



Living For the Glory of God, Part 3: Marriage For the Glory of God

Series: *Philippians – To Live Is Christ*

Ephesians 5:22-33; I Peter 3:1-7 January 3, 2016

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Happy New Year, beloved. With the Christmas season over, we are going to finish up the sermon series that we had going in Paul's letter to the Philippians and in particular, the fleshing out and the application of Philippians 4:20, where Paul writes: **"To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen."** (Philippians 4:20, ESV) This doxology at the end of this letter serves as a climax and a concise summary of everything that has come before it. It sets the direction for the whole of our lives as Christians and it is worthy of real contemplation and meditation. How do we, in the whole of our lives, bring glory to God? So now, when everyone is making New Year's resolutions, let's make one that matters. Martin Luther said: **"Resolved: that every man should live to the glory of God. Resolved second: that whether others do this or not I will."**

Let me take a moment to remind you of where we have been and then to tell you where we are going over the next few weeks. You remember that we began by making the point that there are really only two ways of living in this world. You and I will either live for the glory of God or we will live for our own glory...

And then we made the point that, as those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, we are no longer our own, but have been redeemed and purchased by the death and resurrection of Christ for us. And for that reason, our allegiance to Him, who saved us, must take precedence over every other loyalty...

Next, we said that the fountainhead for a God-glorifying life is boasting in the cross. Paul gloried in Christ and he saw every blessing that he enjoyed, everything good and everything bad that God turns for the good of his redeemed children, as being purchased for him by Christ on the cross and that should be our heart as well...

Then we talked about what living for God's glory looks like in our individual lives --the crux of it all. We saw that if we want to know how to live lives that glorify God, we need to study Jesus and how He lived, and then we must strive, by the power of the Holy Spirit in us and the grace given to us, to walk as He walked. There are no shortcuts. That's where we have been.

And now, here is what we are going to do over the next several weeks. Today, having talked about our individual lives, now we are going to look at how Scripture describes a marriage that adorns the gospel and brings praise to God. Then next week, we are going to look at what it looks like to have a home that is rooted in the glory of God. After that we are going to take a few weeks to establish what it looks like for us as a church, together, to be committed to bringing glory to God. And that will serve to set a vision for us, as a church, for the next year, two years, really until Jesus comes back. Then, around the beginning of February, we are going to start a sermon series in the letter to the Hebrews. Ok? So that's where we have been and where we are going.

Today we are going to look at how we bring glory to God in our marriages. And to do that I want us to look at two passages in particular, Ephesians 5:22-33, and then Peter 3:1-7. So let's stand and read these texts together and then we will pray and dig in. **Read the texts.**

As we talk about marriage this morning, let me start by saying just a few things at the outset. First, cultivating a marriage that brings glory to God is an ongoing pursuit and process for all of us. Gretch and I will have been married this year for 25 years, and as we have shared with many of you, we didn't begin our marriage firmly founded on Christ. We had no clue how Christian marriage was to look and how it was to be enjoyed. We had no idea how to be married. We have endured a lot of growing pains over the years, and even now, we are still learning and growing in our desire to have a God-honoring and God-pleasing marriage. So I speak to you today as a fellow pilgrim and not as someone who has it all figured out. That's the first thing, ok?

Second, there is a great temptation for all of us to settle for what I call functional dysfunction – that is – to be satisfied if things aren't blowing up or there is some mutually

survivable truce going on in our homes, to co-exist, rather than to pursue the richness and fullness of joy that is to be found in a gospel shaped marriage. It's easy, if we are not careful or deliberate, to settle into marriage the way that we see it done in our world, or the way it is portrayed in entertainment. But we cannot be satisfied with that. Our marriages and our homes must be pictures of the gospel. And here's why -- By God's grace, we are new creatures in Christ. He has exchanged our hearts of stone for hearts of flesh and put His Spirit within us and has written His law upon our hearts. We have seen in Christ the saving power of God and trusted Him as our Redeemer and Lord. We have been crucified to the world. We are now longer slaves of sin, but worshippers of the Living God and that must define our marriages and homes.

Third, this is a particularly timely message in light of the increasing blurring of gender lines, the feminization of men, the masculinization of women, the attack on biblical marriage, and the lessening maturity of our culture as a whole. This is a timely and much needed message. As we get started, there are some foundational statements that I have made in the past that bear repeating this morning.

Ten foundational statements

1. **Marriage, as it was designed by God, exists for God's glory.** Marriage is fashioned to be a display of the covenant love between Christ and His church, a display of the steadfast and gracious love of Christ for His church and of the devotion of the church to her Savior. This is the first and ultimate purpose of marriage. Paul makes that clear in the Ephesians passage that we read. Marriage is to picture the intimate love enjoyed by Christ and His church – that is what we are to strive for.

2. **If that is the case (that Christian marriage is a picture of the relationship of Christ and His church), then Christian marriage should be the source of great joy and delight for both husband and wife.** Just as Christ delights in His bride, so should a Christian husband find great joy and pleasure in His own wife. And just as the church delights in the steadfast love of her bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, so should a wife find joy, strength and safety in the steadfast love of her husband. Marriage should be an enjoyable thing, a delight.

3. The roles of husband and wife in a Christian marriage are not open to redefinition and re-interpretation. The roles of the husband and the wife in marriage are not arbitrary in their design. God designs them and so for that reason, they are not open to re-design and they are not reversible. The role of the husband and wife in Christian marriage are grounded in and take their shape from the distinctive roles of Christ and His church. Those who have found a system that “works for them”, doing something different than what Scripture describes, you have not improved upon God’s plan – they are rebelling against it.

4. Headship and submission in Christian marriage is not the result of sin, but is the remedy to it. Headship and submission were woven into the very fabric of creation – Adam was formed first and then Eve. When sin entered the creation, it destroyed the joy of marriage because it distorted man’s loving servant headship into domination on one hand or apathy and passivity on the other. And sin also warped woman’s loving submission into the desire to rule over her husband and be his master either by subtle manipulation or blatant domination and defiance. These texts are designed to remedy that corruption.

5. The presupposition for these texts is saving faith. These texts are for Christians. The ungodly will never understand these texts properly. It will be offensive to them because it is entirely opposite of the flesh-driven, sin-shaped experience of marriage in our culture. Especially in the passage from Ephesians, Paul is assuming that the husband and wife in this text are both saved and transformed by the sovereign grace of God in Jesus Christ and are desiring a godly marriage.

6. The Christian experience of marriage is to be ongoing and growing. As I said before, marriage is not a skill that one “gets down.” It is ongoing and growing; it must continue and will continue to develop throughout your married life. There will be failures and trials and tears and repentance and renewal and triumphs and joy and celebration -- all of those things in your marriage if you are pursuing marriage for the glory of God and for your joy.

7. Whenever we preach regarding God’s design for marriage, we realize that there are people in marriages in this body that are facing all sorts of situations and issues. There is no way to cover every possible scenario that could exist in someone’s home. God calls us to a marriage that is God-honoring and deeply satisfying and my intent is to preach this text as

if the desire of everyone in this room is to have this kind of marriage, knowing that for some of you there are great challenges involved. You may live with an unbeliever. You may have an overbearing or passive husband or a domineering or unloving wife. I want to encourage you in two ways – one, you may want to seek counsel with a pastor or an elder regarding questions that this sermon might raise regarding your specific situation and two, I want to encourage you that if God is powerful to raise a dead soul to life, He is powerful, as well, to refine, to refashion and even resurrect your marriage.

8. This is a text that is valuable for those who are single. Some of you are single, anticipating marriage and this sermon this morning should serve as a divine description of the character that you should pursue for marriage as well as an insight into the sort of person you should seek for marriage. Some are widows or single and not seeking marriage and you have an opportunity to minister to the younger married families in the church. In whatever place this finds you, this text should serve as a guideline for how you can pray for the marriages in this body.

9. The study of this text holds forth both great promise and great peril depending on how it is received. If you listen to this message and what you do is catalogue the ways in which your spouse has fallen short in your marriage, this sermon will spoil in your ears. The purpose of this message is not for you to determine how you have been wronged and let down but rather to have a pliable and willing and receptive heart to hear the Word of God regarding marriage and to ask God, “Lord, how have I fallen short of your plan for me as a husband or a wife? Where must I repent? God, by your grace, would you change me so I can love and honor and serve my spouse for your glory and for our joy?”

10. The gospel is at stake in the way that husbands and wives love and honor one another. Apart from faithful, joyful, strong, resilient, God-glorifying marriages, we can never have churches that magnify the worth and greatness of God and that display the power of the gospel. If the marriages in this church look just like the marriages in the world, then we deny the power of the gospel in us.

So there's a lot riding on these texts. Let's approach them with soft and receptive hearts to receive from God His truth regarding the glories of Christian marriage. I want to start by

addressing the husbands first and let me tell you why. If marriage is a picture of the gospel, and the relationship between Christ and His church, then we must start where the gospel starts – the steadfast love of God as expressed in Christ. God does not love us because we first loved Him, rather we respond and we love God because He first loved us and gave His Son for us. If the man is a picture of Christ in his role as husband, then that means the man is to be the initiator and the wife is to be the responder in marriage. So for that reason, I want for us to begin with the calling of the husband to love His wife as Christ loved the church.

Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church. (v. 25-30) Look at verse 25 again: ***“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,”*** (Ephesians 5:25, ESV) God is commanding us, as husbands – ***commanding us*** – to love our wives in the same way that Christ has loved the church. And the first thing that jumps out is this: the priority regarding proper headship in the home is not authority, dominion or position; the priority is love. Husbands are called to headship in our homes but the headship, the leadership, that we are to exercise is to be expressed and rooted in love. Paul’s command is not “Keep your wife in line” it is love your wife as Christ loved the church. The foundation and the atmosphere of our relationship with our wives must be love.

Think about this. How did Christ love the church? He loved her unconditionally, in spite of her unworthiness; He loved us in spite of our deficiencies. He loved us not because of anything in us; He loved us in spite of what was in us. Jesus died for His church, for His Bride to purchase her for Himself at a deep cost to Himself and to make her beautiful. Christ’s love for His bride is a love that is unconditional, sacrificial and intense. That is the kind of love that we are commanded to love our wives with.

Men, let me tell you what this means. You set the tone for your home. We have it wrong in our society. We like to say that it is the role of the wife to create a climate of love in the home, but that is not so. You set the tone for your home, you set the tone for your marriage by the way in which you love your wife.

The standard for our love for our wives is not if she is perfectly pleasing, but the standard is the gracious love of Christ – unconditional, sacrificial, intense love that sees your wife as your lover, as your sister in the Lord, as a treasure to be protected and cared for, that sees

your wife as your best friend, that sees your wife as the most important investment of your life in this world, and as your covenant love. Sacrificial love is love from a heart that is willing to lay aside your rights, your comforts, your personal pleasures, your personal pursuits, your personal time for the sake of your wife. We are instead called to look for ways to lay down our lives to show our wives the depth of our faithful love for them. Your wife is not an addition to your life, not a resource, not an object, to a possession; she is a gift from God to be loved with sacrificial and faithful love.

Paul goes on to describe the purpose of Christ's love in a couple of ways, first ***“that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 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.”*** (Ephesians 5:26–27, ESV) Christ's love is purposeful and powerful. He labors to present His church as beautiful and holy and without blemish. He labors to cleanse her and make her beautiful. In a similar way, a husband's calling is to labor to help his wife become all that God created her to be for Christ's glory. We must invest in our wives and in their lives.

How do we best invest in our wives? Well, specifically we do it by encouraging our wives' growth in grace. We must love God's Word and seek to cultivate a love for God's Word in our wives as well. You must take seriously the responsibility to pursue Christ with your wife and to take the lead – encouraging her in godliness and biblical womanhood, reading to and with her, fighting for her soul in personal prayer, praying with her, studying the Word of God with her, applying the Word of God to your marriage, providing loving correction from Scripture, discussing spiritual things, and taking the lead in modeling Christ. It means taking the lead in your marriage and living out the commands of Scripture as regards honesty, integrity, hard work, gracious speech, kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, and sexual purity. Be a man who protects your wife from the moral filth of this world as much as possible, guarding her from spiritual error, protecting her from worldly influences and the wisdom of this age. She must be that precious to you. Make it your mission to be a man of substance, a man of conviction, of character, and weight, a man that your wife will delight to follow. That kind of man is short supply in our culture.

Peter talks more about this when he says: ***“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way.”*** (1 Peter 3:7, ESV) Live with her in way that shows that you really know and understand her and care about her soul. That is the heart of what Peter is saying. As

husbands, we cannot use our wives as an excuse for our own failures and shortcomings. We cannot blame our wives or circumstances or situations or anything else for our own sin and instead, we need to confess and forsake our sin, and pursue Christ and true godliness for the sake of our wives. And here is why that's important -- you cannot lead your wife where you have never been. You must pursue godliness, you must abide in Christ, you must pursue the Lord, not only for your own sake but for the sake of your wife. You cannot lead where you are not going. And you cannot give what you do not have. You cannot love your wife with the love of Christ unless you are experiencing the love of God through communion with Christ.

So many men in our world have such a shallow view of marriage and what it means to be a godly husband, a defective view of their wives. They see them as slaves, sex objects, mommy figures or even idols. But not us, brothers. Let's see our wives as the treasures they are. Our wives, covenant loves, one flesh with us. Paul establishes first the way that men are to love their wives spiritually and then he moves to the physical and emotional realm.

Paul says: ***“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.”*** (Ephesians 5:28–30, **ESV**) Paul's point is this: Husbands you need to love your wife just like you love your own body – as is made evident by the way you provide for it and protect it. This is about physical provision and protection. It is the responsibility of the husband to take the lead in providing for his wife and family – putting a roof over their heads, putting food on the table, clothes on their backs. The husband is to take the lead in this. That is not say that a wife may not work – she may, sometimes she may make more money, but the man is to take the lead to lay down his life to put bread on the table. If he is physically able, he sends the wrong message if he does not labor as he should for the sake of his wife and his family.

Even more, a man ought to protect his wife, just as we would defend ourselves. Your wife ought to feel safe with you. Peter elaborates on this saying that husbands should be ***“showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.”*** (1 Peter 3:7, **ESV**) Peter calls us to honor our wives and to protect them as the weaker vessel. Now in a politically correct world such as ours this statement is offensive. But the fact is, human society has been organized from the beginning of history around this truth. Women are more vulnerable in some -- not

all -- but in some very significant ways in relation to men. They are more physically vulnerable because they are not as strong; and they are most times more emotionally vulnerable. It was not so long ago, even in secular Western societies that a man's manhood was judged according to the way in which he protected and provided for the women in his life. That is the idea here.

She should know that you would lay down your life for her because she sees you care for her in small ways now. You ought to shield your wife and her life from danger. Too many guys are passive here and let their wives fight the battles that they should be fighting. A man needs to fight the battles that need fighting. Even more, let me say this -- if you are a husband, you need to develop the skills necessary to protect your wife. You may have never given it much thought. In the climate of our culture, you need to do it right now. Men, we need to know how to spiritually and physically protect our wives. I don't know what else to say here, it ought to be intuitively obvious. Paul goes on to say:

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. We are to nourish our wives -- to feed them as we have seen, spiritually and physically, but the last area, that the word cherish speaks to, is our caring for our wives emotionally. The picture is one of intimacy. It is loving your wife deeply and expressing that love to her. Look for ways to demonstrate that you love your wife -- not merely sexually, but pursue her heart. Be sensitive to her needs, sensitive to her feelings, be affectionate, share your life with her. We nourish our wives when we express our love to them in tenderness, with respect and with a sense of thanksgiving to God for them, when we praise them and express our gratitude to them for what they do, when they know that we are committed to them no matter what. And we express love to our wives when we express our love for them in words. Romancing your wife is right and good. As Solomon said in the Proverbs: ***“Be intoxicated always in her love.” (Proverbs 5:19, ESV)***

Peter helps us to see as well, that we are to rejoice in our wives for who they really are. He says: ***“they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7, ESV)*** Your wife is a fellow heir of the grace of life, eternal life, with you. She is not merely your wife for a lifetime, but your sister in Christ and fellow heir of the glories of Christ forever. She shares with you in the glorious inheritance that awaits every believer on the day of Jesus Christ. That is who she is. She is the daughter of God, are you loving her like that?

And this really matters, especially if you desire fellowship and communion with God. How you treat your wife, will determine the character of your communion with God. So concerned is God that Christian husbands live in an understanding and loving way with their wives, that He disrupts His fellowship with us when we are not doing so. Our prayers are hindered. He will begin to seem unreal, distant, unapproachable, far off. But the opposite is true as well, if we love our wives as Christ loved the church, we will enjoy the fellowship and the favor of Father God and we will with our wives so we have seen the ways that we are called to love our wives as Christ loved the church – spiritually, physically and emotionally. Brothers, I have to ask you, how are you loving your wives? You set the tone for your marriage by the way that you love your wife. It is in the context of this kind of love that the wives are told:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (v. 22-24) Look at it starting in verse 22: ***“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 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 as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”***

(Ephesians 5:22–24, ESV) Submission is not a dirty word. Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and affirm and follow her husband's leadership in the family and help him carry it through according to her gifts. It is to joyfully welcome his position as the God-ordained leader of the marriage and family. The word “submit” comes from a military term that means to arrange under rank – to take your rightful place. Now listen, that doesn't mean that the man is better than the woman, or more spiritual, or more intelligent, or has more ability, or is of greater character. That is not at all what this passage is saying. Submission is not putting the husband in the place of Christ as if the husband is some sort of absolute authority. It means making a choice to affirm and honor your husband as leader within the limits of obedience to Christ. It includes a demeanor that honors him as a leader even when you may disagree with him. What this passage is saying to us is that wives are called by God to recognize that the man bears a great responsibility before the Living God for leading his family properly, for which one day he will give an accounting at the throne of God. The wife is to recognize that awesome weight of responsibility that the husband has, and support him in it and follow him.

Practically what does submission look like? Submission requires **respect**. Submission requires **honesty**. It requires **encouragement and prayer**, not nagging. It involves caring for

your husband's **basic needs**. Submission involves **responding** to your husband's efforts to lead and love you. It involves **thankfulness**, thinking of **him first**, valuing him **more than your kids, trust**. God is calling wives to a quiet spirit and not a domineering one, to be encouragers instead of critics. Because of the fall, this can be a real challenge. Spiritual pride – the thought that you are far advanced above your husband spiritually, that you have surpassed him in knowledge, can be a real fight. Emotional manipulation or a spirit that says that you do not need your husband and that despite the fact that you are married, you can do it all on your own is a real challenge for some. In our world, we see women all the time that treat their husbands like a sitcom husband and act like a sitcom wife. But not you, sisters. Aspire to something greater. Love and serve and respect your husband and look for ways to honor him.

In my experience as a pastor, there are five things that I have seen more often than anything else that destroy biblical submission. Things that would never fly in relation to Christ and His church. **Qualifying Submission** - I will follow my husband if... The only occasion in which you should not follow your husband is if he asks you to go against God's Word. **Grudging Submission** - I will follow my husband but I don't like it... You follow but not joyfully. **Faithless Submission** - I will follow my husband but I'm afraid he won't lead us properly. **False and Patronizing Submission** – that condescending attitude that treats your husband as foolish and only pretends to go along with his leadership. **Mechanical Submission** – submission to your husband according to a list of ways and actions that minus the heart. A legalistic submission. Listen, just like the calling of a man to love, serve and lead his wife, true submission is an issue of the heart. It is an issue of the disposition of your heart toward him not a list of things that you do.

Submission is the commitment of your heart to honor your husband. This may involve several things: making the house a home; striving to be dependable and trustworthy; being diligent and busy, industrious and productive, providing affirmation and encouragement toward growth in godliness and biblical manliness; building loyalty to him in the children; showing confidence in his decisions even if you think you know a better way; being satisfied with the physical provision of your husband and what you have when he is working hard to provide; giving advice, counsel, and even biblical correction to your husband but in a loving and respectful way; being forgiving and forbearing; not using love or the expressions of it as a weapon or to manipulate but loving your husband graciously and faithfully and keeping and guarding your heart only for him.

Submission is not a punishment. Some women think they are getting the short end of the stick having to submit, having to model the church, but the truth is that this call to submission reflects, not only the character and place of the church, but also the character of Christ in relationship to God the Father. We firmly believe in the co-equality of the Son with the Father. Jesus declared, "I and the Father are one." Jesus is not inferior to the Father, though He is always viewed as under submission to the Father's authority... Did Jesus get short-changed because of his submission to the Father? Of course not! Rather, we glory in the Son's submission to the Father for our sake. So why would we take this same term spoken of Christ that is applied in this context to wives in marriage, and make it into something bad? A wife's submission to her own husband is a reflection of the Son's love, loyalty, and delight in the Father and it brings great honor to God. Ladies, you reflect Christ when you willingly and joyfully submit to your husbands.

Here are some self-examining questions to consider whether or not you have a submissive spirit toward your husband: What thoughts spring to mind when you think of your husband? How do you speak to your husband when you are alone? When you are in front of your children? When you are in public? How do you speak of your husband to your kids? To your friends, your family, your co-workers, your sisters in Christ? Do you show your husband respect in the way you act toward him? Do you freely show him affection? Do you engage with him or are you distracted, inattentive, indifferent, or disrespectful? Do you welcome his counsel? Do you respond to your husband's spiritual leadership? Do you encourage His pursuit and growth in Christ? Do you encourage him in general? Do you love him and look for ways to serve him and please him? Do you desire his leadership? Are you responsive to your husband or are you resistant? True biblical submission is an expression of real trust and love toward God, and of true love for your husband. It honors Christ, honors your husband, and displays the right and proper response of the church to Christ. When you reject your husband's headship, you are saying in effect, that the church has no need to submit to Christ, that submission to him is unimportant. Submission to your husband is a part of obedience to the Lord.

But there is more. Think about what Peter says: ***“Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy women who hoped***

in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.” (1 Peter 3:3–6, ESV) Make sure that you understand what Peter is saying here. Peter is not saying that wearing makeup or doing your hair or wearing jewelry is sinful or wrong. Nor is he saying that it is particularly spiritual for a woman to just “let herself go” if you know what I mean. The Bible is not against cultivating a feminine appearance. That is not his point. His point is this: It is wrong to be consumed with outward appearance at the expense of inward beauty. A beautiful woman who lacks inner beauty and character is, according to Proverbs, like a pig with a gold ring in its nose. ***Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion. (Pro 11:22)*** Sisters, listen – too many place their hope, the joy, their value, their person in how they look, how they dress, their external appearance – but your hope is in Christ, your joy is in the transformation He has done in your soul, your value and you person is found in being a chosen daughter of the God of the universe. Delight in that, pursue the beauty of being God’s daughter.

Furthermore, Peter is saying to the ladies, “If you are looking for someone to emulate, pick holy women.” Notice how Peter describes them. Holy women of old, who hoped in God – that’s significant. Their hope, their trust, their faith, was not in their husband’s perfection or in their looks – their hope was in God and because they trusted in God, they could submit to their own husbands faithfully, confident of God’s faithfulness and purposes. That is the point.

Sarah serves as a beautiful picture of Christian women who have their hope fixed on God. Can you imagine leaving your homeland, your family, and all of your friends to go to a place God has not even yet revealed? How many times did Abraham come to his wife to tell her God had instructed him to do what appeared to be foolish? As far as I can tell, Sarah was never present when God gave Abraham his instructions, except one time in Genesis 18. Still she was submissive to Abraham and was not fearful for her hope was fixed on God. She calmly and quietly submitted to her husband knowing God’s purposes would be achieved because of or in spite of her husband.

Peter even addresses the woman who may be married to a disobedient Christian or an unbeliever, saying: ***“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives,” (1 Peter 3:1, ESV)*** This is not about extreme situations (explain this), this is about men who are

believers who are in sin, perhaps, or those who have rejected the gospel or who show no signs of spiritual life whatever. What about those guys?

Peter does not tell them to leave their husbands, to nag him and argue with him, to preach at him, or stick evangelistic tracts under his pillow or have the preacher come to the house when he's home alone to let him have it with both barrels. No, Peter's point is that the gracious and God-glorifying submission of a Christian woman to an unsaved husband is the strongest evangelistic tool she has. Respectful and pure conduct – conduct that demonstrates faithfulness to God and faithfulness to her husband, purity, holiness – God uses that in the life of an unsaved man to bring Him to repentance, to bring him into submission to the truth of the Word of God.

God's desire is that wives would be asking the Lord, "How can I fulfill my calling? How can I beautifully and joyfully submit to my husband and so bring glory to you?" That is the heart of submission and it delights God and both of these together – loving headship and loving submission reveal the mystery of Christ and His church.

The mystery of Christ and His church. (v. 31-33) That's why Paul closes by saying: ***“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*** (Ephesians 5:31–33, ESV) Marriage is a mystery—it contains and conceals a meaning far greater than what we see on the outside. What God has joined together in marriage is to be a reflection of the union between the Son of God and his bride the church. For that to happen, there are some

Non-negotiables in a Gospel- Centered Marriage

Abide in Christ. ***“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*** (John 15:4–5, ESV) Our default position apart from abiding in Christ –

from seeking Him in the Word, seeking Him in prayer, pursuing His will and finding our life in Him – is always fleshliness, self-absorption and self-direction. A marriage will die in that atmosphere.

Do Not Forsake the Assembly of the Saints. *“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”* (Hebrews 10:24–25, ESV) There is no way that you can have a Christian marriage apart from firm commitment to the assembly of the saints, the body of Christ. We all need the encouragement and the accountability that comes from being with the body of Christ, serving and worshipping and following Christ together. You cannot have a gospel shaped marriage apart from a life that is being shaped by the gospel.

Count Your Spouse More Significant Than Yourself. *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* (Philippians 2:3–4, ESV) We cannot see our spouse as our servant or as our adversary but must see them as the one above all that we count more significant than ourselves and seek to serve out of love with a heart of humility.

Forgive as You Have Been Forgiven. *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”* (Ephesians 4:32, ESV) We must learn how to fully and freely forgive one another. You are married to a sinner who is going to sin.

Love Your Spouse Fiercely. Be determined to love with unbreakable and steadfast love, to keep your heart and desires pure, to love in word and in action, to keep the marriage bed undefiled, to seek intimacy and unity and the folding of your life together.

Last, Take Hold of the Grace of God In Christ. The only way, the only way, that you can have a marriage in the way that Scripture desires is by His grace, crying out to God for His grace, and His grace is sufficient.

Does this look like your marriage today? If it does – praise God for His grace, foster it, nourish it, guard it. Continue to pursue Christ together. But if not, do not just throw in the towel. Instead, repent, trust Christ and submit your marriage to His plan and design.

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