

Ephesians 5 (Part 4): 22-33 • The Role of the Husband

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This is part 2 of our study on husbands and wives. We picked on the wives last week, and we're going to do it now for the husbands this week. Let's begin reading at verse 22. Follow along with me and we'll read down through the end of the chapter. It goes like this.

²² "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast 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." (ESV)

Stop there. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the ministry of your Word and we pray that as we dig into these verses that you would open our hearts to hear your voice, and to hear and understand, Lord, what you have determined to be the definition of the roles of husband and wife.

Father, thank you for the insight and the wisdom that comes from your Word. Now, cause us, Father, to hear your heart on these matters. In Jesus precious name, amen. Amen.

I was getting ready for this last Friday. Tim and I motorcycled over to Meridian to have dinner with my oldest daughter and her family and on our way back, we decided to come back along Highway 95, and we stopped in Parma and to get a little dessert. Stopped to get a cone at the drive in there and so we got our stuff, and we came out and sat down at a picnic table and there was an older couple that was sitting at the picnic table next to us and they were having a rather loud conversation, and the more it went on the louder it got.

I mean, to the point of embarrassment. Tim and I were doing our best to try to ignore what they were saying and just carry on with our conversation, but eventually it reached the place of embarrassment and finally Tim just looked at me and said let's go. Which really bummed me out because I was only halfway through my cone, but we left and I got to thinking about that in light of the fact that I was already thinking about these verses and talking about the role of the husband and I was thinking to myself that what we overheard Friday evening was the exact opposite of how a man ought to respond to his wife.

And so, the reason, as we get into talking about the role of the husband, the reason I started off in verse 22 and reading once again, the verses about the role of the wife, is because you really have to take them together. These - the understanding of marriage is never to be looked at singularly. In other words, we don't look at the role of the wife to the exclusion of the role of the husband and vice versa.

They are essentially two sides of the same coin, and they are meant to function in tandem, and basically that means while they are both being played out equally, we never expect the woman to walk in that attitude of respectful submission toward her husband apart from the loving leadership that a husband offers to his wife and vice versa. We don't expect the husband to do all of the work in the relationship when the wife is refusing to do her end of the bargain for, and the reason, and it's not that, it's not that doing that might not be something the Lord would have you to do.

The point is this, in order for marriage to be what God intended it to be there is to be an equal functional response by both the husband and the wife to their respective roles in marriage. And if there is not that balanced approach and response to the Lord, right, by both the husband and the wife things are going to be out of balance. They're going to be painfully out of balance in the marriage, and there's going to be problems and we'll talk more about that as we go.

We're looking here at what God has to say to the husband, and essentially, we find that he says four things to the husband. We'll put them up on the screen and then we'll go through them one by one. They are,

A husband is head of his wife. A husband is called to love his wife. A husband is called to love sacrificially. A husband is to leave and cleave.
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A husband is head of his wife (We talked about this last week in relation to a woman's role, but we'll get more into it today)

A husband is called to love his wife.

A husband is called to love sacrificially (And then finally)

A husband is to leave and cleave

And I'm using old King James words there, that's not the words that are, well, leave, is used in the ESV, but not, cleave. I'm a little partial to those words because that was the theme of my own wedding. I think on our programs, it said leave and cleave, and some gal got up and, who I didn't even know, sang a song about it and that's about all I remember.

Anyway, let's look at the first definition concerning the husband. It's found in verse 23. Look with me in your Bible. It says, "*for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church,*" and so we highlight that first point on these definitions of the husband's leadership. He is the head of his wife. Last week, we talked about what the definition of headship is. It's very simple, it just means one who leads.

The husband is called to a role of leadership within the home. He does not take that role upon himself necessarily. He is called to it by the Lord, and that can be a very challenging thing, particularly if a man doesn't feel much like a leader. Maybe he even feels somewhat ill equipped to lead. The fact of the matter is, he's called to it, and he has been called by God to that position of leadership, and I sometimes think about how this passage here in Ephesians 5 might be perceived by a young man who perhaps who recently was married.

He's a Christian. He's reading through the Word of God to have a greater understanding of his role as the husband and he begins to read here, "*The husband is the head of the wife,*" and he's thinking through what that means. But he really doesn't know what it means and in fact, it's ambiguous, at least from this section of words here because there are all kinds of leaders, good and bad, and he doesn't really know yet what kind of a leader God is talking to him or commanding him to be.

He just knows he's called to be a leader. And so, he says to himself, I'm not really sure how I'm supposed to lead, so he reads on, and he sees the words, "*even as Christ is the head of the Church,*" and he begins to understand, in a rudimentary sort of a way, that his example is Jesus and his relationship with the Church. And so, the man is the head of the wife, or the husband is the head of the wife, as Jesus is the head of the Church.

And he begins to think through that whole process and begins to wonder: I wonder how Jesus would handle some of the things that I have to deal with in my marriage because you don't have to be married long before you realize that being a leader can be pretty tough, particularly when the one that you are called to lead doesn't want to be led, and perhaps is even resisting your leadership in some way, shape, or form, and so he begins to wonder.

In fact, he even begins to challenge this idea. I'm supposed to lead like Jesus led? I don't know, I think he had a pretty easy job of it compared to what I got. Ha and I tell him to go back and read the Gospels. And when you do, you find that Jesus was constantly having to deal with all kinds of issues and attitudes and misguided statements and believe it, resistance and yet He responded with patience and humility every time.

In fact, I am absolutely blown away by reading the account of the Last Supper. Jesus is literally hours away from hanging on a cross, and He knows it. And what are His disciples doing? They're sitting around having a discussion about which of them is the greatest. Now, I don't know how that would make you feel if you were Jesus and you knew you were about to get on the cross and bear the sin of mankind, and these yahoos are talking about which one of them is the best, and the greatest.

And if Jesus, or if anybody ever had a reason to just lose it, and just start yelling, you guys are idiots, it was Him, but He didn't do that. In fact, what Jesus did do is He took off his outer garment and wrapped it around his waist. He got down on His knees and He proceeded to wash their feet one by one. He showed such amazing humility. And so, when we begin to look at the life of Jesus and the leadership that He displayed during His earthly ministry, a husband begins to have a greater understanding of how He is to respond to His wife.

We are to be like Christ. Willing to humble ourselves, absorbing the disrespect that comes to us from time to time and not giving up. It's one thing I love about Jesus. Again, if anybody had an excuse to say, you know what? I'm done with you guys. I'm going to go pick another 12. It was Him, and I mean, many

opportunities and yet He didn't give up. He stayed on course with these guys and that love that He showed is the example that husbands need to absorb as it relates to the love they show their wives. I want to be like Jesus. I'm reminded of the words of the apostle Paul when he wrote his letter to the Colossians. Look at this, I'll put it on the screen for you. Colossians chapter 3, verse 19.

Colossians 3:19 (ESV)

“Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”

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Wow. Now the opposite of harsh is kind. It involves patience, and that's something that we struggle sometimes because we're men. And as men, we get frustrated, we get irritated, and we don't necessarily like being crossed, but that's, of course, our flesh. And when it gets touched in a way that we don't like, it is very, very common for a man to respond in harshness, and yet we are called to respond as Christ responded.

That's the leadership style, the Jesus style, that we husbands are called to in our marriages, and that brings us to the second definition of the role of a husband. We'll highlight it on the screen for you, but let's read verse 25. It says,

Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

“Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church.”

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And so, we see here that a husband is called to love his wife. He's not only called to a position of leadership, but within the context of that position, he's called to love. And just like God gives the wife one command, respect your husband, he gives the husband really one command as it relates to wives, love your wife and that means make sure she knows that she is loved.

Now, a man needs to understand just exactly what God is commanding here in the Scripture when he says, husbands, love your wives, because it's easy for us men just to comfort ourselves and say, yeah, of course I love her. Yeah, look, hey, do you love your wife? Yeah, I love her. I love my wife. I married her, didn't I? As if that proves anything. No, this is a command to act lovingly.

This is a command to treat her lovingly. And by giving men this one command, the apostle Paul is sharing with you and I the heart of what He created in the

woman to be her greatest need, and it is to be loved. A woman has many other needs beyond that, but paramount to them all is that she needs to be loved. She needs to know that she is loved, and when she does, I find that women are usually quite happy in their relationship.

In fact, over the years, I've met women who had much of what the world would consider to be important. Like a fine house, lots of money coming in, a nice car and so forth, but they weren't happy, because they weren't confident of their husband's love. By the same token, I've met women over the years who have very little of this world's earthly goods and who are yet deliriously happy and satisfied because they know that they know that they know, their husband loves them, and that confidence breeds a sense of contentment, stability, and security in their hearts.

It's also important to understand that your wife, guys, may interpret your ovations of love very differently from, say, for example, my wife. Women are very, very complex. If there's one thing I've learned, it's that, but we, as husbands, need to learn and work through some of those complexities so that we can have a better understanding of how they experience or feel loved.

I've told you guys many times in the past that when I'm doing pre-marriage counseling with a couple, we actually go through some exercises along these lines just to help them understand how differently they think, if they don't already know. And so, what I'll do is I'll have these perspective couples take out a piece of paper and a pen and write down the top five ways.

I'll have the guy write down on his list I want you to write the top five ways you show your wife to be, that you love her and then I have her write down the top five ways that he either does or could say I love you to her. What's really interesting about that is usually what's number one on his list isn't even on her radar, and that's not uncommon at all and it's funny too.

I was doing this for a couple of years with people and I finally decided I should probably try it myself. I went home and I just asked my wife, and this was quite a few years ago when our kids were still small, but I said, "what is the number one way that I can show you, or do show you, or communicate to you that I love you?" And I won't get into the specifics of what she said, it's really not important. What is important is, it wouldn't have even been on my list. Not even if I had made a list of ten ways, that one wouldn't have appeared.

I was so flabbergasted by her answer that it just completely took me by surprise. Which really gave me a better understanding of the fact that we men are really

idiots for the most part, when it comes to loving our wives. I'm sorry but it's true. We're really frustrated lovers, for the most part, and many times I see that men are saying to their wives, I love you, I love you I love you, but she's not hearing it because he's speaking in man speak and she's listening in women speak and they're just missing one another completely.

And I'll never forget, years ago I was encouraging a couple that I was doing marriage counseling with about these very things, and I said to her, well he was expressing his frustration, I love her, but she doesn't seem to understand or hear me and so I said to her, I looked at her and I said, "why don't you help out your husband by telling him how he can best love you? The things he can do that will most effectively say, I love you." Never forget her answer. She said to me, forget it. I said, what? She said, and then she said this, if he really loved me, he'd know.

And I realized what I just heard was one of the deepest, darkest lies from the pit of hell because it's just not true, ladies. As I said, men are often frustrated lovers. We do love, but we sometimes, many times, struggle to find expression for that love in a way that our wife really can absorb and understand, and I believe it's important within the context of marriage, and this is another message altogether, but I think it's important for there to be communication along those lines.

The whole point of this thing is that we are called to show them love, men. We are called to show our wives' love, that they would know that they are loved. But another thing that a husband needs to understand related to this command is that loving your wife has nothing to do with whether you feel love or not. God is not saying here, treat your wife lovingly as long as you love her. He's really just using the Nike theme here. He's saying, just do it, just do it.

I want you to show her love. But pastor, you don't understand. I don't love my wife. I know I get it, and see, cause there's a belief among many people today that love is either something you have, or you don't have, and if you don't have it, there's really nothing you can do about it. But we are Christians and that means we're filled with the Holy Spirit and that means there's always hope in Christ, and this is where obedience comes into the equation because when a husband and wife fall out of love, and it happens, they are now going to be presented with one of the most difficult challenges of their married life.

And that is the challenge of whether they're going to be obedient to God or obedient to their own feelings, and I'm sorry to say that God usually loses that one. I find that many times when people fall out of love, they simply give up.

But this is one of those places where obedience to Christ really comes in. You know, I've told you guys many, many times that the first five years of my marriage were lived in a Christless home.

Sue and I did not attend church. I had no desire to attend church. I never wanted to darken the door of a church again. I was fed up with it. I'd had enough. As a result, we lived our married life for the first five years like the world. And after those first five years we crashed big time. And we hurt one another very badly to the point where love was not part of the equation any longer.

But we were both somehow devastated by what we had created in our marriage which was really a loveless sort of a thing. We came to Christ because of our sorrow, but we were still faced with a loveless marriage, and I don't know why, but something in us just didn't want to give up. We weren't really sure there was any hope, but we made a determination to simply be obedient to Christ. Just to begin learning what it meant for me to be a husband, and for her to be a wife and just to do that.

And that's what the Lord kept saying over and over to me personally. There were times when I would be overwhelmed with such emotion, such waves of sorrow and hurt that I would just, I would say to the Lord, I can't do this anymore. I just, I can't do this. And during those times, the Lord would very gently say to me, I'm not asking you to fix your marriage. All I'm asking you to do is just obey Me and put one foot in front of the next.

Husbands, love your wives. But Lord, you know what we've been through, there's no love here. Husbands, love your wives. Okay, and on it went. Now I'm standing here, 35 years later, to say that it worked. God's grace and power healed the hurt that we went through, but we were still without understanding about how to do this marriage thing. And it took time, a lot of time, to work through these issues, to understand what God commanded for a husband related to His Word.

And one of the most challenging things that for me to learn, and it remains a challenging thing to this day, let me tell you, is our third point on the screen as we highlight that one that a husband is called to love sacrificially.

<p>A husband is head of his wife A husband is called to love his wife. A husband is called to love sacrificially A husband is to leave and cleave</p>
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Boy, that's a hard one. In verse 25 again It says, *“husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church (and look at this) and gave himself up for her.”*

This is talking about sacrificial love. I'm not just supposed to be kind and show her love in a generic sort of a sense. I am literally to lay down my life to love her and that means to lay down my desires, to lay down some of my wants and my wishes and to show the same quality of love to this woman that Jesus showed for His Church, and that means being dedicated to her, being devoted to her physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare.

It means being called to give everything that I have to this woman and everything that I am. Here was the problem for me. I didn't want to. I can't say it more simply than that. I didn't want to, but the Lord was showing me in His Word, this is where sacrificial love comes into play. I don't think Jesus wanted to go to the cross. We know that in the Garden of Gethsemane, He even prayed and said, Lord, if there's any way, let this cup pass from me. (Matthew 26:39)

It was a painful situation that He faced, and I'm not trying to compare the two sufferings by any stretch of the imagination. The point is, I didn't want, many times, to do what God was commanding me to do, but that wasn't the point. The point was, Paul, are you going to obey me? Do you love me? Do you love me, Paul? And will you do what I tell you to do and let Me do the rest? Wow! Very, very difficult. But you know what?

Sacrificial love communicates to a wife that she has nothing to fear in her role of submission because you see, asking a woman to submit to a man apart from his sacrificial love, places her in a very vulnerable and very dangerous situation. But loving her sacrificially, communicates to her that there is security and stability in the relationship. Let me show you how the apostle Peter expressed it. I'll put it on the screen for you. 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7,

1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life. (Meaning, she is your complete equal as it relates to her walk with Christ and her position in Christ and then look at this last section) so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

This is an interesting little insight that is given to men related to their relationship to their husband and to the Lord and it tells you and I, that if we are not living with our wives in an understanding way honoring her as the weaker vessel, and by the way that's an interesting kind of a phrase, It's not meant to be a dig in any way. It's simply the understanding that men have a significantly higher muscle mass than do women.

They are the weaker vessel, in most every sense of the word and it is possible for a man to use his larger size to bully her into submission, rather than to allow her submission to be one that is given freely and lovingly, and so, Peter says that if this is not happening the way it should, this is actually going to be a hindrance to your prayer life. Isn't that a shot in the arm? Just about the time we're shaking our fist at God saying, why aren't you answering my prayer?

He comes back and says, maybe you need to look to your own house and the relationship you have with this individual with whom you entered into a one flesh union, and your attitude and your behavior toward her is such that your prayers are actually hindered at this point. That's an eye-opening situation. And finally we come to the fourth definition of a husband's role. And that is that a husband is to leave and cleave.

A husband is head of his wife A husband is called to love his wife. A husband is called to love sacrificially A husband is to leave and cleave
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It says in verse 31 in your Bible, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother.”*

And of course, that just means about the husband coming out from under his father's authority because I always tell couples when I'm doing pre-marriage counseling and before I do their wedding, I say there's a lot happening on your wedding day. What happens when you two come together as husband and wife on your wedding day is a new home is being created. A new authority structure.

You're coming out from under your father's authority. I say to the man, and you are now establishing your own home, your own authority, your own headship and so forth. When a man and a woman come together, it is that position he takes on to come out to leave his father and mother, and that doesn't mean he ignores them, neglects them or anything like that but it's talking about an emotional, spiritual, physical connection to this woman that is paramount above all else.

If a man is neglecting his own home to take care of other issues in the extended family, there's a problem. A man is to leave his father and mother, both emotionally and physically, and he is to be united, or I use that old word cleave. To be united to his wife, and that speaks of them coming together as one flesh. One of the most fascinating titles is given in Scripture to define a relationship, and I find it interesting that the Bible calls a husband and wife one flesh because technically they're not.

I mean, technically I'm more one flesh with my kids than my wife because with them I share DNA. I don't with my wife, and yet, the Bible doesn't call my relationship to my kids one flesh. It only uses that title to speak of my relationship with my wife and so, obviously, it's more than just a biological definition. It's more than just DNA. It transcends that.

It goes on to deal with many other aspects of what we call intimacy. When we talk about intimacy in marriage, we're talking about that which you share with your spouse that you share with no one else. That's intimacy. And there ought to be intimacy in every relationship, on every level. Physically, spiritually, emotionally, even intellectually. Those things ought to be happening.

But, for intimacy to take place in marriage, one thing is required, and that is the willingness to be vulnerable. And that can be challenging especially if we've been hurt in the past by someone with whom we became vulnerable. But when we come together in marriage, it is meant to be a complete and total sharing of who you are with your spouse.

Everything I am, you see, you have. I am yours and you are mine. That is intimacy. That is the one flesh union that God intended for a marriage relationship. What I have found in the years that I've been pastoring is that very few couples experience that kind of total intimacy. And usually the reason for that is that somewhere along the line, they hurt one another's feelings.

Said something, did something, and rather than resolving that issue properly, it just festers and they then put up walls, and those walls create a diminished sense of intimacy in the relationship. And let me just tell you that diminished intimacy in marriage produces dissatisfaction with marriage. People come to me, and they want marriage counseling, and I know what's going on.

There's a there's a dissatisfaction in their marriage. I'm not satisfied with my marriage. I get it, I know. I've been there, right and I know what causes it. It's almost always caused by a diminished sense of intimacy. We're just not sharing with one another like we used to. And they might not say that, they might just

say, we just don't love each other anymore. But what's going on is intimacy has eroded over a protracted period of time, and they have basically neglected or chosen, I guess is a better word, to no longer be vulnerable with one another, to be no longer intimate.

I'm not going to be open to you because when I do, you step on me. You hurt me. And see, we haven't been able to resolve that and so, we are now going to become roommates, for lack of a better word. God created married couples to be intimate on a total level, meaning every aspect of their relationship. But once again, I find that very few couples are. But can I just tell you here that if that defines your marriage in some way, shape, or form, intimacy can be restored.

And I'm telling you that out of experience, because as I said, Sue and I trounced on one another's feelings to the point where we had every reason to say, I won't let you into my life anymore. But thank God we did not take that course of action and we decided to go again, this time with God's help, and God restored intimacy and He will, and I believe desires, to restore intimacy in marriage if both partners are willing, but you got to get over your fear because fear is what will keep you from intimacy.

Now, I want to end this morning by making a confession of sorts to you and I especially want the husbands to hear me. And this is the confession that I want to make, and I make this as a man who has been married to the same woman for 40 years. My confession is this, I can't do this. This stuff we're reading about here in Ephesians chapter 5, I can't do this.

I don't know how to do this, and what I mean by that is, I mean that Paul, this man, is not man enough. I am not strong enough, I am not courageous enough, I am not smart enough to do what God asks of me, in and of myself, here in Ephesians chapter 5. Now don't get me wrong, I adore my wife and for some strange reason that I can't figure out, she seems to like me too.

But I have confessed in front of her many times as we're praying, I don't have the capability to carry this out apart from the power of the Holy Spirit to enable me to be the husband that she has need of. If there's one thing my failure in marriage taught me is that that's what Paul can do. I tell people I am an expert on marital failure.

All the rest of it comes from God, and it is only by the power of His Spirit, men, that we are enabled to be the husbands that our wives have need of and I think that they even should hear us saying that to the Lord from time to time. I pray

that right in front of my wife when we're sitting on the couch, holding hands and praying.

I just say, Lord, I can't be the man that this woman needs without your help, without your strength and without your power working in my life. I don't have what it takes, but you do, and you can enable me, you can empower me by your strength. Right? And that is such an important thing for us to understand going into this because you see, our calling as husbands is not merely a physical one, it's a spiritual one, and we have been called to this role by God, to protect and to provide and to show love at times when our flesh just doesn't want to be involved.

And so, what's going to make the difference? What's going to... What's going to motivate me to love my wife the way she needs to be loved? It's going to be Jesus you guys. It's going to...don't look at me. It's going to be Jesus. He's the one, He's the One who enables us. In fact, as I look at my marriage now, and I have not been the perfect husband by any stretch of the imagination, but I have very, a lot of hope for the future of my marriage, I mean, we've been together 40 years and I have every expectation that we'll continue to enjoy a wonderful marriage.

But my hope and my confidence is not predicated upon our love for one another. Again, I adore her, and I believe she loves me, but that's not what gives me confidence. My confidence is Jesus, in our marriage, in our hearts, at the center of our relationship, I know that Jesus is the glue that's going to hold us together. I know that my wife loves Him. I know that I love Him.

That's the most important thing we can do for our marriage relationship. It's the most important thing you can do for your marriage relationship. If your marriage is having issues, give those to the Lord and just start loving Him with all of your heart and don't police the other person!

I find this happening all the time. Rather than focusing on my relationship with Jesus, the husband instead will police his wife or she'll police him. Why aren't you doing this? Why are, why is this not happening? This should be going like this and da and all these other things. That's not where your marriage is going to improve.

It's going to improve as each of you stop looking at one another, start looking to Jesus and saying, Lord, make me the spouse that my partner needs. Make me the person this individual really needs. Empower me, strengthen me. You see, that's the key. As you begin to walk out these situations, these issues in your

own life, stop looking to your spouse to make you happy and to meet all your needs.

Look to the Lord, love Him, serve Him, obey Him, and let the Lord do the healing in your marriage that needs to take place. Amen?