

Marriage

- I. This study is meant to be a refresher-course on what the Bible says about marriage and it is also somewhat of a book review.
- A. I recently read, “Loving Your Wife As Christ Loves the Church” by Larry E. McCall, pastor of Christ's Covenant Church in Winona Lake, Indiana.
 - B. The book focuses on the husband's role in marriage, that he should follow the model of Jesus Christ Who loves His bride, the church. **EPH 5:25-27.**
 - C. The book has a mixture of godly and practical advice for successful husbandhood but is handicapped by reliance upon corrupt modern bibles (NIV, ESV, NASB).
 - 1. Textual differences from the KJV can affect doctrine, and therefore affect practical conclusions.
 - 2. Be a noble reader (**ACT 17:11**) and check not only the words of an author but also the cited scripture references against what a KJV Bible actually states. Prove all things. **1TH 5:21.**
 - 3. Doctrine matters! There is a fundamental flaw in the premise of the book that reflects a lack of understanding of the doctrine of salvation according to the Scripture. Further comment on this is to follow.
 - 4. A general word of caution: Be cautious to not let men's books, movies (even Christian movies), etc., no matter how well-written, acted and presented, supplant what Scripture actually says. **PSA 119:128.**
 - D. This book has enough “chicken on the bone” that I can recommend it to discerning readers. Some of it is rightly very convicting.
- II. In the foreword of this book, Dr. Tedd Tripp makes an important statement: “In the biblical view, however, worship is the key to marriage. Godly husbanding does not begin with loving your wife; it begins with loving God.”
- A. This accords with the two great commandments, the first of which is *love of God*. **MAT 22:37-40.**
 - B. Love of God is what makes one submit to His will concerning marriage rather than the will of self or of others.
 - 1. Love of God establishes duties and boundaries for marriage and prevents one from sacrificing principle to please one's spouse or oneself.
 - 2. The key to success in marriage is NOT pleasing spouse or self at all costs.
 - 3. Many marriages fail or are troubled because of principle that is sacrificed for pleasure's sake.
 - 4. Consider that the Perfect Husband “...pleased not himself...” (**ROM 15:3**).
 - 5. Sacrificing principle to please others counters service to God. **GAL 1:10.**
 - C. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” should not be a substitute for *love of God*.
 - 1. Such would be the case where one loved a spouse as self to the disregard of God's law.
 - a. Eg. “I don't pressure her about church duty because I don't like being pressured either.”
 - b. Eg. “I overlook her overeating/overdrinking since I do it too.”
 - 2. “Love thy neighbour as thyself” is, though, a blessed restraint on selfish attitudes that can wound or ruin a marriage and it is an incentive to kind consideration of a spouse's burdens, fears, needs and desires.
 - 3. One should treat his/her spouse as he/she wants to be treated by that spouse, not as

that spouse might actually be treating him/her. **MAT 7:12.**

4. We are not justified in *rendering evil for evil* in general (**1TH 5:15**) and certainly therefore not against a spouse.

III. Principal passages on marriage are:

- A. **GEN 2:24; MAT 19:4-6.** One man, one woman.
- B. **JOB 31:1; MAL 2:14; ROM 7:1-3.** Covenantal bond for life.
- C. **GEN 3:16; 1CO 11:3-12; 14:34-35; EPH 5:22-33; COL 3:18-19; 1TI 2:11-15; 1PE 3:1-7.** The headship of the man; the submission of the wife; roles and duties of both.
- D. **PRO 31:10-31.** The virtuous woman.
- E. **Song of Solomon; 1CO 7:1-9; HEB 13:4.** The sexual aspect of marriage.
- F. **EPH 5:22-33.** Marriage a picture of Christ's love for the church.
- G. **MAT 5:31-32; 19:9; 1CO 7:15.** The dissolution of marriage.
- H. **1CO 7:28; ECC 12:12.** Troubles in marriage. ;-)

IV. Paul compares the relationship of husband and wife to that of Christ and the church.

EPH 5:22-33.

- A. The redeemed “church of the firstborn” (**HEB 12:23**) is called the *bride* and *wife* of Jesus Christ. **REV 21:9.**
- B. Christ's love for His bride was effective by His giving of Himself on the cross. **ROM 5:8; GAL 2:20.**
 1. Christ's love was a sacrificing love. He sacrificed His pleasure and life for His bride.
 2. There is no greater love than giving up one's own life for others. **JOH 15:13.**
- C. The cross was the undoing of the devil. **HEB 2:14.**
- D. Biblical marriage (and ONLY Biblical marriage), therefore, is a witness to Satan's defeat.
- E. Is it any wonder that the Biblical order of marriage comes under such heavy attack by fornication, infidelity, divorce, unsubmitive wives, same-sex unions, polygamy, etc.? Satan seeks to corrupt and destroy anything that testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 1. Christian couples who are at war with the kingdom of Satan need to remember this. **EPH 6:12.**
 2. Be wary of becoming so engaged in your personal marital wars that you forget the big picture.
 3. Mind that before sin had even entered the world, Satan sought to “divide and conquer” by wedging himself between Adam and Eve, corrupting Eve, and thus forcing Adam to choose between God and Eve. **GEN 3:1-6.**
- F. Couples who apply the principles laid down in **EPH 5:22-33** are a gospel witness.

V. Pastor McCall writes on p. 10, “First, the love Christ demonstrates toward the church is *unconditional*.”

- A. This is true. The sacrifice of His own life in demonstration of His love was in no way conditioned upon our present or future goodness or performance. **ROM 5:10; COL 1:21.**
 1. This unconditional love at Calvary is ongoing and guarantees the eternal life of His chosen bride in spite of her weakness and disobedience. The covenant relationship with Christ is eternally secure. **ROM 8:28-39.**
 2. This is a committed love, a covenantal love that does not give up on its object, and this is therefore an incentive for His bride to live unto Him rather than self. **2CO 5:14-15.**

3. Faithful, committed, sacrificing love (even unto death) known as such by a wife is a powerful incentive for her submissive, reciprocal love.
 4. Paul instructs husbands to thus love their wives. **EPH 5:25.**
- B. There is, though, a qualification needed.
1. In **EPH 5:25**, Paul is speaking about the one-time death of Jesus Christ out of love to a spotted, unholy, blemished object. This is unconditional. **EPH 5:26-27.**
 2. This was the covenant's legal establishment. As noted above, that aspect of Christ's love to the church will never be withdrawn.
 3. Christ will never put away His bride. He has committed to love her. The marriage bond is eternal.
 4. Husbands are to love their wives "...as Christ LOVED the church, and GAVE himself for it;" (**EPH 5:25**), i.e., givingly, with commitment, unconditionally.
 5. Contrast the above with "Loving your wife as Christ LOVES the church."
 6. How does Christ in daily practice love His church (i.e., the individual saints that are part of "the church of the firstborn")? Conditionally.
 - a. He cares for her, nourishes her and cherishes her. **EPH 5:29.**
 - b. He is merciful and compassionate to her in consideration of her nature. **HEB 4:15; 5:2 c/w 1PE 3:7.**
 - c. He intercedes for her. **HEB 7:25.**
 - d. He forgives her sins upon confession and repentance. **1JO 1:7-9.**
 - e. But He also instructs her and expects her to honor his instruction. **MAT 28:19-20.**
 - (1) He praises her for faithfulness. **1CO 4:5; 2CO 10:18; MAT 25:21.**
 - (2) He does not praise her for disobedience. **1CO 11:17, 22.**
 - f. He stands ready to withdraw fellowship from her, withdraw favor from her, judge her, rebuke her and chasten her and even turn her over to Satan for corrective punishment if she persists in sin. **REV 3:19; 1CO 5:5.**
 - g. He may even slay because of sin. **1CO 10:9-11; 11:29-30; REV 2:23.**
 - h. The marriage will remain intact but its sweetness will be soured.
 - (1) He still loves her *unconditionally* as touching the covenant of eternal life but His practical relating to her is very *conditional*.
 - (2) She has grieved His Spirit and He has established how He will deal with her until she repents and submits to Him.
 - i. Whereas Christ's ongoing love for His bride can provide some helpful ideas for a husband, there are obviously limitations as to how strictly His model is to be followed.
 - j. Remember that Paul's instruction in **EPH 5:25-27** is emphasizing the sacrificial love that Christ demonstrated at Calvary.
 - (1) The object of His love was a corrupt, cursed enemy of God.
 - (2) Husbands do well to remember that they are not the pure Husband, but are by nature corrupt, cursed and enemies of God as much as are their wives.

VI. Marriage is an honourable institution. **HEB 13:4.**

- A. honourable: Worthy of being honoured; entitled to honour, respect, esteem, or reverence.
- B. Marriage was instituted before sin entered. **GEN 2:18-24.**
- C. Unlike the creation, marriage survived the fall intact. To this day, marriage is still what it was before sin entered.

1. Whereas God altered the creation and the relationship He had with man after sin entered, God did not alter marriage. His rule remains as it was: one man and one woman bound together for life.
2. Men have sought to alter marriage but no alteration has come from God.
- D. Thus, marriage is not some old, worn-out, useless institution to be mocked and discarded. It will only be discarded at the resurrection. **MAT 22:30.**
- E. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman. **MAL 2:14; JOB 31:1.**
 1. It is a covenant regulated by God. He establishes its rules and they are not alterable.
 - a. Other covenants may be voluntarily struck between individuals regardless of sex or number but not marriage.
 - b. Other covenants may be dissolved by mutual consent for many different reasons without incurring God's displeasure towards either party but not marriage. The marriage covenant is only dissolved for both parties by death. **1CO 7:39.**
 2. Marriage binds a man and a woman to each other. **ROM 7:1-3.**
 3. They are so bound as to be considered one. **MAT 19:4-6.**
 4. The marriage covenant is a social contract which society is bound to respect. **EXO 20:14, 17.**
- F. Marriage was ordained for companionship. **GEN 2:18-22; MAL 2:14.**
 1. companion: One who associates with or accompanies another; a mate; a fellow.
 2. Husband and wife are "...heirs together of the grace of life" (**1PE 3:7**). They should experience and enjoy life together.
 3. Marriage was originally provided to meet man's need for companionship.
 4. A man who neglects to associate with his wife frustrates her very purpose for being his wife.
 5. A woman who neglects to associate with her husband fails to fulfill her God-ordained purpose.
 6. The woman is an help meet (suitable) for the man to assist him in the pursuit of his calling. **GEN 1:26-28; PRO 31:10-12.**
 7. A good marriage is a friendship. **SON 5:1, 16.**
- G. Marriage is God's means for avoiding sinful sexual connection. **1CO 7:1-2, 8-9.**
- H. Marriage is the godly means of procreation. **GEN 1:28; 1TI 5:14.**
 1. A good marriage facilitates the healthy development of children.
 2. Children provide a strong reason to make a marriage work.
 3. Loving parents will consider their children's need for the marriage rather than only their own desires.

VII. It is important to correct some misconceptions about marriage.

- A. Love is not the *basis* of marriage; it is a *duty* of the marriage. **EPH 5:25; TIT 2:3-4.**
 1. Love is primarily behavioral rather than emotional. **2JO 1:6.**
 2. You *choose* to love. It is an act of will.
 - a. The question is not, "*Do* you love?" but, "*Will* you love?"
 - b. God loved us as an act of will. He did not love us because we were so lovable and attractive. **ROM 5:8; 1JO 4:10.**
 - c. Isaac loved Rebekah *after* their marriage covenant was made. **GEN 24:67.**
 3. This is not to say that emotional love plays no role in selecting a mate or maintaining a marital relationship. **GEN 29:18; SON 2:5.**

- a. However, the heart is the seat of desire (**PSA 37:4**) and the heart is deceptive. **JER 17:9.**
 - b. How many have married based solely upon the heart's desire for the attractiveness of someone only to find out later that they were incompatible?
 - c. Consider that a blind person could find happiness and satisfaction from someone who is unattractive to the eye.
- B. True love will not just happen.
1. You have to work at love. It will cost you something.
 2. True love considers more than itself and its own feelings; it looks out for the good of its object. **1CO 13:5.**
 3. True love is concerned with giving. **JOH 3:16; EPH 5:25.**
 - a. Ask not first, "What can I get?" but, "What can I give?"
 - b. The first concern of love is not to be loved but to love. **1JO 4:10.**
 4. The first mentioned characteristic of perilous times is "...men shall be lovers of their own selves..." (**2TI 3:1-2**).
 - a. Living for someone else is contrary to man's sinful nature.
 - b. Selfishness is a major cause of marital problems.
 5. If spouses invest in one another, their heart, which includes their thoughts, their will, and their emotions, will be in the relationship. **MAT 6:21.**
 6. If both husband and wife choose to love each other according to the Biblical definition of love, they will have a perfect bond and their marriage will work. **1CO 13:4-7; COL 3:14.**
- C. Marriage is *not* an experience of perpetual infatuation and romantic ecstasy. **1CO 7:28; ECC 3:5.**
1. Mere infatuation focuses on the satisfying emotions that one is feeling; it is primarily selfish.
 2. Since emotions change, emotions are not adequate to define love. Married people do *not* always feel in love. It is at such times that true love saves a marriage.
 3. Some marry on an emotional high thinking that this is love but are left with emptiness when they come off their high.
- D. Marriage will not be free of trouble.
1. Life in this world is characterized by trouble. **JOB 14:1.**
 2. Marital companionship provides help in bearing trouble. **ECC 4:9-12.**
 3. Marriage brings its own set of troubles. **1CO 7:28.**
 4. Those who expect a trouble-free marriage are setting themselves up for trouble!
 - a. A good marriage is not one where neither party errs or troubles.
 - b. A good marriage is rather one where couples strive to minimize troubles but expect troubles, work through troubles, learn from troubles and do not let troubles darken the heart and ruin the relationship.
 5. A marriage is two *imperfect* and *different* people living as one and this will cause conflict.
 - a. Marital conflict can be a useful tool in maintaining mutual respect and enforcing accountability.
 - b. Human nature is such that most people do not respect a pushover.
 - c. Conflict lets each partner know when his/her behavior is selfish and disrespectful towards the other. Selfishness and disrespect are toxic to a marriage.
 - d. Without such conflict, improper behavior or attitude can go unchecked, thus

breeding resentment in the other that can later result in an explosion in the relationship.

6. Being committed to making the marriage work will give you the mindset to work through your conflicts to a resolution.
- E. Marriage is not necessarily a relationship where all one's needs are met by the spouse.
1. No single individual can supply every need of another.
 2. It is not a sign of a bad marriage when each partner needs other friends and diversions.
 3. A man can understand another man in ways a woman cannot and vice versa.
 4. David found a love in Jonathan that he did not find in women. **2SAM 1:26.**
 5. Love for the Lord must take precedence over love for one's spouse since He meets needs *no* spouse can meet. **LUK 14:26; PSA 23:1; 62:5-6.**
 6. Couples should steer between the extremes of total dependence and complete independence.
 7. A spouse who is emotionally needy and expects the other to fill every void is setting the relationship up for failure.
 - a. You need to learn to resolve your emotional neediness yourself through your relationship with God.
 - b. It is Jesus Christ Who completes us, and no other. **JOH 1:16; COL 2:10.**

VIII. Mutual trust is essential to a healthy marriage, as it is to any relationship.

- A. This requires that couples be truthful with each other.
- B. Lying destroys trust, which is necessary to healthy relationships. **JER 9:1-8.**
- C. Marital love is jealous. **SON 8:6.**
 1. This heightens the need for trust.
 2. A man does not love his wife very deeply if he does not care if she has affairs with other men and vice versa.
 3. Adultery has a lasting reproach because of jealousy. **PRO 6:32-35.**
 4. God so respects jealousy in a marriage that in the case of adultery, He allows the innocent party to put away the guilty party and to remarry without sin. **MAT 19:9.**
- D. While jealousy figures into a marriage, it should not spill over into mistrust where there is no cause for mistrust.
 1. Suspicion makes good relationships impossible.
 2. You cannot prove innocence to one who is determined to believe guilt.
 3. When suspicion rules, even silence becomes a crime.

IX. In order for a marriage to work well, forbearance and forgiveness must be practiced. **EPH 4:31-32; COL 3:13.**

- A. forbear: To bear with, have patience with, put up with, tolerate.
- B. Do not expect your spouse to become everything you want him/her to be.
 1. You are both imperfect sinners and there are some things that you have to bear with.
 2. A couple should improve what they can, resolve what they can, negotiate what they can, and tolerate what they must with the best possible perspective. **1CO 13:7.**
 3. Emotional health requires accepting that which cannot be changed.
 4. Be wary that the expectation of forbearance from your spouse does not become your excuse to not make a selfless change. Charity bears long but it also "...seeketh not her own..." (**1CO 13:5**).
- C. When you sin against your spouse, take responsibility for your sin that has injured the

marriage.

1. Don't resort to blameshifting. **GEN 3:12-13.**
 2. Don't counter-accuse, a defence born of pride. **JOH 9:34.**
 3. You are responsible to do what is right regardless of your spouse's actions.
- D. When your spouse sins against you and doesn't repent, before you conclude indifference, malice or hard-heartedness is his/her problem, ask yourself some questions:
1. Was it really a sin, or was it a matter of your perception of the issue?
 - a. Sometimes, one's own insecurities darkly color an otherwise innocuous word or deed of the spouse. Was it really a camel or just a gnat you are straining at? **MAT 23:24.**
 - b. Being thin-skinned and taking umbrage at every little thing is contrary to charity which "...is not easily provoked..." (**1CO 13:5**).
 2. Have you had a history of holding your spouse to such high standards of flawlessness that he/she no longer knows how to please you or even cares that you have been offended?
 - a. Remember that Moses' Law demanded absolute perfection. **GAL 3:10.**
 - b. It was an unbearable burden outside of God's grace and mercy. **ACT 15:10.**
 3. Does he/she even know that you were offended? Sometimes spouses have no idea that they have done something considered offensive and one cannot repent of what he/she is ignorant of.
 4. Have you addressed your spouse lovingly about the perceived offense? A high-handed accusation is contrary to charity which "...vaunteth not itself..." (**1CO 13:4**).
- E. When your spouse sins against you and repents, forgive. **LUK 17:3-4.**
1. Truly forgive from your heart. **MAT 18:35.**
 - a. Don't bring it up to your spouse again.
 - b. Don't bring it up to others.
 - c. Don't bring it up to yourself to brood over it in self-pity.
 2. Be willing to forgive a wrong more than once (**MAT 18:21-22**) but don't presume upon this rule to justify continued sinning against your spouse.
- X. There are three ways of dealing with conflict in marriage.
- A. Confront the person and force the issue.
 - B. Don't force the issue and bear a grudge. This resolves nothing.
 - C. Don't make an issue over it and put it behind you. **PRO 19:11.**
 1. It is good to overlook one another's faults when reasonable to do so.
 2. Unloading on your spouse for every little fault only sends a message that it is impossible for him/her to ever measure up to your expectations. This is a foolish "forcing of wrath" that guarantees strife. **PRO 30:33.**
 3. However, when faults cannot be passed over they must be dealt with lest grudging set in. **LEV 19:17-18.**
- XI. A good marriage takes time to build, and when cracked, to rebuild.
- A. Don't expect hasty solutions.
 - B. Granting and receiving forgiveness does not necessarily mean that the relationship will instantly be all that it should be.
 - C. Sometimes a relationship may be damaged so much that it will never be all that it could be but this doesn't mean that the relationship must be terminated or that efforts should not be made to make the best of what is left in the relationship.

- D. Sometimes it takes a tragedy for a couple to get it together but Christians who know the truth and have access to God's grace should not require a tragedy to get their marriage together.
- E. Sometimes it is better to focus not on working a perfect relationship but rather on perfecting a working relationship.
- F. As in the building enterprise of Nehemiah's day, you need the Lord AND "a mind to work" (**NEH 2:20; 4:6**).
 - 1. This common "mind to work" considerably depends on each spouse sharing a common view as to a final source of answers.
 - 2. It is very difficult to resolve conflict when one spouse has a Scriptural worldview while the other has a humanistic perspective.
 - 3. However, even in such handicapped arrangements there is hope.
1PE 3:1-2; 1SAM 25:17, 36-38.

- XII. A survey of N.T. instruction regarding marriage shows that husbands are especially exhorted to love their wives and women are especially exhorted to submit to their husbands.
- A. Frequently in marriage, disputes arise over who is at fault in their respective roles, and who should "flinch" first.
 - 1. Husband: "I struggle to love her because she is so unsubmitive."
 - 2. Wife: "If he loved me, I would be submissive."
 - 3. As noted earlier, each party should be striving to do what God has commanded them regardless of the performance of the other.
 - 4. But what about an impasse, a deadlock situation where she won't submit and he struggles to love her because she won't submit?
 - a. He would do well to respectfully talk to her, get the concern out in the open, and hear her side of the matter. Respectful dialogue clears up many issues.
 - b. If need be, third-party counselling for unresolved issues may be appropriate.
 - B. Consider how Christ relates to His church in practice in time (noted earlier).
 - 1. If His bride expects to *feel* loved and favored by Him, she thwarts that if she is not in submission to His headship.
 - 2. Christ's bride's lack of submission is what invites His chastening, not His blessing, tenderness and favor.
 - 3. Christ's covenantal, eternal love for His bride will not die when she is unsubmitive, but she may well feel that it has because she has grieved His Spirit.
EPH 4:30.
 - 4. Remember, though, that Paul's instruction to husbands is to love their wives sacrificially *and as their own bodies, nourishing and cherishing*, "...even as the Lord the church" (**EPH 5:28-29**). A husband's responsibility to nourish and cherish his wife is as ongoing as his need to nourish and cherish his own body.
 - C. Scripture consistently instructs wives to submit to their husbands before it instructs husbands to love their wives. **EPH 5:22, 25; COL 3:18-19; 1PE 3:1, 7.**
 - D. Be cautious to not trample upon the priority of mention where God is issuing instructions. It is a general observation that what is mentioned first, comes first.
 - 1. Which comes first in the Ten Commandments: duty to God or duty to fellows?
c/w **MAT 22:36-40.**
 - 2. Which comes first: teaching or baptism? **MAT 28:19.**
 - 3. Which comes first: repentance or baptism? **ACT 2:38.**
 - 4. Which comes first: faith or baptism? **MAR 16:16.**

5. Which comes first at communion: bread or wine? **LUK 22:19-20.**
 6. Which comes first: marrying or bearing children? **1TI 5:14.**
 7. That Adam was formed first has relevance. **1TI 2:11-13.**
- E. Where instructions for authority relationships are given, consider:
1. Servants are first told to submit before masters are told to not threaten. **EPH 6:5-9.**
 2. A servant's subjection is not conditioned upon ideal mastering. **1PE 2:18.**
 3. Submission to civil powers is not conditioned upon flawless governance. **1PE 2:13-14.**
 4. Saints are to submit to imperfect ministerial authority. **MAT 23:2-3.**
 5. Saints are to submit to ministerial rule in areas of pastoral discretion.
 - a. Ministers are stewards. **TIT 1:7.**
 - b. steward: An official who controls the domestic affairs of a household...
 - c. control: To exercise restraint or direction upon the free action of...
 - d. Mind that this is restraint upon areas of liberty.
 6. Wives are to submit to imperfect, even disobedient husbands. **1PE 3:1.**
 7. NOTE: As I have always taught, the only Authority Who deserves absolute, unquestioned submission is God.
- F. A theme that seems to have become popular in Christianity is that the lack of husbandly love is the chief cause of all lack of submissiveness in a wife and also all marital failure.
1. It is conceded that loving one's wife is an important element for a healthy relationship. She will likely have less trouble submitting where she knows that she is loved, respected, appreciated, secure and emotionally satisfied.
 2. But as just noted, godly submission to authority is not conditioned upon flawless performance.
 3. If all that is needed for a successful marriage is the husband's love of his wife, then Scripture's instruction for her submission is irrelevant.
 4. Sometimes all the loving attention possible will not make a wife submissive or save a marriage.
 - a. A wife's preferences in religious matters, child-rearing or finances may be more important to her than submission or saving a marriage.
 - b. Some women insist on being "alpha-females" regardless of how much love they are given.
 - c. Scripture speaks of the foolish woman who is *clamorous* (loud, shouting outcry, opposition) and the foolish woman who plucks down her own house. **PRO 9:13; 14:1.**
 5. Solomon's instruction for a man with a brawling wife was not, "Just love her into submission." **PRO 21:9, 19; 27:15-16.**
 6. The husband who isn't a "gold-medalist" in wife-loving won't improve by a wife's rebellion but more likely by her supportive, submissive godliness. **1PE 3:1-6.**
 7. Jesus Christ always loves His bride in just the right way but she still struggles to submit, sometimes goes astray, or even leaves Him for other lovers.
 8. Ladies! Christ has a distinct advantage over other husbands. He knows exactly what is needed for the present and future for His bride and therefore can be flawlessly decisive. Further, He does not struggle to process His leadership through the maze of his own weaknesses and insecurities.

XIII. Consider the duty of the wife to submit to her husband. **EPH 5:22-24.**

- A. "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (v. 22).

1. submit: To place oneself under the control of a person in authority or power; to become subject, surrender oneself, or yield to a person or his rule, etc.
 2. Mind how this counters a tendency for a wife to be more willing to be submissive to a married male employer or law enforcement officer than *her own* husband.
- B. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord” (**COL 3:18**).
1. fit: Befitting the person or the circumstances, agreeable to decorum, becoming, convenient, proper, right.
 2. Our culture might not deem a wife's submission proper or right but it is proper and right in the Lord.
- C. The older women are to teach the younger women “...to be obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (**TIT 2:3-5**).
1. The reverence of God's word is tied to this issue. Considering the value that God places on His word, this must be important. **PSA 138:2**.
 2. The rebellion of women against men has led to many blaspheming the word of God as being outdated, sexist, anti-woman, etc.
- D. Peter likewise commands wives to “...be in subjection to your own husbands...” (**1PE 3:1**), as were holy women of old “...in subjection to their own husbands” (**1PE 3:5**).
1. This subjection is by the commandment of God and not conditioned upon his obedience: “...if any obey not the word...”
 - a. This would apply to an unconverted husband.
 - b. This would apply to a converted husband who is disobedient to something the word of God commands.
 2. What about a deadlock situation where a wife is struggling to submit to a husband because he isn't loving her as Scripture commands (*obeying not the word*)?
 - a. First, this could be a matter of her perception and/or his unawareness of his deficiency.
 - (1) She would do well to respectfully talk to him, get the concern out in the open, and hear his side of the matter. Respectful dialogue clears up many issues.
 - (2) If need be, third-party counselling for unresolved issues may be appropriate.
 - b. If he is genuinely disobedient to the word, she is still commanded to be submissive to him. In other words, *her submission comes first*, as noted already.
 - c. Her godly submission is not only her commanded duty but also the best way to win him. **1PE 3:2-6**.
 - d. Her faith, i.e., her trust in God, ties into this submission. **1PE 3:5-6**.
 - (1) Her faith *and* fear of God will (per **1PE 3:2**) keep her *chaste* (pure from unlawful sexual intercourse, continent, virtuous). She is not likely to win him by trying to fill an emotional need through adultery.
 - (2) Her faith convinces her that true beauty and submission is inward and that outward appearance or apparel are no substitute for that. **1PE 3:3-4**.
 - (3) Her faith will strive for a meek and quiet spirit, not a loud, rebellious, contentious spirit. **v. 4**.
 - (4) Her faith will encourage her that God will honor those that honor him. **1SAM 2:30**.

- (5) Her faith knows that God can change a heart. **PRO 21:1.**
 - (6) Her faith knows that she must be patient. **HEB 6:12.**
 - (7) Her faith knows that God can deliver from unreasonable men. **1SAM 25:36-38.**
 - (8) A woman who trusts in God and finds her ultimate security in Him is better able to let go of the need to control everything and can, therefore, submit to her husband.
- E. Women are commanded to be *under obedience* in both testaments. **1CO 14:34.**
1. Paul here reasons that the duty of women to be silent in the church is a result of their being placed under the authority of the man.
 2. The headship of the man comes first from the order of creation before sin entered. **1TI 2:11-14; 1CO 11:7-9.**
 - a. Adam was formed before Eve.
 - b. Eve was created for Adam, not Adam for Eve.
 - c. Eve was deceived in the transgression, not Adam.
 3. Woman's subjection to man was reinforced as part of the curse. **GEN 3:16.**
 4. This has been God's law from the beginning and no amount of rejection or tinkering will alter it.
- F. A wife's submission to her husband is an unpopular subject in our day.
1. We are in a time of a general breakdown of Biblical authority. We are seeing **2PE 2:10** fulfilled before our eyes.
 2. Women's liberation and feminism defy the headship of the man. c/w **ISA 3:12.**
 3. Children are allowed to defy, encouraged to defy and (shock!) do defy parents.
 4. There is a revolt against ministerial authority.
 - a. Cult leaders cause authoritative pastors to be suspected.
 - b. Heavy media attention given to scandals revolving around ministers brings reproach on the office of the ministry.
 5. The entertainment industry often makes husbands, fathers, and ministers look stupid, incompetent, immoral or even dangerous.
 6. The commandment for women to be submissive is often ignored by stubborn, rebellious women to their own peril.
 - a. But it is also abused by oppressive, selfish, insecure men.
 - b. Thus, it is necessary to clear away the glosses that have been placed upon this holy commandment and set it in its true light.
- G. Stubbornness and rebellion are serious matters, as **1SAM 15:23** forcefully declares.
1. rebellion: Open or determined defiance of, or resistance to, any authority or controlling power.
 2. stubborn: Of persons or animals: Pertinacious or dogged in refusing obedience or compliance; unyielding, inflexible, obstinate; chiefly in bad sense, unreasonably obstinate.
 - a. pertinacious: Persistent or stubborn in holding to one's own opinion or design; resolute; obstinate. Chiefly as a bad quality.
 - b. dogged: Like a dog. Having a persistency or tenacity characteristic of various breeds of dogs; obstinate, stubborn; pertinacious.
 - c. obstinate: Pertinacious or stubborn in adhering to one's own course; not yielding to argument, persuasion, or entreaty; inflexible, headstrong, self-willed. Rarely in neutral or good sense.
 3. "...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft..." (**1SAM 15:23**).

- a. witchcraft: The practice of being a witch or witches; the exercise of supernatural power supposed to be possessed by persons in league with the devil or evil spirits.
 - b. The practitioner of witchcraft seeks Godlike power.
 - c. Rebellion, like witchcraft, is an illicit grab for power.
4. "...stubbornness is as iniquity..." (**1SAM 15:23**).
- a. iniquity: The quality of being unrighteous, or (more often), unrighteous action or conduct.
 - b. Iniquity comes from a combining of the prefix *in* with *equity*, and thus means *without equity* (equity = equal, fair, just).
 - c. The stubborn feminist agenda defies male authority in the name of equality and justice when it is their cause that is unequal, unjust and unrighteous.
 - d. A hierarchy of authority is necessary to equity and justice in the earth.
 - e. When every person is his/her own lord, then anarchy results.
 - (1) anarchy: Absence of government; a state of lawlessness due to the absence or inefficiency of the supreme power; political disorder. *Transf.* Absence or non-recognition of authority and order in any sphere.
 - (2) *Anarchy* comes from a Greek word meaning *without a chief or head*.
 - (3) Consider the lack of equity and justice in the days of the Judges when "...there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (**JDG 21:25**).
5. "...stubbornness is as...idolatry" (**1SAM 15:23**). Stubbornness is as idolatry in that the self claims sovereignty and thus tries to usurp God's place.
6. A rebellious and stubborn person is acting under the influence of Satan as is a practitioner of witchcraft or idolatry.
7. **1SAM 15:23** was addressed to Saul, who professed to be obedient to God in the very context of the utterance. **1SAM 15:20-21**.
- a. Professing Christians can also be characterized by rebellion and stubbornness.
 - b. This warning applies directly to women who profess Christ as Lord yet rebel against the legitimate authority of their husbands, which authority is derived from the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. Wives, when conflict arises between you and your husband, honestly examine yourself to see if rebellion against authority is not a key factor.
9. Attitude counts! Wives, what does submissiveness mean in your heart?
- a. Does it mean that you will submit only when he does or decides what you wanted? That is not submission!
 - b. Does it mean that you will grudgingly submit when he does or decides contrary to your wishes?
 - c. Does it mean that you will feign submissiveness but pursue your own agenda anyway?
 - d. Does it mean that you will hide from him something that you don't want to have him make a decision on, lest your agenda gets trumped?
 - e. It should mean that you will submit willingly to his headship, his policies and his decisions in good conscience and trust God to honor your submission.
 - f. This does NOT mean that a wife can never disagree with her husband's

decision but such disagreement should not become an occasion for usurping authority or for resentment or underhanded, manipulative revenge tactics or a bad example for a daughter. **PRO 14:1; 12:4.**

- H. The authority of a husband over his wife is a limited authority.
1. Wives are to submit themselves unto their own husbands "...as unto the Lord" (**EPH 5:22**).
 2. The phrase *as unto the Lord* imposes a limitation on the submission.
 3. "With prepositions, 'as' has the general sense of 'as far as, so far as,' and thus restricts or specifically defines the reference of the preposition; e.g. 'as against, as between.' 'As anent, as concerning, as for, as to, as touching' have all the sense of 'as it regards, so far as it concerns, with respect or reference to.'"
 4. A wife's submission unto her own husband extends as far as her submission unto the Lord.
 - a. No wife is required to obey her husband when such obedience places her in disobedience to God.
 - b. Sarah, the model of a holy, submissive wife (**1PE 3:6**), was justified in resisting Abraham's dedication to Ishmael. **GEN 21:9-12.**
 5. Remember, only God has absolute, unlimited authority. **1TI 6:15.**
 - a. All legitimate human authority is delegated by Him. **ROM 13:1-2.**
 - b. God delegates authority to different spheres of life: minister, husband, wife, parent, employer, civil power, etc. Reason dictates that none of these offices have all authority of themselves or there would be no separation of powers.
 - c. All human authority is subject to God's law. **PSA 103:19.**
 - d. In a just society, rulers themselves are restrained by law. **DEU 17:14-20.**
 - e. From this, it follows that no human authority has a right to unqualified submission from its subjects. Only God has such a right.
 6. A wife is to submit with *fear* (**1PE 3:2**) but she is to be "...not afraid with any amazement" (**1PE 3:6**).
 - a. amazement: The condition of being mentally paralyzed, mental stupefaction, frenzy.
 - b. Being submissive to her husband does not mean that she becomes mentally numb, powerless and helpless.
 - c. In the face of immediate clear peril to herself and her family, Abigail wisely worked contrary to her foolish husband's wishes to the saving of her house. **1SAM 25:4-35.**
 - d. A sensible, intelligent, godly wife is an asset, not a rival, threat or liability to her husband's success. **ACT 18:26; PRO 31:10-31 c/w RUTH 3:11.**
 - e. The woman is the weaker vessel and is to be honored as such. **1PE 3:7.**
 - (1) The effectiveness of prayers hinges on knowledgeable cohabitation manifested in the honor (respect, reverence) that a husband renders to his wife.
 - (2) Praying for children to grow up into godly adults with healthy emotions and marriages while dishonoring a spouse in front of them is an example of hindering prayers.
 - f. A wife's holy fear should not be a fear that her weakness will be exploited by her husband. He is not to be bitter against her for being as God made her. **COL 3:19.**
 - g. The man who terrorizes his wife into submission is abusing his authority and

- a woman is not required by God to submit to an abuser.
- h. As a last-ditch recourse for a woman who cannot live under her husband's authority without losing her mind, health or life, she may separate from him by divorce and remain celibate. **1CO 7:10-11.**
7. Woman was given by God as “an help meet for” the man. This requires the use of her God-given intelligence. **GEN 2:18.**
 - a. A wife should have a part in making decisions in the home.
 - b. Paul exhorts younger women to “...marry, bear children, **guide the house...**” (**1TI 5:14**).
 - (1) guide: To act as guide to; to go with or before for the purpose of leading the way. 4. To conduct the affairs of (a household, state, etc.).
 - (2) This is why children are to obey and honor father *and mother*. **EPH 6:1-2; PRO 1:8.**
 - c. Being under authority does not mean being totally without it. **GEN 41:40; MAT 8:9.**
 - d. The woman under the authority of her husband exercises authority with her husband for her husband's interest. **GEN 2:18.**
 - e. If being under authority to your husband seems demeaning and repulsive to you, then you need the mind of Christ. **PHIL 2:5-8.**
- I. The day to day order of the household rests very much on the shoulders of the wife.
 1. Men, it is our responsibility to support our wives' efforts to keep an ordered home, not frustrate them by our own bad habits.
 2. Men, do not complicate your wives' efforts at keeping an ordered home by allowing excessive “stuff” to overwhelm the place.
 3. Men, be cautious to not let the size of a dwelling be so big that it overwhelms your wives.
 - a. It's fun to be a king of a castle but castles require much upkeep.
 - b. A homeschooling mother will especially have her hands full already. Be reasonable!
 - c. Great saints in Scripture might have dwelt in tents but had servants and handmaids. **GEN 14:14; 15:2; 16:1.**
 4. Men, do not impose unreasonable expectations of perfection and cleanliness upon your wives, particularly if you are not willing to lend a hand with household chores.
 5. A proverb to live by: Let your house be clean enough to be healthy and dirty enough to be happy.
 - a. An unkept house is one where valuables tend to get lost. **LUK 15:8.**
 - b. On the other hand, a fastidiously clean house may be a home of a devil. **MAT 12:44.**
 - c. “Be not righteous over much...why shouldest thou destroy thyself?” (**ECC 7:16**).
 - d. Be cautious to not be so caught up in the quest for perfect order in the home that you cannot have contentment in sub-perfection.
 6. Men, be mindful that *guiding the house* (**1TI 5:14**) embraces much more than cleaning and cooking, especially when children enter the picture.
 7. Wives, be mindful not to get wrapped up in false responsibilities, burdens or even opportunities which rob you of the time and energy you need to attend to the things

God expects of you.

XIV. Consider the duty of the husband to love his wife. **EPH 5:25-31.**

- A. Loving a wife should be an instinctive thing but Paul nevertheless commands it.
1. love: v. To bear love to.
 2. love: sb. That disposition or state of feeling with regard to a person which (arising from recognition of attractive qualities, from instincts of natural relationship, or from sympathy) manifests itself in solicitude for the welfare of the object, and usually also in delight in his presence and desire for his approval; warm affection, attachment.
 3. solicitude: Anxious, special, or particular care or attention.
 4. welfare: The state or condition of doing or being well; good fortune, happiness, or well-being (of a person, community, or thing); thriving or successful progress in life, prosperity.
 5. The husband that truly loves his wife cares about her welfare, wants to be with her, cares about what she thinks of him, is fond of her, gives her particular attention, and is devoted to her, her happiness and her well-being.
 6. This commandment establishes that a man's rule over his wife is to be wielded with a view to what is good for her.
 - a. Nowhere can the rule of the husband be construed to be a club to gratify his lust for power, nor an excuse to debase or degrade his wife in demands, words or actions.
 - b. Authority is for the edification (building up), not the destruction of others.
2CO 10:8.
 - (1) Rulers must rule justly in the fear of God. **2SAM 23:3.**
 - (2) A wife needs to know that a husband's authority is being wielded for her good, not simply for his ego.
 - (3) An appeal to the wife *for love's sake* may be a more preferable approach than dictating orders. **PHM 1:8-9.**
 - c. Jesus Christ's model of authority was one of service.
 - (1) **(LUK 22:27)** For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.
 - (2) Jesus described His Second Coming in terms of coming to serve.
LUK 12:37.
 - d. A common source of conflict is when what a husband thinks is best for his wife's well-being is contrary to what she thinks is best.
 - (1) This is a case where a husband had better be guided by sober thought rather than base desires and emotions.
 - (2) A wise leader will avoid impractical or unnecessary extremes in setting standards. **PHIL 4:5; MAT 23:24.**
 - (3) A calm, rational discussion between spouses may be needed here. Those in authority do well to give ear to the opinions of those beneath them. **1CH 13:1-4.**
 - (4) Where a reasonable man has arrived at a reasonable conclusion, his wife should submit and not charge him with a lack of love and caring. What she errantly perceives as a lack of love is actually the true demonstration of love: he is doing what he is supposed to do in

obedience to God.

- e. Men, think not, “She is my slave, my puppet, my push-button automaton to satisfy my every whim.”
 - f. Men, think, “She is my beloved wife, my flesh whom I nourish and cherish. Therefore my rule/control will be reasonable, benevolent and with due consideration of her needs. I will be firm where household order or vital principle is at stake. I will establish guidelines and boundaries within which she may freely operate and exercise considerable power. I will not relinquish my headship, but neither will I be a heartless tyrant. I will remember my Savior's love for me; His tender, compassionate rule over me, and make this my pattern.”
 - g. The man who thinks that he can dictate orders to his wife like a drill sergeant grinding down boot-camp recruits is a fool who will likely generate alienation and mutiny, not loving submission.
 - (1) This is destructive authority that will imperil her, the marriage and children.
 - (2) By contrast, authority which manifests itself in loving consideration and care of a wife is far more likely to generate loving submission in her.
- B. Husbands are to love their wives “...even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (**EPH 5:25**).
- 1. Christ's giving of Himself for the church was as a sacrifice to God. **EPH 5:2**.
 - a. This is how we perceive Christ's love for the church. **1JO 3:16**.
 - b. There is no greater love. **JOH 15:13**.
 - c. How many stories have been told which revolve around the theme of a man who puts himself in harm's way even unto death to rescue the woman he loves?
 - d. The gospel is the greatest love story ever told since it is the account of the greatest Man making the greatest sacrifice for the greatest purpose.
 - 2. After Christ's pattern of sacrifice, so is a man to love his wife at a cost to himself.
 - a. He does this by giving her time, affection, attention, communication, appreciation, money, leisure, his self.
 - (1) A wife craves her husband's affection and attention. **SON 1:2; 2:3-8**.
 - (2) She needs more from her husband than a paycheck.
 - (3) She needs to be told and shown that she is loved, even as the church needs to be told and shown that Christ loves her. Think here of the personal value of Christ's love being communicated to us through the written and preached word, and shown through the ordinances that bring His love to mind.
 - b. A husband should love his wife enough that he would die for her.
 - c. A man who is unwilling to sacrifice himself should not marry.
 - d. A woman should not marry a man who only thinks of himself and what he wants, regardless of how good-looking, charming or wealthy he is!
 - e. On the practicality of such sacrificial love, Christian radio host and author Bob Levine observed: “It is often harder to live for your wife than it would be to die for her. It involves dying daily to your own desires and dreams.” (*The Christian Husband*, p. 167)
 - 3. A husband's responsibility to love his wife does not cancel his responsibility to rule

- her as her head.
- a. Loving a wife does not mean allowing her to always have her way.
 - b. Nor does loving a wife mean that a husband should sacrifice all of his interests and hobbies to satisfy an overly possessive, controlling wife. To do this would make her the head!
 - c. Christ loved the church sacrificially not to exalt it over Himself, but to save it and make it what He wanted for Himself. **EPH 5:27; TIT 2:14.**
4. Husbands: consider the significance of **TIT 2:14.**
 - a. peculiar: That is one's own private property;...
 - b. The church is called *the purchased possession*. **EPH 1:14.**
 - c. She is obviously His most treasured possession: He spent all for her. He left glory for her, preferred her to angels, gave His life for her, and made her joint-heir of glory. **ROM 8:17.**
 - d. Husbands should likewise deem their wives their greatest treasure, especially in light of **MAT 6:21**. If our wives are not genuinely a treasure to us, our hearts will not be towards them, and this cannot be hid.
 5. A husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the church is not going to be a tyrant.
 - a. (**PRO 28:16**) The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.
 - b. An oppressive husband shows a lack of understanding of the nature of true love.
- C. In His loving, sacrificing, and saving Headship of His wife, Christ exalts her. **EPH 5:26-27.**
1. He does NOT trample upon her, debase or humiliate her. The humiliation was His to bear. **ACT 8:33.**
 2. A godly man will follow Christ's example by exalting his wife through his sacrificing of self-interest for her benefit.
 3. He will NOT exploit his headship to the humiliation of his wife who is rather to be honoured. **1PE 3:7.**
 4. Mind that Christ's salvation of His church is "That he might present it to himself a glorious church..." (**EPH 5:27**).
 - a. present: *v. trans.* To bring or place (a person) before, into the presence of, or under the notice of, another; to introduce, esp. formally or ceremoniously; *spec.* to introduce at court, or before a sovereign or other superior.
 - b. Consider that Christ's love is a love that brings His bride *under the notice of* Himself. This speaks of attention.
 - c. Men, do not discount the importance of giving due attention to your wives!
- D. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies..." (**EPH 5:28**).
1. so: In the way or manner described, indicated, or suggested; in that style or fashion.
 2. Men ought to love their wives *in the way* that Christ loved the church, as already noted.
 - a. A husband should *give* himself for his wife.
 - b. A husband should *present* his wife to himself, bring her before his attention.
 - c. A husband should so *love* his wife as to exalt her to her full potential.
 3. When men love their wives *as their own bodies*, they love their wives as Christ loved the church.
 - a. The church, the wife of Christ, is also *the body of Christ*. **EPH 1:22-23.**
 - b. For a man to love his wife as his own body is to bestow upon his wife the

same care and consideration he bestows upon his own flesh.

- (1) NOTE: This obviously assumes a reasonable care of one's own flesh that is for its betterment.
 - (2) The man who does not care about his own body or who mistreats his own body is not therefore justified in not caring for his wife.
 - (3) Mind also that loving one's body means putting a check on its desires for its own good. **1CO 9:27.**
 - (4) The man who loves his wife thus will, FOR HER GOOD, have to do likewise sometimes.
 - (5) It is not an act of nourishing, cherishing love to give into every desire of either one's body or one's wife.
- c. The man who thinks of his wife as only something to feed and comfort his body without bestowing the same regard for her body does NOT love his wife as Christ loved the church nor as he loves his own body.
- d. Paul even teaches that in marriage the wife has power over her husband's body just as the husband has power over her body. **1CO 7:3-5.**
- (1) The husband should have the same regard for the needs of his wife as he expects her to have for his needs.
 - (2) Men: you need respect, food, sex, liberty and rest. Fine. She needs those as well, plus affection, attention, appreciation, assurance, praise, compassion, kindness, protection, security, stability, etc.
 - (3) This is a matter of *due benevolence* and failure to render that benevolence is defrauding one's spouse.
 - [a] due: That is owing and payable, as an enforceable obligation or debt.
 - [b] benevolence: Favourable feeling or disposition, as an emotion manifested towards another; affection; goodwill (towards a particular person or on a particular occasion).
 - [c] defraud: To deprive (a person) by fraud of that which is his by right, either by fraudently taking or by dishonestly withholding it from him.