to you, which then obviously connects the fact that it benefits you to treat your husband the way God wants you to treat your husband, because there will be divine blessing following that. So this is more intimate than obedience. This is more personal, more tender, more inward, more vital, more loving—"your own husband." This is not about inferiority in any sense.

But as simple as the command is, it's kind of hard to get women to do this all the time. And I'm not picking on them; it's hard for men to be what they ought to be, but it's hard for women to be what they ought to be. We're all caught up in the Fall, right? So we're struggling to be what the Lord wants us to be. But I want to take you back to Genesis chapter 3 and verse 16 because I want you to know where this tendency toward rebellion comes from.

So if you are a woman, and you feel like your husband irritates you, and you just don't feel like always complying with what he wants, you came by this basically because of Eve. She did this to the women, and Adam followed suit. But back in Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve had sinned, God cursed the woman—women in general.

Verse 16 of Genesis 3, "To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth'"—is that true? Is that a reality? Of course. Every woman who's ever had a child affirms that. So that's a validation of Scripture. Yes, that's true. "In pain you will bring forth children."

And then there's a second part of it: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." Now what does that mean, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you"? That exact statement appears in chapter 4, verse 7, exact same Hebrew statement. Verse 4 is talking about—chapter 4, verse 7 is talking about sin, and it says in verse 7, middle of the verse, "Sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." It's the same phrase.

Whatever sin wants to do is what the woman wants to do. It's not a desire that's physical, it's not a desire for intimacy that's being referred to here. It's a desire to overthrow. It's a desire to dominate. That's what sin wants to do, and "you must master it." That's what the Lord said to Cain: "You can't

let sin master you; you must master it. Its desire is to overpower you.” Same exact phrase, speaking of women. The desire for women will be to overpower the man, and he must “rule over you.”

Well that leads to rebellion in a marriage, and even a kind of hostility on the part of the husband, who’s struggling to rule. That’s the conflict in marriage. You have women innately, in their fallenness, not wanting to submit, and you have men in their fallenness wanting to dominate, and that’s the battle of the sexes, as it’s known. But I want you to understand that that’s all basically in the book of Genesis; that is to be expected.

So in the woman submitting to her husband, there is the assumption that something in Christ is now possible that apart from Christ was not possible or not likely. You can do this now because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, because of the transformation of your life. And Colossians 3:18 says this: “Wives, be subject to your husbands.” It’s the same thing there: “Be subject to your husbands.”

Why is this? Why does it have to be this way? Well, by God’s design, God has designed men and women differently; and of course, this culture wants to overthrow all of that with a level of insanity that shocks us all. But the headship of the man is built around this notion, and this is how you have to look at it: not smarter, not wiser, not more experienced, not more insightful, not more spiritual, not more valuable. It is simply that God designed men to be physically stronger, constitutionally designed by God to work, to protect, to provide for, to secure the wife, whom the Holy Spirit calls in 1 Peter 3:7 the weaker vessel. Not weaker intellectually, not weaker mentally, not weaker in wisdom or any virtue at all, but merely by God’s design. And we get that. That’s why there’s such a furor when men want to participate in women’s sports. Anybody gets that. It’s obviously not a possible compatibility, because men have a completely different system that makes them stronger than women.

It’s really nothing more than that, and so by divine design—Colossians 3:18 says it “is fitting,” it is fitting. It has always been this way. It’s an imperfect active indicative. It’s always been like this. It’s always been this way, that men have been designed by God to be the providers, the protectors of women.

And you see that in 1 Timothy 2. Look at 1 Timothy 2:11, “A woman must . . . receive instruction with entire submissiveness”—this is talking about the church—“I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” In the life of the church there are no place for women preachers. Women can teach women, of course; women can teach children. We’re going to look at Titus 2 in a minute, and women are instructed to teach women, but not to preach in the church.

“I”—verse 12—“do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” Is this cultural? No. Verse 13, “It was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” Women need the protection and the provision and the shelter of a strong man. It was because Satan got Eve out from under Adam that she was deceived. Adam was not deceived; he was not deceived. He bears the culpability for leading the race into sin, but he was not deceived; the woman was deceived. A remarkable illustration of the fact that women need the protection that men can provide for them.

But lest you think that that makes women second class, verse 15 says, “But women will be preserved”—or “saved” or “delivered.” From what? From second-class status. How? “Through the

bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.”

Ask yourself this question: When you think about a godly child, grows up to love the Lord Jesus Christ, would you assume that the greatest impression made upon that child was its father or mother? Most likely it is the mother that comes to mind because the mother who suckles that child, who nurses that child, the mother who cares for that little child has the most intimate relationship with that child. That balances off the male authority. I mean, it's the NFL commercial: “Hi, Mom.” Never, “Hi, Dad,” right? No matter how much gratitude you might have for your father, it's not the same as the gratitude you have for a godly mother who raised you in faith and love and sanctity.

And it says she will be saved through the bearing of children. Now there's been some confusion about that. I was in Romania some years ago with a pastors' conference in a packed church in Bucharest, and they were having a Q&A, and one of the questions was, “What does that verse mean, ‘Women will be saved through the bearing of children’? What does that mean?” And I was ignorant of the circumstances, so I just popped into a simple answer: “Well, it certainly does not mean your soul is saved if you have a baby. That's not possible, because you're saved by grace through faith in Christ. So it can't mean that. It can't have anything to do with your salvation.”

And the translator translated that, and the room just went dead still, and I knew something was up. And the man who was trying to help me with this leaned over and said, “That was a blow that you wouldn't understand. These people have been taught for years that if you do anything to prevent a pregnancy, you'll lose your salvation based on that verse. Yeah, if you do anything to prevent any normal thing, unless you want to get pregnant all the time, anything you do to void a pregnancy, you lose your salvation based on that verse.” And so I said, “Well, I need to say more then.”

So I doubled down on it, and I explained in detail that's not what it meant, and you couldn't lose your salvation anyway, certainly not because you decided not to get pregnant. And by the time I got done with the explanation you could see these women, these pastors' wives, who had between twelve and sixteen children—yeah—looking at their husband and say, “So you had to be wrong about that verse? I mean, couldn't you just get baptism wrong? What have you done to me?”

It doesn't mean that. It means a woman is saved from any thought of second-class status by the fact that she bears the children and she influences them in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. She's the most intimate part of the child-rearing process. But notice there's clear word here that women are to be submissive because that is the created order, that is the created order. And that's why Colossians 3:18 says it's “fitting.”

Now look at 1 Peter chapter 3. A few more portions of Scripture, and we'll get back to Ephesians in a minute. First Peter chapter 3. I just want to show you the consistency of Scripture on this regard.

There's a lot about submission in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 13: “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution,” kings, those in authority, governors, et cetera, et cetera. Verse 18, “Servants, be submissive to your masters”—again, it's the same kind of language. And then you come to chapter 3. In the same—in the same way that you submit yourself to those in civil authority over you, in the same way that you submit yourselves to your master or your boss or the one who has authority over you, “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands.” “Be submissive to your own husbands.” Very obvious: in the very same way as your submission would

be in any other function.

Again, we're talking about function, not essential nature or quality. And furthermore, "so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word"—if they get out of line with the Word of God, you still are submissive—that "they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior." If you want to win over a disobedient husband, the way to do that is show what verse 2 describes as respectful behavior.

So there's really no way out of this. Obviously, if your husband asks you to sin or asks you to sin in such a way that you're not permitted to do what you know God has commanded you to do, you have to claim Acts 5 and say, "Well you judge whether we obey men or God. You can't ask me to violate my allegiance and devotion to Christ." But apart from that, when you are commanded by a husband who is out of line to do things, you need to be remembering the fact that the way to win that husband over is not by being rebellious but by being submissive. And he can see your chaste and respectful behavior. You say, "What good does that do?" It shows that Christ changes the heart. Right? It's a way to let your light shine, and they can see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

How do you convince a disobedient husband that Christianity is a transforming reality? You do it by being a transformed person. You're no longer living in the Genesis 3:16 category, where you're trying to overpower your husband, but you're submissive.

And "your adornment," if you're going to adorn yourself, "must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, putting on dresses; but"—verse 4—"let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable"—it's a great word—"with the imperishable quality"—virtue—"of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious"—meaning of great value—"in the sight of God." Even if you have a husband who's out of line, when your heart is right before the Lord, you demonstrate the imperishable. It's really the eternal value, the eternal beauty, the eternal preciousness. That word "precious," by the way, is used in Mark 14:3 to refer to the alabaster box of ointment. And so it has great value. And what is it? It's a "gentle and quiet spirit." It's "precious in the sight of God."

In verse 5 we are reminded this is nothing new; this is nothing just popped up to the apostle Peter here but rather, "In this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands." You can't escape it; it just keeps coming back at you. This has always been the standard. Holy women always did this. They were holy in part because they were submissive to their own husband.

And you have an illustration of it in verse 6, "Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." Now I'm not suggesting you go that far; that might push it a little too far, the man in the wrong direction. But just in the sense that "Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord," meaning she acknowledged his leadership and his headship, "and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear." So Paul says in Romans that if you're a person of faith, if you put your faith in Christ, you're a son of Abraham. Abraham is like the father of faith, and all who believe the gospel are sons of Abraham in a spiritual sense. Well, all who are responsive and submissive to their husbands are also daughters of Sarah, daughters of Sarah.

So again, the Scripture doesn't give you any wiggle room on this responsibility other than what I said a moment ago, that you can never be doing the right thing if you do the wrong thing. So anytime your

husband asks you to sin in any way—covertly, overtly, by commission or omission—you cannot do that.

And you do this—and I think this is very important, the end of verse 6—“you do what is right without being frightened by any fear,” without being intimidated. When you do what is right, who’s on your side? God’s on your side when you do right. And again, it just calls for you to do the right thing and trust God. Commit yourself to a faithful Creator, which is exactly what our Lord did when He submitted Himself to evil men within the purpose of God’s redemptive plan.

Now I want to show you another passage as we move toward the end: Titus chapter 2. And we’re still talking about the matter of submission and how consistent Scripture is. Titus chapter 2 is talking about things that are proper, things that fit sound doctrine, and among them is a word to the women in verses 3 to 5: “Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good.” So yes, is there a place for women teaching in the church? Of course. Of course. They are “to be reverent in their behavior” and “teaching what is good, so that may encourage the young women.”

So older women teach the young women to do what? “To love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored.” And again, it comes back to what kind of testimony you give. If you’re going to show that the gospel transformed you, you can’t be a rebellious wife. That’s not going to communicate the grace of Christ having transformed a heart.

This is an emphatic statement of the function of a wife. Again, what I’m saying is this isn’t about one’s essential quality, character, virtue; this is simply in the design of God. Women are to be taught to love their husbands. It’s not just submitting, it’s loving, and it’s the Greek word that means to have strong affection for. They are to love their husbands, and the same with their children. They are to be known as lovers of husbands and lovers of children; that is the priority for a woman. And that’s what her submission really means. She submits in love and for love.

And if you want a parallel here: While you may have difficulty submitting yourself to the love of your husband and loving your husband like you should, it’s unlikely that you have trouble loving your children like you should. But there’s no difference. It’s actually a form of the same root. You’re to have the same affection for your husband that you have for your children. I’ve said through the years that the best thing you can ever give your children is to love your spouse. That dominating love in the home is the most securing reality children can experience.

So yes, women—older women teach younger women. They teach them to love their husbands and love their children, and there’s no difference in the kind of love they give to each. And then, “To be sensible, pure,” and then this: “workers at home,” “workers at home.” That is not a popular idea. Twenty-five million—I think that’s the latest number I could find—twenty-five million American women with small children are in the workforce. The fallout of that is tragic; it’s terribly tragic because you have children who don’t have a sense of love and affection and security and protection; and they are left to be the victims of whatever media corruption can take over their young minds.

But you’re to be a worker at home. This is the only place this appears in Scripture: “workers at home.” Do your work at home. *Oikos* is the part of the word that means the house, the home. A

woman's place is the home. And it doesn't limit you because like the woman in Proverbs 31—she had a lot of things going on. And like Dorcas—she had a lot of things going on in the book of Acts chapter 9, in making garments for all kinds of people, so much so that they wept when she died because she had been so kind to them.

And certainly in the world in which we live today there are lots of ways that you can work at home. More and more, seemingly, since things like COVID have come in, you can do that not to the detriment of your time with family; but whatever it is that you do, the home is to be the center of your world, where you love your husband and you love your children.

This gets a different look if you turn just quickly to 1 Timothy 5. This is about widows, and it talks about widows here. But just to give you one perspective, there were widows in the church, and they needed to be cared for. They needed to be honored, in verse 3; 1 Timothy 5:3, "Honor widows." That word "honor" can mean support, money, finance. Widows are to be cared for. Widows shouldn't have to go into the workplace, they should be cared for.

"If any widow has children"—this is the first line of care—"children and grandchildren, [you] learn to practice piety in regard to [your] own family . . . make some return to [your] parents." Take care of that widow. "This is acceptable in the sight of God." That's what children and grandchildren should do. Just because a woman lost a husband doesn't mean she should be thrown into the workforce and taken out of the home.

And a woman "who is a widow indeed," in verse 5—that means maybe there's nobody immediately around her in a family who can care for her. What does she do? Well, "[She fixes] her hope on God and continues in entreaties and prayers night and day." She turns to prayer for the needs to be met. And somebody steps up. Maybe it's extended family; down in verse 8, "If anyone doesn't provide for his own, especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." So "his own" could mean the household, or it could mean somebody outside the household who knows you have need.

Again, there's nothing here that says, "The widow is on her own; throw her out there and hope she can make a living." Everybody steps up to care for her.

And even the church is to do that, verse 9, "A widow is to be put on the list"—the churches had a list of special widows who needed care—"if [they were over] sixty years [of age and had] been"—this is the virtue that basically qualified them to be given special care—"a one-man woman"—that's what that is—"a reputation for good works . . . brought up children . . . shown hospitality"—that's in the home—"to strangers . . . washed the saints' feet . . . assisted those in distress . . . devoted herself to every good work."

So at the end of life, when you come to the age of sixty or beyond, the Word of God says now this is a time for the church to evaluate the care of this widow. Obviously we take care of widows and orphans; James says that. But there's a special list of concern and care for those who have faithfully fulfilled their God-designed duty, and that's described there in verse 10.

So all the Scripture, whether you're looking at the front end of life, from the beginning of the marriage, or at the back end of life, from the time of widowhood, conveys the same message, the

same message. God's design for women is to submit and to love their husbands and love their children and be workers at home.

Now with that in mind, let's go back to Ephesians chapter 5, and we'll wrap it up. So I've tried to show you from a number of passages the matter of submission. Secondly, the manner of submission, verse 22: "as to the Lord," "as to the Lord." It's a sense in which you would treat your husband as you would treat the Lord, because the Lord has designed this function—"as to the Lord."

It's always the perspective in all submission: "as to the Lord." Back in verse 21, "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ." Verse 25, when we get to husbands, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church." Chapter 6, verse 1, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." Chapter 6, verse 5, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters"—and at the end of the verse it says—"as to Christ." "And masters," in verse 9, "do the same thing . . . knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there's no partiality with Him." Every duty in every relationship assumes that we're treating someone else as if they were Christ, as if they were Christ. This is holy living. This is why you submit: because Christ has asked us to do that; and in a sense when you do that, you are honoring Him.

So the manner: "as to the Lord"; the motive—what is the motive for women to be submissive? Verse 23, "The husband is the head of the wife." That's the motive. That's by God's design. You do it because it is right; it is what God has designed.

And then he rounds out this part discussing the wives with a model. The matter, the manner, the motive, and the model of submission. Who is the model? Christ, who's "the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything."

The church is subject to Christ "in everything," "in everything." We confess Jesus as—what? As Lord. He is "head of the church." That's explained in beautiful language at the end of chapter 1 of Ephesians. So wives, submit to your husbands, as the church submits to Christ.

Why do you do that? Because He is "the Savior of the body," He is the Savior. Not because you are forced without reciprocation, but because on the clear, simple level of reality, he is the provider, protector, and he is the deliverer of the wife. He's the head of the wife, not in the sense of dominant control, not in the sense of lashing out orders, not in the sense of pride, but in the humble sweetness and simplicity of selflessness, he offers protection, provision to the woman, as the stronger part physically. He's committed to her care, to her welfare, to her benefits, to her needs; and that's his calling.

We submit to Christ because everything we have is in Him, right? Everything we have is Him.

And then there's a sense in which your husband is as Christ to you. Now I know that seems a stretch; I get it. None of us is perfect. But it's a good reminder to the men what we need to be. And we'll see more about that next time.

But God's design is clear. And of course, the world hates all of this. I don't know if it was incidental or if it was another issue, but it was about this time in the early service that several people got up and

walked out. So thanks for sticking with me. And I don't think they were together; they were leaving from all sides.

I understand that this is hard to hear because you've been so conditioned by the culture. But in the frame of reference of living in the light of all that God has granted us in Christ, this is the pathway to blessing, right? Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for its clarity, its directness. And we understand that this fights against the world around us. We understand that it even fights against our own nature, the fallen elements that are still within us, that we men tend to be too overbearing or dominating. And as women, there's a tendency to rebel out of the flesh.

So Lord, we have to go back to the filling of the Spirit. We have to be filled with the Spirit. We have to be filled with the Spirit to be joyful worshipers, to be thankful for everything, and to submit to one another so that submitting to your husband is normal for a Spirit-filled believer.

And Lord, we ask that You would bring the full grace of marital peace and joy to all those who have been blessed with that grace of life. Heal marriages and families. And Lord, protect us from the lies of the world around us that are so destructive, and help us to realize that it's up to us to show the world what a marriage in Christ should look like. We don't want the Word of God to be slandered. We don't want people to dismiss Christianity as having no power because they can't see transformed marriages.

So Lord, make our marriages everything they should be. And may we live out the fullness of the rich relationship that You have designed, so that the gospel may be attractive, and hearts may be open to it. I thank You again, in Christ's name. Amen.

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