

MBC - 1/21/2018 - Pastor Doug Thompson
"Husbands Love Your Wives"
(Husband School)
Ephesians 5:22-33

- Ephesians 5:22-33 ²²Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so 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. ²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰because 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." ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

A man died and went to heaven. When he got there, he saw two signs above two different lines. One sign said: "ALL MEN WHO HAVE BEEN DOMINATED BY THEIR WIVES, STAND HERE." Under this sign there was a line of men that stretched off through the clouds into infinity.

The second sign said: "ALL MEN WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN DOMINATED BY THEIR WIVES, STAND HERE." Underneath this sign stood one man. So the new guy in heaven ran over to this guy, grabbed his arm and said, "Hey man, what's your secret, how did you do it? That other line has millions of men and you are the only one standing in this line."

The guy looked around with a puzzled expression and said, "Uh, I'm not really sure . . . My wife just told me to stand here . . ."

Guys, which line would you be in?

Isn't it true that many men are either dominated by their wives - or they sinfully *dominate* their wives? And both types might think they are being biblical. Some men try to avoid all conflict by being nice, docile, deferring to their wives and not rocking the boat - they call that *loving* their wives. Other husbands control their wives and manipulate them verbally and emotionally - sometimes even physically - and they call that *leading* their wives.

Neither one is biblical, and neither one is a picture of Christ's relationship with His Bride, the Church. Men, this morning we're going to see from the Scriptures what biblical headship looks like. And it looks like loving your bride as sacrificially, consistently, and intensely as Jesus loves His bride. It means *love* - nothing more and nothing less.

And to begin, let's review what we saw last Lord's day about the role God has designed for your wife. You both need to understand each other's roles to understand your own, and to encourage each other and complement each other. So men, if you didn't take notes last week, take some this morning.

- The wife's role is stated in v.22: *submit to your own husband, as to the Lord* - meaning, as an expression of her loving submission to Christ. In v.24, it says, "as the church submits to Christ." That clearly implies an authority/submission relationship, but it's a

joyful, loving, voluntary submission - if it's anything like the way a child of God submits to Christ, right?

Biblical submission is a positive thing! For the wife it means that she devotes herself to affirming and honoring and supporting her husband in his role as the head of the home. This goes clear back to creation when God took one of Adam's ribs and made a wife for him to be his *equal*, and to be his *helper*. Wives, your role comes from heaven. You were designed by God to *complement* your husband, and to *complete* him: when Adam saw Eve, remember what he said? *"This at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh!" Finally, my equal!*

So ladies - and men - this is far from being a passive doormat. And it's not just being *compliant*: "Yes dear, whatever you say dear. You're the man!" That's not loving your husband or helping him. God designed your submission to *empower* your husband, not just *enable* him.

- To complement and complete your husband requires that you bring all you've got to the table to help him: every gift and resource, your wisdom, experience, and intelligence - and your "unique female perspective." Us husbands don't understand that - we just know that we really need it!

I think we can make this simple: The heart of biblical headship is love - and the heart of biblical submission is love! If you don't know how to submit to your husband in a situation - ask what it means to *love* him in that situation! And do what love requires! But you are not fulfilling your biblical role as his "equal helper" if you are just a mousy rubber stamp!

I want us to think about this: if submission means loving your husband, then sometimes submission says *no* because love says *no*—

- He struggles with alcoholism and tells you to buy him a bottle of liquor. Love says 'no,' but says it lovingly. It's never loving to enable your husband in something wrong or harmful.
- If he beats you, you forgive him in your heart - and then you have him arrested. Because it wouldn't be loving (or legal) to cover his sin and enable him to continue to harm you.

I'm saying, that *is* submission, because you are fulfilling your role to love him as his *equal helper*.

And we saw that submission to *any* human authority has its limits. Out of submission to Christ, you are not to obey your husband if he asks you to do something sinful, or prohibits you from doing something Christ commands you to do.

- We have an example in the Bible of a wife who refused to submit - do you remember Vashti in the book of Esther? Her hubby was Ahasueres, the King of Persia. One night he was throwing a party for his buds, and after he'd had too much to drink, he ordered his wife to come to his party so he could show her off. He told her to appear before them *"wearing her royal crown."* Some Jewish scholars believe that meant, *only* wearing her royal crown! So she refused to submit - and if that's what he was asking her to do, it was right for her to refuse.

God gives no authority to husbands to mistreat their wives in the name of headship! That is the *opposite* of Christlike headship. It's a perversion. Over and over in Scripture we see that God has a special place in His heart for those abused by those in positions of power over them. And He has a special spot in hell for those who abuse them: *"But whoever causes one*

of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.” Matthew 18:6 (NASB95)

So now let’s look at the role that God has assigned to the husband. It’s called headship, and it we can sum it up in two words: Not power and control. But responsibility and love.

I. Headship means responsibility.

Look with me at v.23: *For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church.* Paul sums up the husband’s job description in the marriage in one word: *headship*.

But notice that this isn’t a command, it’s just a statement of fact. Husbands are nowhere *commanded* to be the head of their wives. God simply says they are. Men, you might be faithful, godly, loving heads, or abusive and absent heads, but every husband is in a position of *inescapable headship*. And that means inescapable responsibility and accountability to God.

Guys, that’s a serious and sobering position to be in! From the moment you say “I do,” God says, “And you’d better!” Marriage means taking on your shoulders, responsibility for your family before God. You say, “Does that mean I’m responsible for the actions of my wife and kids?” You might not be at fault, but yeah,, you’re responsible. “The buck stops with you.”

- Think about the very first marriage: Who was the first to eat the forbidden fruit? Eve. But when they had both eaten and ran off to hide from God, what did God call out? *“Adam, where are you?”* Because God had appointed Adam to be responsible for the spiritual condition of the family. Adam never should have allowed Eve to be tricked by the serpent - where was he when all this was going on? He was just standing around with his hands in his pockets. . . well, he didn’t have pockets, but you understand. He should have been there, as Eve’s head, to protect his wife. Instead, Eve took the leadership, she made the decision to disobey God and Adam followed his wife into sin.

So the sin that led to the downfall of the entire human race, was due to a reversal of the roles that God designed for a husband and his wife. It all goes back to Adam abdicating his headship in his marriage. But God still held Adam responsible, didn’t He? Read Romans 5, and you see that it’s because of Adam’s sin, not Eve’s, that we all inherit original sin.

Adam wasn’t being nice by listening to his wife in this case - he was being weak. When God was passing out the curses, what did He say to Adam? (Gen.3:17) *This is “because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree . . .”* And later, Abraham repeated Adam’s mistake—

- Gen.16:2 - When Sara couldn’t have children she told Abram to get with her servant Hagar and have a child with her. Bad idea. Bad consequences. What does it say? *“and Abram listened to the voice of Sarai!”* The ESV footnote says the implication is that Abram *obeyed* his wife - instead of the other way around.

Men, it’s easy to get discouraged and start thinking, “Hey, I’ve tried to steer this ship, and the crew isn’t cooperating! I give up. They have to answer to God.” Yes, they do, but so do you. God still holds you responsible for your wife and kids, the way He did with Adam. Ask yourself what you are avoiding right now in your home: some hard decision you need to make; maybe it’s a discipline issue; a financial issue; maybe it’s an issue between you and your wife, and you haven’t taken hold of the wheel. Guys, along with your responsibility, God will give all

the grace you need to carry out your duty. So step up to the plate. In the Spirit's power, do the hard stuff. *His grace will be sufficient to His calling.*

II. Headship means submission - *yours*.

- Eph 5:24 Now *as* the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

Husbands love this verse. They have it memorized: their wives have to submit to them. Now bring me my pipe and slippers . . .

Guys, look at this passage and let me ask you a question: who is the church in this verse? You! If you are a believer, you are part of Christ's church, Christ's bride. What this means is that as a Christian husband, you are a *bride* before you are a *bridegroom*! So husbands, let's read it again: "*Now in the same way as (circle 'as') you (underline 'you') submit to Christ - so also (in the same way) your wives should submit to you.*"

Oh my goodness. This means that your wife should be able to look at the way you love and follow Christ and see a pattern for the way she is to love and follow you. You are to *model* submission for her by the way you submit to Christ. Isn't that what it says?

*The most common question I hear from wives is, "So what does it mean to submit? What does that look like?" Well according to this passage, it should look like the way your husband is submitting to Jesus Christ. Men, can your wives learn how to submit to you by watching how you follow Jesus, and seek to please Him in everything you do?

- Men, what a position of influence God has put you in! You don't need to preach to your wife about submission, or give her books on it. You can *show* her - and at the same time, you're showing the kids what joyful obedience to authority looks like.

Men, job #1, as a husband and father, is just to love and follow Jesus. Nothing will impact your marriage and family like your own walk with God. Headship means responsibility, it means your submission to Christ, but at the very heart of your headship is love.

III. Headship means love.

Now I said that the heart of a wife's submission is to *love* her husband. Well the heart of a husband's headship is to *love* his wife. How does Jesus do His headship?

- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, *as* Christ loved the church . . .

Christ exercises His headship by *loving* His church. And that's how you do headship - love your bride the way Christ loves His bride - and if you are part of His bride, then it makes it really simple: Godly headship is loving your wife the same way Christ loves - *you*. Do you see that? So how does Jesus love you?

A. *Unconditionally.*

Why are you a part of Christ's bride? Paul tells us in—

- Eph 1:4 even as *he chose us* in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

He didn't choose you *because* you were holy and blameless, but *so that you would be* holy and blameless. It's not a *because of* love, it's an *in spite of* love! "*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

- Guys, God's love for you is not performance-based. It's choice-based. He *chose* to love you as He loves His own Son. His love for you isn't diminished or diluted by your ongoing sins or your constant unfaithfulness to Him. It never changes, it never fails - His love toward you is a mighty flood, an unquenchable fire, and an immovable mountain.

So choose to love your wife the same way. Love her in spite of her sins, when she isn't particularly attractive—when she mismatches your socks, and misplaces your favorite tool. She should never worry that she has to *earn* your love anymore than you worry that you have to earn Christ's love. You know that you can count on His love for you, day in, day out. Does your wife know that she can they count on your love like that?

B. Sacrificially.

- v.25 As Christ loved the church and *gave* Himself up for her.

He died for her. That's how He loved her. That's how He loved *you*, if you're a Christian. So headship means that you lay down your life for your wife. Probably not literally, but maybe. It certainly means that you willingly die daily to sacrifice your own desires to serve her, even if you never have to take a bullet for her.

Rachel's husband Evan lost his first wife, Danielle to cancer. But he was by her bedside right to the end. He wrote this—

- "There are men who love the idea of being the leader. There are women who really chafe under the notion that the husband is the head of the house. What both groups fail to grasp is that in Christianity, the Leader dies. Christ is the head of the church. Christ was nailed to the cross for his bride. That is the only marriage model for Christians. I don't hear a lot of men complaining about biblical gender roles. I think there isn't much complaining because too many emphasize the wife-submitting part but not the man-dying part."

It's all about following Jesus. We see our Lord washing His disciples' dirty feet, and then we see Him washing their dirty souls with His own blood. He put them ahead of Himself to the point of dying in their place. So getting really practical, wouldn't it mean that *you* do the hard stuff, the heavy lifting, the dirty, smelly, gross, scary stuff? I really don't understand any husband who thinks that his wife should do that stuff instead of him. Did Jesus ever say, "Serve Me!" No, "*The Son of came not to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.*"

I remember when Dustin and I went to Uganda and I was preaching to pastors and their wives about marriage. Uganda is very patriarchal. They have billboards up in Kampala encouraging husbands not to beat their wives - seriously. So Greg Reed and I were trying to teach what the Scriptures say about sacrificial headship to these husbands. We kept holding up our Bibles and saying, "The Bible overrules your culture, here in Uganda, and where we live, in California!"

So in one session I was telling the men that there is nothing in Scripture that says that men can't help their wives with the household chores. Dustin remembers, the wives stood up and were shouting hallelujah! We almost started a riot! The men were looking at each other and shaking their heads. At one point I said, "I know that you are used to

your wives working hard all day, then cooking your meal at night, and then cleaning up all the mess and doing all the dishes, but I'm telling you that you should die to self and help your wife with the dishes!"

I expected more of a response from the men, but they just kinda sat there. So after the session I asked Geoffrey my translator why the men didn't react more to what I was said. He said, "Oh, because I didn't tell them. Men don't do dishes in Uganda!"

Guys, your wife will know you love her when you sacrifice what is costly to *you*, to serve her. She knows in a second when you are just doing what is easy and cheap. But she will see your love in your sacrifice.

Now the opposite of this is the warped idea that because God has appointed *you* to be the head of your wife, *you* are entitled to get your way in the home. The walls should be painted the color you like, you should get to choose where to go on vacation, what restaurant to go to, big decisions, little decisions, are all yours to make - because you are the head.

Men, that's the *opposite* of the way God calls you to treat own bride! Jesus never treats His Bride like that—

- Romans 15:2-3 ²Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. ³For Christ did not please himself!"
- Romans 12:10 ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Doesn't that mean - all things being equal - to bend to your wife's preferences instead of your own? What . . .do I have to give you the Greek word? Die to your own desires and please your wife. That should be your default setting. And wives, guess what? You are to do the same! But doesn't that turn into Chip and Dale: "You first - no, I insist, you first - oh no, you must go first! . . ." No, it results in a truckload of happiness as you both try to outserve each other out in love.

- Twice this last week, Janice practically argued with me because she wanted me to have something I didn't think I needed, but she wanted me to be happy! That's the kind of wife I have!

Men, there is no love without sacrifice; without dying to self for the sake of your wife.

- When we heard the news that Janice had cancer. . . I had an *overwhelming* desire to take her cancer. I knew it wasn't possible or rational but I cried out to God, "God, there has to be some way that I can go through this instead of my wife! God, take it from her and give it to me!"

C. Exclusively.

- Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for *her*.

For *her* - His Bride. Not for everyone. He purchased a Bride for Himself by His blood. Do you hear some godly jealousy here? There is. Jesus says, "I am beloved and she is Mine. I lay down My life to get her for Myself, and nothing will ever separate her from My love."

Men, you are to love your wife the same way: *exclusively* - you *exclude* all others from the kind of affection and passion you have for her. She's your one and only. 'Til death do you part. And yes, it's a jealous love, it's a fire! You're protective of her. You wouldn't think of sharing her with another man. And you wouldn't think of sharing the love you have for her with another woman.

And you have to work on that! You need boundaries, and rules, and protections in place to guard your marriage. You can't be naïve and unguarded.

You need to *vigilant* to guard your heart, and your eyes, and your thoughts. Your wife should be as confident of your faithfulness to her as she is confident of *Jesus'* faithfulness to her. Guys, if your wife can't say that, you have some work to do to convince her. But you can get everything else right, and if you blow it here, you have failed to love your wife as Christ loves His church.

Awhile back a man called me. His marriage was in shambles because his wife had caught him sending flirtatious texts to another woman late at night. I had them both come in to see me. His wife was a beautiful, godly woman, great mom, and she had been a great wife. She was willing to forgive him. I said to the husband, "What are you thinking? Why would you throw all of this away?" He said, "I don't know why I did it. It doesn't make sense. I love my wife so much." I said, "Then *act* like it! Prove it to her! Stop this relationship with this other woman, cold turkey." He said he would.

A few months later I got a call from this man telling me that he hadn't ended the relationship and a few days earlier he met up with this woman and slept with her. His wife found out, kicked him out and said she was going to file for divorce. He said, "Doug, I don't get it! This other woman isn't worth it. I love my wife!"

I said, "*Apparently not.*" Love is as love does (Forrest Gump)

Paul's simple way to love your wife—

How do you love your wife? Look at Jesus, study Him, follow Him. But I think that it's kinda funny that Paul then dumbs it way down - for the men! - to put it in terms they can understand. "Men, how do you love your wives?" **A:** the way you love yourself!

- Eph 5:28-30 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

Guys, you all take care of yourselves. You've nailed that one! When you are hungry, you eat, when you are thirsty, you drink. When you are tired, you rest. When you itch—you scratch. Even in public. Now simply devote the same energy and time and creativity to meeting the needs of your wife.

- You can program yourself so that your own needs trigger you to think about your wife's needs: e.g. "I'm hungry, maybe my wife is hungry; I'm cold, maybe she's cold." "I've been under a lot of stress - hey, maybe she's been under stress. . . I've been feeling neglected and unappreciated - maybe she's been feeling the same way."

This is just the golden rule, isn't it? Treat her the way you would have her treat you. And then Paul even brings this back to Jesus - we are His body, and He cares for His own body. He nourishes and cherishes us. Men, do the same for your wife. You are one with her. Love her as yourself.

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There's so much more we could say this morning - I mentioned that I want you to come to Sunday School next week with your questions about how all of this fleshes out, but let me wrap it up by talking about what headship looks like in real life when push comes to shove and you and wife don't see eye to eye, but you have to make a decision.

Let me say a couple things here: If you are both seeking to love and serve one another, you're still going to have disagreements, but they won't turn into arguments because you are seeking to give preference to one another in honor. You will both listen and respect each other.

- And if you are doing that, it will be a *very rare thing* for you as a husband to pull rank and make a decision that your wife is strongly against. And if you do it, you only do it out of love for her, not to get your own way. Remember, your authority is always and only for the purpose of serving love - not getting your way.

And Janice pointed something out: When the husband says to his wife, "Woman, you need to submit," something's wrong in that marriage. It could be that the wife isn't fulfilling her role, or it could be that the husband is abusing his. But the wife's submission should happen as naturally as the husband's loving headship. Over the course of 40 years of marriage, I could probably count on one hand the number of times I've overruled my wife and said, "Honey, sweetie - lambie-pie. . . we need to do this."

Bottom line, if you both love each other the way Jesus loves you, you will rarely even talk about your roles. You will just love and serve each other and defer to each other. Let me close with a great story that Kathy Keller tells about she and her husband, Tim Keller.

"In the late 1980s, our family was comfortably situated in a very livable suburb of Philadelphia where Tim held a full-time position as a professor. Then he got an offer to move to New York City to plant a new church. He was excited by the idea, but I was appalled. Raising our three wild boys in Manhattan was unthinkable! Not only that, but almost no one who knew anything about Manhattan thought that the project would be successful. I also knew that this would not be something that Tim would be able to do as a nine-to-five job. It would absorb the whole family and nearly all of our time.

It was clear to me that Tim wanted to take the call, but I had serious doubts that it was the right choice. I expressed my strong doubts to Tim, who responded, "Well, if you don't want to go, then we won't go." However, I replied, "Oh, no, you don't! You aren't putting this decision on me. That's abdication. If you think this is the right thing to do, then exercise your leadership and made the choice. It's your job to break this logjam. It's my job to wrestle with God until I can joyfully support your call." (That's a gutsy wife - but she was absolutely right!)

Tim made the decision to come to New York City and plant Redeemer Presbyterian Church. The whole family, my sons included, consider it one of the most truly "manly" things he ever did, because he was quite scared, but he felt a call from God. At that point, Tim and I were both submitting to roles that we were not perfectly comfortable with, but it is clear that God worked in us and through us when we accepted our gender roles as a gift from the designer of our hearts."

- Ephesians 5:32-33 ³²This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.