Greater Marriage — Delivery Transcript

Colossians 3:18–19 (ESV) · Wes Terry · Sunday, May 7, 2017 · *Greater*

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All right, it's week three of the Greater campaign. We finally get into marriage. If you were with us at the beginning of this campaign, the basic idea of the Greater campaign was to take the victory that everybody says is in Jesus' name, the whole greater life that Jesus said he came to give, and actually experiencing that, not just on a Sunday, not just with Bible answers, but practically speaking, Monday through Friday, on Wednesday and Saturday. How does the greater life actually manifest itself in places like my home and at work and among my most important relationships?

It's really easy for people to get the idea that church stuff is on church day and real life stuff is on Monday through Saturday, and we kind of do church things to get our church world all put together, but our faith is kind of some private thing, distant and detached from what really matters. And the purpose of this campaign was to show you how relevant the gospel really is to your day-to-day life. And so we started with putting off the old and putting on the new. We looked at that the last two weeks, how to take what we used to be the old man, the old woman, and putting to death those vices that undermine any relationship in your life, especially the relationship that you have with your spouse.

Putting things to death like anger and greed and malice and those type things and then putting on virtues such as love and compassion and patience and kindness, long-suffering. And you may be sitting there thinking to yourself, why are we just now getting to marriage? "I don't have a problem with myself. I got a problem with my marriage. I got marriage problems." And if that's your attitude, if you kind of think that we're wasting our time talking about putting off the old and putting on the new, it's likely that the problem in your marriage is you because as I've done ministry only a short amount of time and as I've talked to people who've done ministry for decades, I've come to conclude there's really not a whole lot of marriage issues.

There's a whole lot of single people issues that follow themselves into marriage and therefore the marriage doesn't create the problem but it exposes the problem that already existed. And so if you're kind of thinking, why are we just now getting to marriage? I'm fine with my— I don't need to put off anything. I don't need to put on anything. You might find that the greater life for your marriage comes from doing a little bit of that work, a little bit of introspection, looking at the vices in your life and putting those things to death, and then looking at the life that God has called you to, a life of love and compassion and putting on those virtues.

And it could be that the greater life in your marriage comes through those couple of things. Today though, we're just going to look at about three things in marriage that I think if we would get these three things right, then your marriage would be a greater marriage. So putting aside the essentials that we put off the old man and put on the new, that in order to experience the greater life in our marriage, we've got to see marriage the way that God sees marriage. We've got to have the right perspective.

We need to know what the right goal is, what's the end game, what is this marriage supposed to accomplish, and then we need to use the right methods to accomplish the right goal. And there's no shortage of marriage literature out there and some of what we get from our culture is not exactly what we get from the scripture. And we've got a decision to make this morning. We can either let the Bible, let the Holy Word shape our book on marriage, or as somebody put it, you can let Hollywood shape your approach on marriage.

Hollywood or the Holy Word. It's up to us to make the decision. And what I'm going to encourage us to do this morning is to let the scriptures shape our vision of what marriage is supposed to be. But if we do that, I just need to say right up front that there are some things that the Bible's going to say about marriage that are going to confront you that you may not necessarily like. There are some things that the scripture says about marriage that our culture certainly finds offensive. And so I just want you to hang with me through the potentially offensive parts until we get all the way to the end so that you can really get a full understanding of what the Bible says about marriage.

The last thing I'd say is if you're here today and you're not married, maybe you're recently divorced or maybe you're single but you want to be married. One of the things that I kind of came to as I struggled with talking about a topic like this, you know, because not everybody in our church is married. But as I thought about it, the scriptures were written to groups of people, and Paul talked about marriage in several of his letters, knowing that many of the people in that church were not going to be married.

Same thing in the Old Testament. The prophets would speak to the issue of marriage over and over and over again, knowing good and well that many of the people in that congregation wouldn't be married, many of them would be young, some would be divorced.

There would be just the kind of complexity relationally in that season as there is in this season, and yet the Bible unapologetically addresses things like marriage. And the reason I think that is so is because as the church, we're one body. We're one unit. And even though some of us may be single, some of us may be divorced, some of us may be wanting to get married, the fact that we all as a community have a vision of marriage as God wants it to be, then we're more likely to help the other people in our community experience that kind of life.

And so you may be single, but you just as much need this vision of marriage as does a married person. So I hope that you'll listen to it with that view in mind that I'm part of this church. And therefore I'm part of, I am one of the means that God is going to use among the other people in this church to promote a biblical vision for marriage. The first thing I'd say is if we're going to adopt the right perspective on marriage, and I don't necessarily have a Bible verse on this, I just have personal experience.

And that is that marriage, as God designed it, was not necessarily meant to make you happy, as much as it was meant to make you holy. We will see this in Ephesians chapter 5. We don't have that saying in the scripture, but as I've experienced marriage, my relationship with Audra— the implications of my marriage with Audra more than anything else in my life has exposed things in me, a few things that are pleasant, but the vast majority of the things that marriage has exposed in my life have been weaknesses. Marriage exposes you warts and all.

Does anybody know what I'm talking about? The things when you ended up getting married, something about living with another person, sharing your life with a whole nother person, they see you at your worst, they see you at your best. But they are able to draw things out of you that otherwise never would have been drawn out of you. And God has chosen to use marriage as a vehicle to expose those things in you and to sand them down. My mentor, Pastor David, likes to say that your spouse is God's heavenly sandpaper.

It's kind of hard to think about your spouse as sandpaper, but in a way that's what God has given you your spouse to do is to sand off those rough edges, to freeze off those warts in your life that need to be frozen, and marriage is meant to make you holy, not meant to make you happy. And if you look at Hollywood's vision of marriage versus the Scripture's vision of marriage, you're going to see a contradiction there. Marriage should make you happy. It can make you happy. It can give you incredible joy in life.

But God has chosen it primarily to sanctify you, to make you holy. So let's go ahead and look at the text. We're going to look at two texts this morning. Colossians chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, and then there's a passage in Ephesians that I'd like us to look at. I showed you this last week that Colossians and Ephesians are kind of sister books. They're at the end. They talk about marriage. They both talk about parenting. They both talk about the workplace. They both talk about prayer and living life in an unbelieving world.

And so in order to get the full picture of what the Bible says about marriage, I'd like us to read both texts. I think of Colossians as kind of like the CliffsNotes version of a biblical vision for marriage, and then Ephesians is a little more robust, and so we're going to read both. Let's start with the one in Colossians, starting in verse 18. The text says, Paul says to the Colossian Christians, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them."

Now I know I lost some of you on the word submit, so if so, just hold on to your hat for just a minute. Go with me to Ephesians chapter 5, starting in verse 21. Sometimes we miss out on this. We get caught up on the word submit. We get caught up on the fact that the Bible says to wives to submit. And if you look in Ephesians in chapter 5, verse 21, he actually calls all Christians to submit to one another. In fact, if you have a translation that says submit to one another.

That's actually not an appropriate translation of the Greek New Testament. It should be at the end of a sentence. Verse 21 should read like the ESV: "submitting to one another." The actual beginning part of that sentence is in Ephesians chapter 5 verse 18. It says to be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing songs, encouraging, admonishing one another, and submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. So Paul says, as Christians, we are all called to submit to one another, and then he fleshes out what that looks like in the home.

So he says in verse 22, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord," and here's the reasoning: "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." Now I know we don't talk like that anymore. We don't use headship language. But the word head there is the word kephalē. It just meant kind of like the one who takes responsibility for the home. As the man, according to scripture, God's blueprint for the family. The man is the one who takes responsibility for the spiritual health of that family.

And so since the husband is the head of the family, the spiritual head, the spiritual one who takes responsibility, wives are to submit themselves. And it's not saying for husbands to get their wives to submit. He's telling wives to willingly, voluntarily put yourself underneath the headship or the leadership of your husband, who is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church and is himself its Savior. "Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands." Now again, I get the word submit in our culture.

I mean, it's very offensive, maybe not in church world, but at least culturally speaking, I've seen a ton of people like on CNN and YouTube's got a bunch of it, but people will take a text like this and use it to downplay the authority of the Scripture. They'll say, "How can you trust a book that says, you know, that's so archaic and so patriarchal and so out of date." And so I

get that, but before you dismiss it outright, just read the rest of the text because I think it's informative and should shape how we think about submission and love.

So the word to the wives is wives submit to your husbands. He's the head of the home, the head of the family. And then in Ephesians 5:25, he gets to the husbands. Wives, submit to your husbands; "Husbands," agape, or "love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Now what's fascinating to me, I didn't know this until this week. Nowhere in the Scripture are wives called to agape their husbands. They are called to love their husbands, but never called to love them with agape love. There's one other passage, in Titus,[1] where older women are encouraged to teach the younger women to love their husbands, but the word for love that's used there is the word phileō.

It's not the word agape. So you just can't avoid the fact that yes, Christians are all called to submit to one another, right? But in the home, it fleshes itself out in a unique way, in that wives voluntarily submit themselves to the headship of their husbands. And then husbands voluntarily lay down their lives, they agape their wives, lay down their lives for their wives. They love their wives in the same way that Christ Jesus loved the church. And so it's different. The commands to the wife and the command to the husband are different commands.

Now you could argue, and I think you would be right to say that both men and women submit to one another, and both men and women love one another. There are exhortations about that in the scripture, but I think what this scripture is getting at when it comes to the relationship between husband and wife, that there are differences between a man and a woman and how you relate with your husband or with your wife needs to take into account those particular differences. You need to relate with them in such a way that those weaknesses in your man or in your woman are minimized and those strengths in your man or in your woman are leveraged and put in service for the good of the other person.

So the main point is that whether you're a husband or a wife, men and women are created equal, but they're different. What does the Bible say? Men are from Mars, women are from Venus, right? I'm just kidding. The Bible doesn't say that. But it's true. You don't need a Bible to tell you that men are different than women. What is it? Waffles and bananas? No, waffles and spaghetti. Men are like waffles, women are like spaghetti. You see this in the scripture, which is offensive to our culture. I get that our culture would like to think about gender as a social construct, especially today with the whole bathroom debate.

Can men go into women's bathrooms if they self-identify as a woman? Can they just kind of go in? And the thinking behind that, the worldview behind that is that gender isn't defined by our biology, but gender is defined by whatever we want. So I can decide to be a male one day and I can decide to be a female another day because maleness and femaleness are social

constructs that I get to decide when and where I become a man or a woman. And I humbly would suggest the scripture thinks that's ridiculous.

Scripture would suggest that gender is intrinsically linked to your biology. That there are differences in the genders between a man and a woman. There are differences there that are intrinsically linked to their biology. Now does that mean that all men are super super strong and all women are super, super weak? No. That's not the difference that I'm talking about. There's a more intrinsic difference and we don't have time to delineate out all that they are, but what the Scripture is leveraging here in our text today is that there are differences between a man and a woman, and therefore the way that a husband relates to the wife and the way that a wife relates to the husband, you need to take into consideration those differences and serve them in such a way that their weaknesses are minimized and your strengths are put in service for their benefit.

And so wives, submit to your husbands; husbands, love your wives. And you see the difference thing all the way back in Genesis. Look at chapter 5, verse 31. Paul is going to appeal to Genesis. So Genesis chapter 2, verse 24. This is God's blueprint for marriage. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 31. It says, "A man shall leave his father and mother"— see you later, Mom, not attached to Mom and Dad anymore— "and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So even in Genesis you get this idea that men and women are distinct.

They're different. A man is like a man and a woman is like a woman, but when they get married, those two distinct, different people, they become one flesh. And if you read a little bit earlier in Genesis chapter 2, you see that when God created the man, he gave the man responsibility. Look over the garden, take care of the garden. And then Scripture said, "It is not good that the man should be alone." And that stands out in Genesis. If you're reading it with everything else, you see words like good, very good, good, good, very good, good, good, you know, sun good, moon good, stars good, crawling creatures good, swimming creatures good, and then man not good.

It kind of stands out. What's what's going on with the man? He's not good. And the reason it was not good is because there was not a helper fit for him. There was not a woman corresponding to the man. So what you get is this idea that God created man and it was as if he intentionally left him incomplete. Yes, he was created in the image of God. I'm not saying he was somehow less valuable than the woman, or that he can't somehow be human without the woman, but God created man and brought along the woman because it was only through man and woman being together that they could fully accomplish the mission that God gave to humanity: to have dominion over the earth, to subdue the earth.

He needed Eve to come alongside of him as his helper, as his custom-fit correspondent, so that together they could do what God has called them to do. Now, in saying that, I'm not

saying that if you're single, you're somehow not created in the image of God. A man is created in the image of God. A woman is created in the image of God, irrespective of one another. All I'm saying is, could you imagine a world in which there were only men? That's a terrible world, right? There's no— well, there's a lot of things, aren't there?

I mean it's really really bad. There's no tender loving mercy. There's no kind compassionate stuff. There's no motherly instincts. If you got an ugly mug— so much for having a face that only a mother could love, you know, your ugly mug's never going to be loved. You need women. Or just take vice versa. Take a world in which only women exist. That's kind of crazy to think about too, right? A lot of fighting and all that. Sorry, that was stereotyping, but here's what Scripture's getting at. Men and women together is God's ideal.

Not saying they have to be married, but if we're going to rule the earth, if we're going to have a world in which everything functions as it's supposed to function and humanity is to fulfill everything humanity is supposed to fulfill, then both men and women need to be on the planet, because there are things that a woman can do that a man cannot do, there are things that a man can do that a woman cannot do. There are strengths that a man has that a woman does not have, and there are strengths that a woman has that a man does not have.

And therefore, they need to both be on the earth in order to accomplish the God-given mandate. Am I making sense there? They don't have to be married. They don't have to be together, but they have to both exist. And when you get into marriage, those differences show up. Those differences have to be taken into consideration if you're going to have the greater marriage. And that's why Paul says to husbands, love your wives and wives, respect your husbands. That's what he says in verse 22. Actually, before we get there, look at Ephesians chapter 5, verse 32.

Not only are men and women created different, that's the perspective we need to have. But you get the goal of marriage in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 32. Here's the reason why God created marriage. Paul says that mystery, that one flesh mystery that is appealed to in Genesis and repeated here in Ephesians, that mystery is profound, that man and woman can become one. And then he says, I'm saying that mystery actually refers to the gospel. That it refers to Christ and the church. So what's the right perspective? The right perspective is marriage is meant to make you holy, not happy.

That men and women are created equal and yet they're different. And God's goal of marriage, the reason he created marriage all the way back in the beginning, was to point us, Christian people, non-Christian people, was to point us to a more satisfying relationship, to a deeper joy, which is the relationship that Christ has with his church. Is marriage going to make you happy? You bet. Is marriage going to give you joy? Probably so. But that joy is just a foretaste of the better joy, the greater joy between Christ and the church.

Is that satisfying? Is that relationship with your wife going to be satisfying? And is that relationship in marriage going to satisfy you? Yes. But it's only a pointer, it's a taste of a deep, more deeply satisfying relationship with Christ. So marriage is for the gospel. And you may be sitting there having trouble in your marriage and you're thinking to yourself, could God really be for my marriage? I mean, my marriage is such a shambles. I think God's given up on it. I should give up on it. And the answer to that is no, he has not given up on it because your marriage is a reflection of the gospel.

God is for your marriage because marriage is for the gospel. No one could be more for your marriage than God, because he chose marriage to be the vehicle through which he displays to the world the relationship that Christ has for the church. Unconditional love, unconditional forgiveness. That's the kind of love and submission that a husband and wives are supposed to embody and reflect so that the world can see the gospel. Now the question is how do you do that? If the proper perspective of marriage is that it's to make us holy and not happy, and that men are created men and women are equal but different.

And the goal of marriage is for God to display the gospel through my marriage, then how do you do that? And that's where verse 33 comes in. Look at what he says in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 33. Here are the methods. Here's what you need to do. Summary statement of marriage: "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself"— agape your wife like you would love your own body— "and let the wife see that she respects her husband." Now, the reason I want to spend all of our time on the word respect is because it's a little more palatable than the word submit.

And so many people have taken that word submit and they have twisted it and they've preached this text in such a way that quite frankly I can understand why so many people are hesitant to embrace a Christian view of marriage. They kind of use that as kind of a club to get their wife in check and you know you don't speak and I run the things and you just submit and get in there and make a sandwich or whatever. That's not a biblical picture of submission and if you were in the groups today hopefully you got a different picture of that.

But what you do see at Ephesians chapter 5 verse 33 is a beautiful picture of how both husband and wife can serve one another so that the husband is loving his wife as Scripture calls him to love, and wives are submitting to their husbands as Scripture calls them to submit. And it's through love and respect. Love and respect. Love and respect. Now, I know you're thinking, well, you know, I'm a woman and I want some respect too, right? You thinking that? So I'm not saying women don't need respect. You remember the Aretha Franklin song?

R-E-S-P-E-C-T. You know that was not written by Aretha Franklin. That was actually written by Otis Redding. It was a man's song, and she stole it from him, but that's beside the point. I get that women need respect. I'm not saying women don't need respect. And I get that men

need love. Here's all I'm saying. There are differences between men and women. And when it comes to marriage, there's something about a craving that a man has in the context of marriage that a woman doesn't have. And he craves respect in a marriage in a way that the woman does not.

And the woman craves love in a way that a man does not crave, and in a way that a man just quite frankly isn't very good at giving. That's why you're always frustrated with your man. He's not romantic. He does that. How many of you your man is as romantic and loving and intimate as you want him to be? Don't raise your hands. Okay, the newly married person. Okay. That's true for a while. But eventually, eventually, eventually he's going to kind of become more natural. And naturally men are not as loving as women are and naturally men in marriage crave respect in a way women don't crave it.

It's based on their biology, I think, and that's what the scripture is getting at here. There's actually a book on this by Emerson Eggerichs, really good book. It's called Love & Respect. Go figure. And there's actually a video series on it on our RightNow Media. You know, the thing we give you for free as members of our church. Even if you're a guest today, if you just go on our website and go to Resources and RightNow Media. That video is on there. He has 10 different sessions of how this can happen.

It's really good stuff. The scripture's getting at a difference between men and women, and it's a difference that the reason God calls the man to agape his wife is because the man's not naturally wired that way. He's not as romantic as you want him to be. It's not in his DNA. And so he has to come along. The Lord has to come alongside of the man and say, be filled with the spirit. You need a power at work in you greater than the work that's in you naturally. And now go agape your wife."

And he comes along to the woman. I know the woman's more naturally wired to love the man, be connected, and they, you know, they love to read marriage books together and discuss the weaknesses of their marriage, but men are not necessarily wired that way. And so he comes alongside the woman and the one thing that they're not naturally wired to do, he comes along and says, respect your husbands. And it's based on their differences. He's saying you need a power at work in you that's bigger than yourself. You need a supernatural, Holy Spirit-empowered love and respect.

And when you do that you will see in your marriage something begin to change because you're providing for your spouse something that they crave but they're not experiencing. And to prove this, okay, just take the Scripture right out of it— Scripture, okay, away. Just sociologically speaking, they've done tests on this. And they've tested husbands and wives who have been in incredible arguments, fighting all the time. And they asked the question to both husband and wife, when you were fighting and she said what she said and he did what he did, did you feel more unloved or did you feel disrespected?

Unbelievable percentage, over 80-something percent. Men said they felt disrespected and women said they felt unloved. And not only did they do that study, somebody did another study to try to disprove that study because they didn't agree with it. And same thing. The bigger the poll got, the more, the higher the percentage went. Men felt disrespected and women felt unloved. What is that? That's getting at this biological difference. It's a difference in the gender. Men crave respect and women crave love. Think about your fights that you've had with your spouse. If you've been married more than, I don't know, a couple hours, you've had a fight.

So just think back to that fight. And, well, I mean, the issue's not the issue. You were fighting, okay, you opened your Christmas present and she got you a blue jean jacket and you didn't respond the way you were supposed to respond. You didn't really show your appreciation. You just said I like it. But you should have said, oh, I really, really, really like it. But you didn't do that. And so she's mad at you. And then you're kind of mad at her because you're like, who are you to say that I don't like my blue jean jacket?

I like my blue jean jacket. I said I like my jacket. That should be enough. And boom, boom, boom, you start to fight and all of a sudden it escalates, it becomes something big, big, big, big, big. And you think to yourself, even while it's happening, are we fighting about the blue jean jacket or are we fighting about something else? So the issue doesn't seem to be the issue. And what is the issue is love and respect. He felt disrespected, you felt unloved, because he probably reacted to you when you challenged him.

He reacted in a way that was unloving. And when a woman reacts without respect, a man reacts to that disrespect without love, and when that man reacts without love, the woman reacts again without respect. And when the woman reacts without respect, the man again reacts without love and it's like a vicious cycle. It kind of tailspins. More disrespect, more unloving, more unloving, more disrespect. And they call it the crazy cycle because when you're on it, you feel like going crazy. You're thinking to yourself, insanity is defined as doing the same thing and expecting a different result, and we keep doing the same thing, having the same arguments, and nothing's changing.

And all that's needed, all Paul is saying is, husbands, love your wives. Respond lovingly instead of coming down harshly. Colossians: be loving towards your spouse and do not be harsh with them. They need love. They need intimacy. They need tenderness. And wives don't react without respect. Now you don't think it's disrespectful. You're not wired like a man. But he perceives it as disrespect and so respond differently and you'll be amazed at what happens. When a wife responds with respect, That respect motivates and energizes the love of a man. And the love of a man demonstrated towards his wife motivates and energizes the respect of a woman.

And instead of it being a crazy cycle, you start to see this energizing cycle take place in your marriage, and all of a sudden what used to be terrible fights become wonderful discussions. Because— husbands, love your wives, and wives, respect your husbands. It's a need. It's a need that they have. Each one of you. It doesn't mean they're better or worse than you. You're just different. That's why you're having the fights that you're having. You're different. And scripture is trying to show you in light of those differences, wives respect your husbands, husbands love your wives.

Now, in the video he gives particular ways that you can do this, and I don't have time to cover that right now. So you can go to your small group and get it, or you can watch it on the internet, or go to Love and Respect. Go to the RightNow Media page on our website and, excuse me, type in Love and Respect. There's 10 sessions. Really, really good stuff. I watched it this week and I felt terrible, you know, as a husband. I was like, man, I'm really not as good at this as I thought I was.

So you can do that and start serving your spouse in a way that they need. But let's say you don't do that. Let's say you don't go over the things. Here's one question you can use, something you can take away today. One question. If you'll ask this one question. I think it'll change your marriage. And it's not a question that just applies to marriage. This question applies to all the relationships we're going to look at over the next couple of weeks. And the question is, what can I do to serve you?

Or you might just ask, how can I help? Husband comes home from work, had a terrible day, he's tired, he wants to veg out, check out, and instead of doing that, he comes home, he looks his spouse in the eye, and he asks himself the question, how can I help? What can I do to serve you? And vice versa. The wife sees the husband come in. The wife's had a terrible day. The kids have been driving her nuts, or the kid has been driving her nuts. And she wants nothing more than to just blah, blah, blah, tell everything about her day to the man.

And she sees that he's had a pretty rough day. Instead of doing what she naturally wants to do, self-centeredly wants to do, she asks the question, how can I help? What can I do to serve you? In asking that question, what you're doing is you're basically reminding yourself marriage is not about me. It's about God and the gospel. It's about me taking all my strengths and gifts and abilities and leveraging those for the sake of my spouse. It's about seeking their welfare and their good. And so you do that by asking yourself the question, what can I do to serve you?

Let's say you don't believe the whole love and respect thing. Just take that out of the water. Just ask yourself the question, based on who my spouse is, based on their unique needs and the way that they're wired, what can I do to serve them? How can I bless them? And you'll be amazed at how that one question will revolutionize your relationship. Ask it. Husbands

particularly you should ask it. One of the things that Ephesians 5 gets at that we didn't have time to cover is that a husband is to love his wife as his own body, his own flesh.

And so that means you take initiative, you take care of yourself, you brush your own teeth, you take a shower, I hope. And you do the same kind of taking initiative in your marriage. That means you ask the questions. That means you creatively come up with ways to initiate in romance. You say, well, I'm not good at romance. Well you're not supposed to be good at romance, but you can take initiative. There's a thing called G-O-O-G-L-E. It's a Google, you know, romance. There's a ton of articles on it. I know, because I've done it.

And she doesn't know that, so don't tell that to her, but take initiative in your family. Ask the question, what can I do to serve you? Imagine how different your marriage would be if you just asked that one question. Amen. You're the kephalē, you're the head. That means it's up to you to start this process. What can I do to serve you? It applies to your sex life as well. You want to hear a joke? I know we don't have much time. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. I'll read you this joke.

You can go ahead and turn there. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Starting in verse 3, Paul tells the funniest joke. It's not really a joke. The first time I read this text, I thought, well, what does that mean? You know, how does that settle the debate on Tuesday night? But here's what he says. Talking about husbands and wives in their sex life: "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights." And if you don't know what that word means, you're going to have to ask someone else. Sounds like prison break, right?

It just means, you know, give your wife what she needs sexually. "And likewise the wife to her husband." And look, get this: "For the husband does not have authority—" I'm sorry— "the wife does not have authority over her own body." Now that is the most culturally insensitive verse in the Bible. "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." And some guys are like, yeah, not as culturally insensitive for them. And then he says in verse 5, don't deprive one another unless it's to pray.

Basically pray and fast. I remember when I was in seminary, I had a buddy. His name was Drew. And I was over at their house all the time. And so I got to see them at their best and their worst. And I remember them having a terrible fight. I mean, it made me uncomfortable. Well, that's not too hard to do. Anyway, it was a really bad fight. And I remember going over there the next day and things were really hot. They were still really tense. And Christa looked at me, she goes, Drew and I are fasting.

And she was getting at this text that they were, you know. Anyway, that's not the joke. The joke is, the joke is when it comes to sex, husbands don't have authority over their own body, the wives do, and wives don't have authority over their own body, the husbands do. And so

you've got to give each other your conjugal rights. So what that comes down to is on Tuesday night, one person wants to have sex, the other person doesn't want to have sex, so who wins? And the answer is yes. The answer is they do.

Well which they? They do. Because you don't have authority over your own body, and they don't have authority over their own body. See, you're asking the wrong question. Who wins? That's the question of how can I serve myself? Marriage has never been about you, it's always been about the other person. It's about how can I leverage everything I am, even my sexuality? How can I leverage it in service to them? Because marriage is about reflecting the gospel to the world. It's about reflecting the love that Christ has for the church to my spouse.

The answer is they do. What can I do to serve you? Which, by the way, is why pornography is so devastating. It's the quintessential example of self-serving sex. Sex was not designed to be self-serving, it was designed to be self-giving. And the best sex, you want greater sex, the best sex is sex that is self-giving. It's serving the other person instead of satisfying your own wants and your own lusts. So pornography is devastating, premarital sex is devastating because ladies, if you're with a man who won't be with you unless you sleep with him, he wants all the benefits of the physical sexuality and none of the baggage.

He wants all of the physical pleasures and none of the relational complexity. He's not ready to be a man, not according to Scripture. Because sex is about giving yourself fully. And that's why sex is meant for marriage. It's how can I serve you? What can I do to serve you? Self-giving, not self-satisfying. That's the ticket to the greater life. It's understanding marriage was meant to make me holy, not happy. So I'm not happy, but God is making me holy in my unhappiness. And I know that doesn't feel great, but that gives purpose to your pain, doesn't it?

It's not meaningless pain. It's not that I made a mistake and I married the wrong guy. Everybody marries the wrong guy. Everybody marries the wrong woman because we're all sinners. There is no perfect spouse. We're all imperfect, sinful people. But in that imperfection, God is using those problems and those weaknesses to make you holy. And you're different. And you have to embrace that. You can't expect your husband to love you the way he's naturally wired to love you because you're going to hate that. And you can't expect your spouse to speak man code.

She doesn't know man code. She wasn't raised with man code. That was in the locker room. She wouldn't get to go to the locker room. You're different. And you need to understand those differences and then get over yourself, build a bridge, cry a river, get over yourself, and serve your spouse in the way that they need to be served, because it's not about you. It's about them. What can I do to serve you? And that's the pathway to greater marriage. Now, some of you are thinking, well, you don't know who I'm married to.

He's the most unlovely man on the planet. And first off, you picked him. Okay, so there was something that was lovely about him at one point or another, so maybe just try to remember that. Because you could have thrown the brakes on that thing and you didn't. But the other thing is, you notice that little phrase that says, wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord? Do you see that? As to the Lord. Which means I'm not submitting to him. I'm not respecting him because he's worthy or respectable. And in probably most cases, he's not.

He may be the worst, most unlovely person on the planet. But it's about your relationship with Christ. The reason you're relating with your husband as you do isn't because of him, it's because of Christ in you. So out of reverence for Christ, submit to your husband. So you say, well, you may be a husband and say, well, my wife's the most nagging, disrespectful, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And again, you picked her. Okay. Maybe you thought she was pretty, and now you're reaping the whirlwind. But you married her, and marriage is lifelong, even if you made a mistake.

And your love to her is out of reverence for Christ. Christ loved you and you were a piece of trash. And you were rebelling against him, and you were the most unlovely person on the planet, and he still laid down his life in service to you. And all he's asking you to do is as a way of showing your wife how much I love her, how much I love the church, I'm asking you to love her. I know she's not worthy of it. It's not about her. It's about me and you.

It's about me and you showing her something about the gospel. It's about me and you showing her friends something about the gospel because the gospel is way bigger than your marriage. Eternity is way bigger than your little life together, and this is about eternity. So love her, even if she doesn't feel lovely. And you say, well, how do I do that? Well, you do that by the power of the Holy Spirit. Do you notice in verse 21 I told you that it wasn't a main verb. It doesn't say submit to one another.

It says submitting to one another. Yeah, see it up there. If you track that verse all the way up to its first main verb, it's in verse 18, chapter 5, verse 18, and it says, don't get drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. And then he says, admonishing one another, teaching one another, submitting to one another. So this submitting to one another is a fruit of being filled with the Holy Spirit. So you want to know how do you submit to your husband? How do you love your wife?

You do it in the power of the Holy Spirit. You won't do it naturally. Naturally, you're not wired to be loving men, as loving as she wants. And wives, you're not naturally wired to show them respect. It's not in your DNA. You're more about connecting and whatever women are about. I mean, I don't even know. I'm not a woman. You're wired naturally to do a certain thing. And so scripture is coming alongside of you and saying, you need something outside yourself. You need a supernatural power. You need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to love your spouse and respect them.

How do you get the Holy Spirit? Is that the question? Well, you remember last week we talked about the difference between Colossians and Ephesians? Colossians says, let the word of Christ dwell in you, and then Ephesians says be filled with the Spirit. The way you get the spirit in you is by getting the gospel in you. The deeper you go into the gospel— meditating on the love of Christ, seeing his sacrifice for you, renewing the joy of your salvation, going deeper and deeper and deeper into the fact that you were a sinner without a cause, you are a rebel, and that Christ came and rescued you even though you were undeserving.

The deeper you go into the gospel, the more full of the Spirit you will become, and the more full of the Spirit you become, the more effective you will be in making your marriage great. It's not natural. The marriage books aren't going to help you. The tips and the tricks and the techniques won't matter unless you're a person filled with the Holy Spirit. That's why weeks one and two are so important. Put off the old, put on the new. This is what a spirit-empowered man and woman looks like. So maybe this morning you just need to go there.

You may be here this morning and you're not a Christian and you can't have the Holy Spirit if you're not in Christ. And so this morning for the first time, maybe you come to a place where you repent of your sins, you put your faith in Jesus, and begin a journey of loving your spouse in a new way, respecting your spouse in a new way. Because you're filled with the Spirit. A lot of you are Christian people, you've been Christians, and your marriage is getting weak. It's not what it used to be.

And the reason is because you've pursued a biblical goal without biblical methods. You're demanding that your husband talk woman to you, and husband, you're demanding that your wife talk man to you, and you're different. And so honor your differences and ask yourself the question, what can I do to serve you? What does it look like for me to love you as Christ loved the church? What does it look like for me to respect you as Scripture calls me to do? And just try it for 30 days. God didn't give us this passage of scripture to make our marriages worse.

So just try it. See if it gets a little bit better. And let today be a starting point. Sermons don't change people's lives. I get that. But sermons can start a process in you where you decide I'm not doing this anymore. We're going to take a different direction. And so let it do that. If it means filling out a decision card and talking with the pastor later in the week. Or maybe saying, we're going to go get some counseling starting next week. Let it do something, but let's not leave this place without responding to the Lord.

Let's stand as Daniel leads us.

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1. Transcript note: spoken as "in 2 Timothy"; the passage where older women are to train the younger women to love their husbands (philandros, a phil- word) is Titus 2:3–4. Source: Titus 2:3–4 (ESV). ↩