Marriage Glorifies God's Redemption, Part 2

Ephesians 5:25-33

March 13, 2022

We are going back to Ephesians Chapter 5 this morning to finish the sermon that I started preaching last week. If you're new to Grace Church, just want to let you know that usually we are working our way verse by verse through a book of the Bible. We have taken a break to do this series on marriage, taken a break from our exposition of Luke's Gospel, working through a series on marriage. We're about halfway through it.

Last week, we looked at the wife's role in marriage and so husbands this week it's your turn and start in Ephesians 5:25. But for both roles in marriage, for husband and wife, as well as for the marriage unit itself, and individual marriages, for the institution of marriage as an institution all of these things serve, as we were saying last week, they serve a larger purpose. All of these things, everything that we are a part of, our very lives, we serve a larger purpose, which is this, it's to glorify God's marvelous redemption in Christ.

That was our first point in the outline last week. We glorify God's redemption in exaltation and the exaltation is not the exaltation of marriage for marriage's sake. It's the exaltation of God's redemption in and through our marriages; lived out through our marriages. As I said last week, that's true for every Christian, whether married or unmarried. We exist to bring glory to God, and that comes for us as the church by exalting his redemptive work in Jesus Christ. It's critical that we see that, especially since the Spirit has arranged the argument in the book of Ephesians for us to see that exact point.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he unpacks this letter and makes his argument moving from point to point in the argument, so that we see our lives and our marriages in the larger context of God's redemptive work in and through his church. So we glorify God's redemption when his people are saved, when they are sanctified in and through the local church, and that brought us to our second point last week. Number two, we glorify God's redemption in sanctification. We glorify God's redemption in sanctification.

Paul's argument in Ephesians is that, that salvation and sanctification, those things happen in and through the ministry

of the local church. In fact, just to show you this briefly, go back to Ephesians Chapter 4 and verse 1, where Paul there urges the Christians in the local church in Ephesus. And again, this is where he pivots from, really, what is a doctrinal foundation, a doctrinal platform, he pivots from that to then what do we do about that?

If that doctrine be true, and it is, how do we therefore live? And Paul says we're to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called. That happens when individual Christians pursue unity of mind and unity of heart, oneness of spirit in doctrine. That's what it means in verse 3 about the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is not talking about some kind of ecumenical unity. Bring all the faiths of the world together, so that they can all have their different expressions of how they worship God in the way that they worship God, that is not what the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is referring to.

The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is referring to a corporate context for certain in the local church, but it's a doctrinal unity, which is what verses 4-6 refer to. The Spirit, his work, is to bring out the doctrine that we really do

hold together, to be true, as Christians, by virtue of being Christians, he brings that doctrine those, the clarity of those truths, out and up, so we can see it, so we can admire it, so we can worship in the truth together. He brings that unity out. That's the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Think about that. Considering all of our different backgrounds, all of us in this room. Think about our upbringings. Think about the different cultures that we come from, different languages that we've spoken, experiences we've had, different capacities and capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, dispositions. How does such a disparate group of people, totally different, for any other reason we would not be together.

How does this disparate group of people gather together in a local church? How are they ever going to come together, be united together? How does, take it down to the individual level in our marriage, how does a married couple, the pairing of one man, one woman, come together in unity? I know at first when they're dating and the romance and the, you know the, the hormones are flowing and blinding them to the reality that's ahead of them. They come together and they think, we have everything in common. And how many times have I heard that in

premarital counseling? Well, we just we love each other. We just have everything in common. Of course you have everything in common. He's saying everything you want to hear and you're saying everything he wants to hear, of course you agree on everything. Give it six months after the wedding, right?

So how does this, man and woman, and they start to realize over time how very, very different they are. God delights in, in bringing great differences together in a complementary fashion, to strengthen one another's strengths and to shore up one another's weaknesses. He does that in the marriage. He does that in the church. So how does that unity going to happen? Well that unity is going to happen deeply, profoundly in truth. It's gonna happen in doctrine. It's gonna happen in theology.

Just warn you, young people, don't go shopping for a bride or a groom out in some other far field where you don't know the theology that that other person has. You may come together on superficial, a superficial basis of looks or profiles on whatever social media you're using. May like the same, superficial things. I'm telling you, unity is shared in the heart, in the mind. It's a doctrinal, theological biblical unity. It's why it's so good to see couples come together, grow up together and come together within the framework of a local

church. They're of one mind and one heart. They are so far ahead. So far ahead.

So how's that going to happen in the local church? How do we come to this one mind, one heart, sharing unified doctrine well, Ephesians 4:11, Christ gave gifted men to his local churches. He gave, first of all, New Testament apostles and prophets. Those are the men who set the doctrinal foundation for the church, that's all recorded here in the New Testament. Christ also gave, Ephesians 4:11, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers as well, and their purpose is to take from that doctrinal foundation, keep planting people into it, keep digging them deeply into it, and getting the nutrients of that foundation of that soil into their hearts and into their lives so that they work that out in their lives.

That's what pastors, shepherds, teachers, evangelists, that's what they do. They work the truth of Scripture into the lives of church members and into the lives of marriages, husbands and wives. What for? Verse 12 says "to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ," husbands and wives, they sit under the word of God together. They love the truth together, they learn doctrine together, they worship together, they sing together, they pray

together, they minister together, they learn how to serve together.

Listen, that is the pathway to unity in the entire church. If that's the pathway to unity in the entire Church, of all of us coming together, well, then so much more to strengthen marital unity. As the saints do the work of the ministry, as they build the body together as husbands and wives learn to love the truth and minister the truth together, the church grows in unity, strength, maturity.

Verse 13, look at it there in Ephesians 4. We, “equip the saints,” verse 12, “to do the work of the ministry for the building up of the body of Christ,” verse 13, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him, who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow, so it builds itself up and love.”

"When each part is working properly." We could, we could substitute that and say very easily when each part, each person, is playing their own role. When each player is playing his position on the field. Every single one of us is doing what God designed us to do. If that's true in the Church, how much more so in marriage. The husband submitting to his role defined by God and the wife submitting to her role as defined by God.

It's really the spirit of rebellion, the spirit of the age, it's against the revealed will of Christ who is the head of the church; it's a sign of ignorance and arrogance, when a professing Christian acts like an island unto himself. When he's independent and self-reliant, when he lives like a, a wandering star, isolated from the authority and the discipline of the local church. When he's checked out, disengaged from the regular ministry of the Word of God. When he fails to practice the one another commands of scripture. It's a sign of immaturity when he's like that, she's like that. It's a sign of rebellion. It's a sign of ignorance and, and even arrogance in many cases.

But when we live, whether we're married or unmarried, whether male or female, Jew or Greek, slave or free, when we live in submission to Christ as our head, when it when our life is to do his will and to work his will, we do that in and

through the local church, listen, all of us grow in sanctification. As verse 17 in Chapter 4 says we, we no longer walk as unbelievers walk when we grow in, in strength and sanctification. We're no longer living in futility and darkness and ignorance. We're no longer, as verse 18-19 say in that chapter, we're no longer alienated from the life of God due to the ignorance that's in us. No longer in hardness of heart, we rather walk the worthy life of God in Christ, which is a redeemed life, a mind renewed by scripture, and we pursue repentance in the fear of God, as Paul described that from verse 20 all the way to the end of the chapter, chapter 4.

We learned to walk, Ephesians 5:2, in love, as imitators of God. We also learn to walk in the light, the light of truth, Ephesians 5:8, because we're children of light. Because we're children of light, we love light, we love truth, we love to live a life that's lived in the light, walked around in the light where everybody can see. We don't mind exposure. We're grateful for that because it brings glory and honor to Christ. We learn the truth, understand the truth, embrace the truth. And then, Ephesians 5:15, we practice the truth, which is what it means to walk in wisdom, to take the things that we know to be true, and put them into practical outworking in our lives. That is, the

wrestling through of the truth and working out in daily life. That's wisdom, that's wisdom.

Living a life of repentance and faith. Walking in love, walking in light, walking in wisdom. All these, these metaphors Paul uses here about the Christian life. All this is produced by the Word of God in us. Our minds are renewed and our lives are transformed not because we've got the, the strength and the wisdom to do it in and of ourselves. It comes by the power of God's Word, by the power of his Spirit working in and through his Word.

All this happens because, with the preaching ministry of the local church, the teaching ministry of the local church, where Christians are not only taught with depth, but exhorted and commanded to obey what's written, that's what true preaching is. So all this is happening this new life empowered by the Holy Spirit, as verse 18 talks about, we're being filled by the Spirit. That's what it is to be filled by the Spirit. The power of his Word, because of his power, works inside of us as believers. And yet it doesn't just stay inside of us. It's not bottled up and contained. It can't help but come out.

Comes out, showing a dramatic effect on the outside overtime. We see a transformation taking place in the life in

the disposition in the personality and the manner of living in the priorities of the life and all that becomes manifest to the world. So the invisible work of the Spirit is made visible to all to everyone, to the watching world and to one another when each and every Christian submits to one another, as verse 21 says, Chapter 5, out of reverence for Christ. When we fear God, when we fear Christ, and then we submit to one another. And as I said, it's each one of us in the body doing our part. Wives submit in the role of a wife. Husbands submit in the role of a husband. Parents and children, they submit to their roles. Slaves and masters submit to theirs. This is how the wisdom of God, in the redemption of God, is manifest to the world. It comes out in and through the church and his people.

And here's where we come to the institution of marriage. Which serves its initial purpose, as we've been talking about, especially in that we're reviewing Genesis, the institution of marriage serves that initial creation purpose. As a durable formative institution, it shapes individuals inside the home which also has a shaping effect on society outside the home. That's an initial purpose, but the institution of marriage also serves a second purpose, a new purpose, as we've mentioned, it's to glorify God's redemption in Christ.

So brings us, as we did last week, to a third point. Number three, we glorify God's redemption in submission. We glorify God's redemption in submission. And as we've shown, Paul starts with wifely submission in Ephesians 5:22 to 24. “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.”

One of the constant temptations I think coming out of the fall, coming out of our sin disposition, our sin nature, from that original temptation, and it's to redefine the roles of men and women. To flip the script, to subvert what God made plain and clear in Scripture and we think we're always fooled into thinking that we can get better results by taking another way. You hear this all the time. Men saying something like this, Well, my wife is just better at making decisions than I am so, she's so gifted.

He's flattering, you know, he doesn't want to do anything, really, he just wants to watch TV. But you hear men saying, men, she's just flattered, you know flattering their wife. She's so gifted, she's so much better educated. She's experienced at

this. I don't want to get in her way. I'm gonna slow her down. You go girl. Right?

So it's a better idea in our particular marriage for her to take the lead. Her to have the decision making. You hear wives may be sometimes fooled into saying the same things. I've even heard something like this. We, we think it's fair to trade roles kind of switch it up, go back and forth. After all, men have failed in leadership for long enough and been the oppressor, in this oppressive institution, so they need to appreciate the woman's perspective. It will help them lead better, help them think better.

We trade roles every now and again. We learn to appreciate each other's challenges. You heard this word? We empathize with one another. We're submitting to one another, as Paul says, verse 21, submitting to one another in the fear of Christ, we're actually doing it better than you are by holding onto this traditional male female role thing. And the resulting empathy of our trading back and forth makes us better at both roles. I've become a better leader and servant. She becomes a better leader and servant, so we're doing it better.

Look, we expect unbelievers to talk like that. We get it when the world tinkers with God's design, thinking it can get

better results, thinking human reason and intuition can improve upon God's perfect wisdom from creation. But believers ought never to speak that way. We shouldn't even think that way.

Do we really want to use the formative power of our marriages and our roles in marriage to shape our children to become spiritual innovators? Is that ever a good idea? That's an original temptation, isn't it? That's what Satan tried to do. That's what he tempted our first parents to do. Look how it's worked out.

No matter how wise and cool innovation might seem in any given cultural moment, listen, beloved, we need to stick to the plan, this is dropped to us from heaven itself. This isn't, this isn't from the mind of men, it's from the mind of God and a good and loving God gave this rule to us for a good and loving purpose. He's all wise, he knows everything. He's told us, because he loves us. Let's follow the script.

Paul says, in Ephesians 5:15, we're not to walk in foolishness, which is what all that innovation stuff is, we're to walk in wisdom, we need to "understand what the will of the Lord is," verse 17, and do it. Practice it. Don't try to improve upon

it, just follow the model. Follow the design it will get you where God wants you to go.

By the way, I just want to clear up a terrible misinterpretation of verse 21. I've seen how applying this totally wrong headed egalitarian view of mutual submission within the marriage has undermined and frustrated so many marriages. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” does not mean that wives submit to husband sometimes and husbands submit to wives sometimes, that's the view that's been propagated for decades. I mean, if that's what Paul meant by verse 21, “Submit to one another,” just test it by trying to carry it through every other authority submission, pairing from verse 22 onward, in the whole house table. Wives submit to husbands, husbands submit to wives. Okay. Husbands love wives and wives, love husbands. So we may think so far so good.

Doesn't seem too bad until we come to the next pairing, children obey parents, parents obey children. Talk about a recipe for disaster. Then it gets totally ridiculous. Parents train up your children, children, train up your parents. Some children are trying to do exactly that, doesn't work does it?

Same problem in the master slave pairing. You can't carry that idea, submit to one another, mutual submission,

egalitarianism, you can't carry it through any of the relationships. And if it's to be a paradigm, to set a paradigm for all those relationships, it fails at the very, really fails at the very first one. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ,” it sets us up to see how fulfilling our individual roles, whether in marriage, whether in parenting, or whether in the workplace, fulfilling our God given, wisdom designed roles, God has assigned to each one of us, that is how we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. It's how we submit, by lining up under his authority to do the, the role defined by him.

So as the wife embraces her role as a wife, as she submits to her husband, voluntarily, thoughtfully, actively as her husband’s helpmeet. In obedience to the will of God, out of love and devotion to Christ. Listen, the wife not only fulfills her role in the marriage institution, but she submits to her design in creation, so her submission becomes a model for the church who submits to Christ. She is a living example to the entire Church of what submission looks like within her marriage and then outward in her life. She has a powerful role in the church, powerful role, and it's a formative role. It shapes the next generation. It shapes how people think. It shapes how people act

and react. It shapes our expectations. Beautiful, beautiful picture.

Now for the husband. Husbands are to submit to and to model for everyone the love of Christ for his church. This is a fourth point in our outline, number four, we glorify God's redemption, and I use the word here, in affection. We glorify God's redemption in affection. Men, affection, love, that is your role as a husband, that is your duty and husbands, listen, you can make it easier or you can make it harder for your wife to submit, to line up under your authority, submit to your headship and follow your leadership. You can make that hard on her or easy on her.

All of us understand this, don't we? How submitting to a leader can be easier or harder depending on the, the leader. How that leader uses his authority, how he exercises his leadership. We get this. When I served in the military, the officer in charge, the OIC in my first platoon, was not a good officer. Terrible communicator, terrible leader, and not just in difficult situations in all situations, he could not lead us safely out of a wet paper bag. He was a, he was a derelict in his leadership. I, I have to say he wasn't bad at everything.

He was good at a couple things. He was really good at administration. He was a good administrator, but he used his administration powers to take vengeance on others. He was a vindictive little man. He's also good at taking credit for things his platoon accomplished, even though he had nothing to do with it. He had a knack for using the accomplishment of others to promote himself. So he wasn't all bad. We saluted the rank, but had a very hard time saluting the man.

Probably many of you have had that experience as well, whether serving in the military or during your schooling or in your workplace environment. I think everybody understands this and we resolve, don't we? We resolve by living through those kinds of bad experiences with bad leadership, we say, that teaches me, I don't ever want to lead like that. I don't ever want to do to others what that guy is doing to us. I'm gonna, I'm gonna make very different decisions when I come into this difficult situation. When I come into any situation, I'm gonna put them ahead of me. Not like that leader who always puts himself first.

We learn from good leadership as well as bad. We know how hard it is to submit to bad leadership to self-centered, egotistical leadership. So husbands, please, let us resolve

right now to learn how to be good leaders, so that we don't make it difficult for our dear wives to submit to us. So that we make it a joy for them to follow our leadership.

At the end, look at verse 33, Paul summarizes this, "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see to it that she respects her husband." Listen, we're gonna find out here that love for a husband. It's a decision we make. You know what, respect for a wife, that's also a decision she makes. Wives, show respect for your husband. Don't put this bar of, oh, they must get to this level of respectability, and then I'll dole out a little bit of respect here and there.

You respect your husband. Your husband is commanded to love you. For either of us on either side of this, it's not always easy. Well, we're commanded to do it. So husbands, when your wife is commanded to respect you, be respectable. Let it be an easy thing for her to respect you to look up to you, to admire you for your work and your diligence, and your love and your leadership.

Can we all agree that exhibit A for sound leadership is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Can I get an Amen? It's Jesus Christ that we need to look to. Jesus Christ is exhibit A for sound leadership, so let's take a look at exemplary

leadership and how he exercises headship over the church. Starting in verse 25, “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. 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. 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 he nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.” We’ll stop there.

In that section Paul gives husbands a command in that very first part of verse 25, just a clear cut command. Very simple. As followed by a comparison with Christ in the way he carried out his love for the church, verse, end of verse 25 through verse 27, and then we see a reason for obeying that command in verses 28 to 30.

So we're going to do this just like we did for the wives. We’ll make command comparison and reason, we’ll make those all sub points. So we see the command, the comparison and then the reason will start with sub-point A, the command, which is in verse 25, “Husbands love your wives.” We might have expected Paul

to say something like this, following on the, the wife's role of submission, might have expected Paul to say something like this, husbands exercise your authority righteously. Your headship, exercise it well, lead justly.

It's not that the command here, it's "Husbands love your wives." Let's take a moment to notice a few things about that command. First, the command is in the present tense. In the Greek present tense, it means that the duty of love is a continuous, ongoing commitment. This isn't a one off, it's not a check the box, check the list, check this off the list kind of a kind of a thing.

It is a way of life. It's a manner of living for a husband to love his wife. Husbands, love your wives and here's the idea, in the present tense, keep on loving your wife, make it your constant habit to love your wife. In the words of the marriage covenant, it's to love and to cherish till death do us part, right? That's talking about the longevity, talking about the longevity, that commitment it ends at death. But listen, your daily duty is to love your wife. This is definitional, by the way, this is the very definition of being a husband. Being a husband means lifelong, daily, continuous love.

Talked to a lot of young men who are not yet married and they say one of my great desires in being married is, it's sexual fulfillment. We understand that, we understand the joy of that, but they've got it all wrong. They think that that is what it means to be a husband, is to be able to do that without guilt, without sin.

Listen men, this is the privilege of marriage. It's to love one woman, exclusively, as a daily duty and to see how that shapes your character, how it changes your entire way of thinking. You become, not ever self-centered, you become other's centered, other's focused, and it starts with that beautiful little creature called your wife.

Second, there's a word there that Paul uses for love. It's very significant to get this right, especially when love in our culture means so many things. Our English word for love is pretty broad, very broad, semantic range. We love our wife and our kids. We love the truth of Scripture. We, we love our God, we love Jesus Christ. We love his church. We also love a day off every now and again. We love weekends. We love vacations. We love sports and sports teams. We love ice cream, chips and salsa.

Based on common usage, any non-English speaking observer to our language, as they come into our culture and they listen to us chatter back and forth about this thing called love, they hear how broad the range is for a word like love. He might assume that love, taking it all together say, okay, this word love, what does this mean in English, it means we love what we like.

We love what positively affects our senses, our physical senses. What, it's, we love, what gives us pleasure. We, we love what we find attractive. We love what makes us happy. Plenty of evidence in our society, that that's exactly how people think about love. I love what I like.

Beloved, don't think that that's just out there in the world that's in the church, that's how Christians think and then they start using Bible verses to support and cover over their self-centered version, their worldly version, of what love means. I love what I like, so when wife and kids no longer bring happiness, or when our God seems too demanding, too severe, a little bit cramping our style, we drop that wife, we drop those kids, we drop that god, that we no longer like.

We've fallen out of love. Can't help it, just happened to me. Fall out of love. We set out on a quest to find a new wife,

a new god, new kids, new families, ones that we like. That's the English word for love. It's pretty broad, it can lead to those kind of conclusions.

The Greek language, though, has four words for love, not just one, four words. All the same concepts that we have in our own language. So we just have to be careful on how we're using it. Define our, our use of the word love well. All the same concepts, but they have clarified the idea of love in four different words, *storge*, *philia*, *eros*, and *agape*. *Storge*, *philia*, *eros* and *agape*. If you don't know have to spell those things, just guess, okay? We'll go through it here. The first word, *storge*, it's about natural affection. It's about filial love, family love. So this is like the, the love of a father or a mother for their children. It's about children's love for their parents. It's a, it's a natural affection. So think of the natural love of family when you think of this first word, *storge*.

Second word, *philia*, this is the most common Greek word for love and in the Greek culture, Greco-Roman culture, *philia* was the high in, in secular sources, in many religious and philosophical sources, *philia* is the highest form of love. Verb is *phileo*, it's the affection of a friendship. It's a friendship

bond, it's intimate and deep, and it's particularly demonstrated by loyalty, fidelity. *Philia* could be used for marriage as well, which is fitting and good to use that word of marriage is to actually used of the father's love for the son and the son's love for the father. So it's not a bad word. It's a very good word. Intimacy, close, friendship, fidelity, loyalty that's *philia*. *Phileo* is the verb.

The third word is *eros*, from which we get the word erotic, and so it implies that, refers to passion or longing or desire. E*ros* was an impulsive thing, so it's that whole animal attraction deal. I just can't help myself. It's what we I think are referring to when we say, I fell in love. I couldn't, I couldn't help it. I saw my wife Melinda and I was smitten. I was knocked on the floor. That just happened to me. It's okay, but it's, but it's kind of, it's kind of instinctive. I wasn't smitten by others; I was smitten by her.

It's driven though, *eros* is driven often by a desire to satisfy this impulse, this desire that's been activated, it's been stimulated, it's been provoked, *eros* seeks to satisfy that. Much of what passes for love in our time consists in the first and third words. If we wanna be really simplistic about this, overly simplistic and, kind of crass, we can say that

conservatives primarily see love as *storge*, as devotion to family. Progressives primarily see love as *eros*, as in unrestrained sexual passion and expression. And for conservatives or progressives to stifle either of those kinds of loves is doing great harm. Don't bottle that up. It's a very rare and precious thing to find the love of true friendship, the *philia* kind of love.

Fealty and devotion in friendship is very hard to find. But it's a very rare, even rarer thing than that. To see the kind of love that Paul is commanding husbands to practice constantly. It's even rarer, because this kind of love is God given. What Paul commands husbands to practice is a God given love. It's a virtue provided by his grace. It's generated in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. It's grown within us. It's the very first fruit of the Spirit; Love followed by joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. It's fruit of the Spirit. It's grown by him.

So its source, of this kind of love it's, we're commanded to practice, its source is not human. It doesn't come from the bowels of our own being, doesn't come from our own hearts or minds. It comes from God, because God is this kind of love, kind of love Paul commands husbands to give their wives, is *agape*.

It's from the verb form *agapo*. *Agape* is pure virtue, *agape* seeks, here's really kind of, definitionally, what *agape* is, it seeks the highest good of the object loved. *Agape* seeks the highest good, the greatest good for the object loved.

So how do we define good? Well we go right to scripture, don't we? Sometimes the highest good means, got to confront a person in sin, because it's the highest good that we walk in holiness, right? So if the highest good for the object loved is what *agape* is, if we're going to *agape* our wives, sometimes we need to confront. Oftentimes, this is true for a husband. The little summary in Colossians 3:19 that Paul gives of this whole section, in Ephesians, "Husbands love your wives and," what does he say? "don't be embittered against them."

It's a temptation and a tendency for husbands to become embittered against their wives, to be impatient with them, to be not gentle, but harsh and rough with them. So if we're gonna do the highest good for the object that we love, our wife, it means that we do not be embittered against them, ever. It means always being gentle, always being kind, always speak in a manner that she can receive and understand.

It means being tremendously patient with things we don't get. It means being kind and gentle and tender with her and that

is against our impulses. It's against how men speak with each other. *Agape* seeks the highest good of the object loved, and then add this, even if it comes at great sacrifice for the subject. Even if it comes at great cost and sacrifice for the one who gives this kind of love. *Agape* seeks the good of the object loved, even if it means a high cost, even grave, mortal sacrifice for the giver of this kind of love.

Very little attention given to the word *agape* in Greco-Roman literature. It's a concept that's ignored in our world as well. Harold Hoehner says, “Outside the Bible, the noun *agape* is not found in classical literature before the New Testament era.” It was the coming of Christ and the love of God in Christ that made this a thing. And all of a sudden now others are talking about it as well, 'cause they've never seen it. Because *agape* is revealed, it's revealed from heaven. It's a virtue that comes from God. It comes to us from another world, as it were. *Agape* love is what characterizes God, because John tells us twice, God is love. *Agape* is higher than *storge* because it's not natural it's supernatural. *Agape* is different than *philia* because the feelings of affection and friendship are not required to practice it.

Agape is almost the opposite of *eros*, because *agape* has nothing to do with attraction, self-satisfaction, and I'll ask to do with the other. Listen when husbands practice *agape* love all those other loves will be experienced as well, but they are the caboose on the train, not the engine driving the train. The engine driving the train is *agapao*. So the command is "husbands Love your wives." Another note, this means how we love our wives constantly, habitually as a way of life. We also know what kind of love this is, okay, to seek the highest good of our wives, even if it comes at great cost to ourselves.

There's a third observation about husbands loving their wives, and this is so simple that it's really easy to miss, but it is a command. Okay, duh, it's a command. It's an imperative, but as a command we have to understand that to love is a matter of the mind and the will, not the emotions, not the feelings. And so even this point, we glorify God in affection, affectation, being affected. That's really a misnomer for the point.

So go back to where I told you to write, "We glorify God in God's redemption, in affection." Cross out affection and put love. Put love there. Because this does not have to do with the feelings, the emotions, the affections, how many times you hear

a husband say, “You know, I, I love her. But you see how she talks to me? You see how she acts, she, how she spends money. You see how she keeps or doesn't keep the home? You see the kind of food I get, you know?”

You hear the complaint coming right? I mean, if she took care of XYZ, I'd love her. I would show that kind of, listen, because this is a command, this is going right to your mind and your will, men. That means you can choose even in the face of undeserving person before you, whoever that is, whether it's your wife, or your kids, or coworkers, or friendly or neighbors or whatever, whoever it is, you can choose to show this kind of love. You make a decision. Example before us, Jesus Christ.

Romans Chapter 5 says he loved us when? We were sinners. We were enemies. We were opposed to him in rebellion. We were at enmity with God. We were in the filth of our sin. And what did God do? He loved us in spite of what we look like. In spite of our rebellion against him. That's why this is so important to understand that love is a matter of the mind, understanding it, and the will to do it.

Duty of the husband is to love his wife, and it's a decision that he makes. Doesn't depend on his feelings, doesn't depend on his desire, doesn't depend on whether he's attracted

or happy in the moment or not. Love is the decision a husband makes to seek the highest good of his wife in any moment, at any time, whether she's grumpy or happy, love her.

You do that even when, and in spite of the fact, that it'll certainly cost something. Obedience to this command is not based on a quid pro quo arrangement. You do for me, I'll do for you. It's not some kind of agreement. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours. Obedience to this command doesn't require reciprocity. In fact, the virtue of *agape* is most clearly manifest when the object of love is most undeserving of it.

Obeying the command, "husband love your wife," requires a decision, requires an act of the will. It means seeking the highest good of your wife and it will cost you something and maybe, maybe it's a low cost; it's the sacrifice of rest when you get home and you want it; it could be the sacrifice of some money or some time; it might be a small investment of your time and attention; might require a bigger investment of your time and your teaching, your energy to study, in order that you have something intelligent to say and pass on to your wife.

Might come at an even greater cost for you. The cost of a job promotion, maybe the cost of a job that you really wanted, you're well qualified for. Maybe it's an attractive opportunity,

but you give it up for the sake of your wife. Whatever love demands, seeking the highest good of your wife, that's what husbands give, that's the command.

"Husbands, love your wives," do that continually, seeking her good always, do it sacrificially. And some of you wonder, some of you men are thinking this, I know, because I'm a man. How far does this go, okay? To what extent? I mean, come on, let's be honest here. What are the limits? What are the limits here? You know when a wife says this, says, "Wives submit to your husbands in everything," and they're like, oh yeah, when he tells me to sin? No, not when he tells you to sin.

Same thing here. What's the extent? Do I have to love her even when loving her means sinning? No, it doesn't mean sinning, because it's the highest good, good as defined by God, so you'll never be loving her and, and causing you to sin. What extent? What are the limits? You know what, Paul's anticipated you. Keep reading in verse 25, "Husbands love your wives," How? "as Christ loved the church." Hmmn, how far did he go? To what extent did he love? Paul says "He gave himself up for her." He paid the ultimate sacrifice, didn't he?

Which brings us to another sub-point immediately. It's note, subpoint B, the comparison. It's talked about the command, now we talk about the comparison. “Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church, gave himself up for her, 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. But that she might be holy and without blemish.”

That little section, there are three purpose statements, marked by the English conjunction, that, Christ loved the church gave himself with three purposes in view, “that he might sanctify her,” verse 26, “that he might present her,” verse 27, and “that she might be holy.” We can simplify those purposes into two, Christ died number one to sanctify the church, verse 26, and Christ died number two to glorify the church. He died to sanctify the church. He died to glorify the church. And that in a nutshell, is the ultimate example of *agape*.

Christ loved his church. He sought the highest good for her. It came at the highest cost for him, and he did that to sanctify her and to glorify her. Number one, Christ died to sanctify the church. It says to purify her, to make her holy, the cleansing that Paul refers to here is the whole work of

Christ to save his bride. Though her sins were like scarlet, because of Christ's perfect atoning sacrifice, because of his substitutionary death on the cross, dying for her sins, her scarlet sins are washed away and she before him becomes whiter than snow. Though they were red like crimson, blood, they were washed as white as wool.

God took all the initiative, didn't he? He wasn't attracted by the sinner. Don't ever quote it this way. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, whosoever believeth in him and should not perish but have everlasting life." Don't ever quote that by saying "God just loved the world so much." He's not affected that way. God is unchanging. He is an impassible, immutable God. What that word, *hoytos* means, it means God loved the church in this way. It doesn't mean he loves so much. It means he, he did love so much, it's a great extent, it's not talking about the extent, it's talking about the kind of love.

"For God so loved the world," God loved the world in this way that he gave. God took all the initiative. He sent his only begotten son to die for the church that she might live. He sent his Holy Spirit that she would be born again. She'd be regenerated in new life. A new nature in her, no longer inclined toward sin and death, but now inclined to trust and believe. And

the first act of her new nature is to put faith in her savior, to believe in him, to repent of all of her sins. God is pleased to justify her in Christ, to accept her in the beloved, to draw her close.

She's not only pardoned, forgiven, she's declared righteous in Christ, she's sealed by the Holy Spirit. She's sanctified by the word that God has spoken. The Word of Christ. She's preserved whole until the day of her glorification. It says number two, Christ died, number two, to glorify the church, to glorify her, to beautify her, to make her lovely. This is verse 27, "So he might present the church to himself in splendor." The word is *endoxos*, which is emphasized in the sentence. It means bright, present her to himself, bright, shining, utterly stunning, full of splendor.

It's one key part I love in every single wedding, being able to have this front row seat right down here when I'm marrying a couple and we all rise we take a look. We pivot over to see that bride as she enters, she's splendorous, isn't she? Beautiful in that gown glowing with face filled with joy. That's what Christ wants for the church. Christ glorifies his bride. He rejoices to present her to himself. He's like, he's like an artist. He's like a painter, a poet, an architect, a builder.

He's one that takes great pride and immense pleasure in his work. When Christ glorifies his bride, she's spot free, wrinkle, free, absolutely flawless.

Because of Christ love, there's no cause for condemnation in her whatsoever that is gone, forgotten, disappeared, taken care of, atoned for on the cross, because of Christ's love there's every reason for her commendation, because she's robed in perfect righteousness. Husbands, what do you learn from the way that Christ loves and shows love for his bride? The decision that he made to love her when she was unlovely?

What implications for us in the love that we show to our wife? Well, to be clear, it's not a one to one comparison. A husband, he does play a role of sanctification in his, the life of his wife, but just, and it's just as a wife also plays a role in the life of her husband and his sanctification, but strictly speaking, Christ is the one who has sanctified his wife, not the husband. Christ is the one who's sanctifies every husband's wife. So Christ is the one who also sanctifies the husband.

He is the key agent in this, and he does this by the power of the Holy Spirit. So Christ is the one who is sanctifying her, by his Spirit, it's not the husband, it's not the husband's duty to, to sanctify his wife, that's Christ job. He contributes to

that, he supports that, he teaches that, but he is not the sanctifier Christ is.

To sanctify the wife and present her holy blameless, this is way above the husband's pay grade, it's the realm of Christ himself, but we need to think about the implications for husbands and the love that they show to their wives. At the very least, we see that Christ's love, how did he love her, what does that show? It shows his love involved planning and thinking. It involved some forethought, involved some preparatory work, preparatory action, laying down groundwork. Before individual members of the church were even aware of him, Christ had done everything for his bride, the church.

So husbands think about that. How much thought and planning and preparation do you put into the love that you show your wife? Are you intentional? Do you put effort into it? Are you diligent, deliberate at loving your wife? Do you remember things that pertain to her? Do you remember things that she cares about? Christ is intentional.

Christ planned, gave forethought, preparation. If you look more closely and see, verse 26, don't let this escape your notice. Christ cleansed her by the washing of water with, what, the word, right? It's not the usual word for word. The usual

word we see in Scripture is the word *logos*. This is the word *rhema*. *Rhema* puts the focus on the content of what Christ spoke, what he taught. *Rhema* refers to the sayings of Christ, refers to his, his teachings, his doctrine. So guess what husbands, loving your wife, also means you love her by talking to her, not by being the strong silent type. John Wayne is not your model for an exemplary husband. Christ is. Christ is your model and he spoke. He used words. Try it out guys.

If you're having trouble with your wife more verbal than you, usually, she'll help you. She'll help you. She'll fill in the dead spaces. He spoke, he used words. He leads through his communication. He leads through speaking. He leads by teaching. So if you will love her well, you will serve her well, you will lead her well, if you take up your God given responsibility and live according to your design to be a student of God's Word. Be a student of biblical doctrine. Then turn around and teach your wife what you yourself are learning from the word of God. What's affecting your soul? Let it affect her soul.

Think about the power of the marriage institution in shaping men in this daily commitment to the duty of loving one's wife this way. Think about the example this sets for your children. Think about, this sets in, how this sets an

aspirational model for boys to follow, not to follow their silly impulses, give themselves to every little silly thing, but to put others ahead of themselves.

To exercise self-control and self-discipline that they might be the most useful tool and vessel, for the purpose of other people. Just like you're showing that little boy in how you treat your wife. Think about how this sets expectations for girls and the young men that they grow up to consider for marriage. Let yourself in your example be a model for them. So they look to you and say, I want a boy that's just like Daddy.

Think about how that kind of love in leadership in the home, how it sets a pattern for a man who takes up role leadership in society as well. Think about the power that that example sets for others in the environment that it creates in the workplace or should, God permit, in realms of government authority or political power, think about how you, if God gave you that opportunity to exercise authority and power in the workplace and the government and politics or wherever it is, how you show by serving others, completely different from what we're seeing all around us, aren't we? No matter what side of the aisle it is.

The institution of marriage, its durable formative power by the design of creation by the purpose to glorify God's redemption. It's through this kind of affection for our wives. It's through this kind of love for our wives. What a remarkable kindness of God, isn't it to give marriage to the world. No wonder Satan wants to destroy it. No wonder he wants to divide marriages, split them apart, disrupt them, fracture them, tear them to pieces, redefine the terms, confuse everybody, let them make up their own brand of marriage. No wonder he wants to do that, but listen, he's not our worry. You know what our concern is? Our own hearts, it's our own hearts.

Come to a final sub-point. We've seen the command. The comparison, Paul gives sub point C, the reason for the command. Here's why husbands ought to love their wives, verse 28, says "In the same way husbands should," ought to, "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."

It's two reasons actually here for the command, not just one and this motivates husbands to love their wives. Husbands love your wives first because it's morally essential. It's that

word ought, it's ought, should love their wives. Love your wife because it's morally essential, and secondly, love your wife because it's personally beneficial: Morally essential, personally beneficial. Love is essential, love is beneficial for the husband.

Love your wives first because it's morally essential. Christ's example creates a moral obligation, doesn't it? Whatever he does and however he acts, that becomes our moral duty. That becomes a righteous imperative for husbands to follow. That's the word should in verse 28. The verb is *opheilo,* it refers to an indebtedness. It refers to an obligation. It's about what we owe.

Remember husbands, what do you owe Christ? Everything. You owe Christ your entire life. You owe him your soul. Why? Your a member of Christ bride, he died for you. You have experienced the love of Christ. You've, you've been that undeserving, wicked bad husband. You've been a bad man, you've been a bad boy, you've been a bad everything. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God," right? So man, when he purchased you, he did it all. You owe him everything.

Second: Husbands are to love their wives because it's personally beneficial, that's the principle there, he who loves

his wife loves himself. Husbands, God in his kindness, he united this woman to you. Think about that. He united this woman to you. Look at yourself in the mirror sometimes and say, how in the world did she love me? What kind of blindness did God put over this woman's eyes that she would consider me a match?

In his kindness, though, he's given you this woman, to nourish this woman. Nourish is a term that means to facilitate her development, to help her growth, to stimulate her growth. It's also used in raising up children, Ephesians 6:4, raising them from childhood. It refers to providing subsistence for people. For adults, it refers to providing food, for animals, tending plants, so they grow. It's about ensuring growth and development, providing training education that's nourish. That's the idea there.

To cherish is a much more tender word, here. In a literal sense, the word nourish means to heat or reheat or keep hot, and that's referring to a mother bird using her body heat to warm her eggs. That's where the word comes from. That's a picture of the meaning to keep warm by showing affection and comfort. It signifies tender care and affection, and that's what we see here.

This woman, men this woman is a priceless gift. She's an invaluable prize. She's of incalculable worth when you nourish her. You're looking out for your own interests when you cherish her, you are benefiting yourself. Peter O'Brien, the commentator, says, “The husband's obligation to love his wife as his own body is not simply a matter of loving someone else, just like he loves himself. It is in fact to love himself.” Albert Barnes is exactly right when he says, “If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.” Happy wife, happy life, right?

Paul draws his argument from creation here. The origin of the wife who's drawn from the rib of her husband. Just as Adam exclaimed in that moment when he woke up and saw her, this at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. Calvin to that responds and says every man by his very nature loves himself. “Every man loves himself, but no man can love himself without loving his wife.” And Calvin goes on to say that “therefore the man who does not love his wife is a monster.” Men don't be monsters. Cherish your wife. Let her know you cherish her.

Treasure that woman that God has given you. Treat her like a prize. Handle her with care. Treat her like a delicate, priceless work of art. Value your wife's counsel and let her

know that you value her counsel. Show her you value her counsel by seeking it out, asking her questions, drawing out of her and after you ask the question, stop talking and listen to her. When prudent, follow her advice.

She is a blood bought saint as well with the Holy Spirit living within her. She too has thoughts that come from the word of God. Listen to her. Keep that intelligence close by. Keep her as your most valued counselor adviser, one on whose counsel you're most eager to hear, above even your friends. Definitely above some podcasts or something you look up on the internet. Talk to your wife, before everybody else.

So take care then if she's gonna be your closest advisor, your closest counselor, make sure you teach your wife. You want to inform her mind with Scripture, with doctrine, so make sure she's benefiting from the regular means of grace. Hearing the word preached and taught. Make sure she's not always running around with kids and distracted from the service of worship.

Don't be an Adam, refusing to correct your wife when she strays into any error, that's not loving at all. Listen, that's passivity, and that's cowardice. Do your job. Inform her thinking with divine counsel with biblical reason, guided by sound doctrine. And men, learn to trust your wife. See that that

woman that God has given you is for your benefit. She is a gift. She wants to help you. She is designed by God to want to be helpful to you. Learn to trust that.

Don't be critical. Don't be mean spirited. Don't be harsh, be gentle, trust her. Christ is using her, and you in her life, to restore what's lost in the Fall. Just as he's sanctifying you, he's sanctifying her as well, by the word, by the Spirit, through the regular means of grace here in the local church. So learn to appreciate the ways that she seeks to be helpful to you.

Tell her how helpful she is. Let her know. Verbalize that. Be encouraging to her, in fact, permeate the home with your encouragement for your wife building her up. It's so strengthening for her, especially in the face of those little kids who are growing up to be little rebels. She's God's gift to you as you are to her. “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.” So cherish your wife. Let her know you cherish her.

That's how Christ is with his bride. Does he lack for telling us he loves us in Scripture? Is he holding back in sharing his affections with us, he lets us know, he couldn't be more personal about that. This couldn't be a matter of more

intimacy to him, because the church is united to him as a member of his own body.

Husbands, loving your wife is a matter of intensely personal interest, since she is a part of you, she is one flesh with you. So husbands love your wives as Christ loved his bride, because it is morally essential, because it is personally beneficial. This is what God intended for us from the very beginning to glorify his perfect redemption in Christ. Portraying this redemptive relationship in and through our marriages, look at those final verses in Ephesians 5 and we'll give Paul the last word here. “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'm 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.” Let’s pray.

Our Father, we give thanks to you for the love you have shown to us in Jesus Christ and we men who are married, and any men who are to be married, and aspired to be married, we count it a privilege, such a privilege, to take this duty, as a joyful privilege. This responsibility as a, as a high and holy honor you've given to us to model this kind of love. It makes a

decision in every single moment to put our wife first, to love her to seek her highest good, even if it comes at a sacrifice to us. We count the sacrifice as nothing, because it is a joy to walk in this kind of love. You'll shape our character; you'll form our thinking; you'll give us great joy, purpose, sense of meaning, fulfillment. That is what you've designed us for Father and we pray that you would bless all the marriages in this church. Bless marriages, in around the world, in the churches of Jesus Christ. Let them shine in righteousness and bring glory and honor to you Father, in the name of Jesus Christ our savior, Amen.