

“Ephesians & You: Your New You!”

The Family of God

Ephesians 5:22-33

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Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we give You thanks and certainly praise. You are God and there is no other. You’ve revealed Yourself in such a spectacular way. You spoke and things came into existence, and then they fell by Adam’s sin. And yet, wonderfully You redeemed. You sent Your only-begotten Son into the world that He might lay hold of the children of Abraham. And He redeemed those who belong to Him. Father, we’re thankful that Abraham is the father of those who have faith, having faith himself. And Father, we are in Christ as we believe in those promises that were given to him and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. So Father, as we come to You we are thankful. We certainly praise You, and ask that Your blessing would be upon us as we open Your word this morning.

Father, we long to be cleansed by it. We long to be fed by it. And we long to be shaped by it. The worst part of us often resists. And yet the best part of us, that renewed part, longs to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And Father, we ask that You would take the truth of Your word, and that You will leaven it through our lives still more and more.

Father, we pray that You will indeed have Your way with us. And in having Your way with us we realize that we will be better and we will be better to others. And we’re thinking specifically of our wives. We ask now that You’ll bless us as we think about the husband/wife relationship, how important it is. And we pray, Father, that You will bless not only us, but our spouses. We pray that You’ll bless this knowledge to us that we might share it with children and friends and grandchildren that they might be better, and that they might be more Christlike. So we ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. Well, what I want us to plug away at again is talking about this whole idea of Ephesians 5—husbands and wives. And I pray that we would be better husbands. But we’re going to be thinking about the wives predominantly today. No; just kidding. *(Laughter)* However, we are going to be thinking about them. We’re going to be starting with them. And we do have some things to say to them by golly, and we’re going to say it! *(Laughter)* We’re not going to tape today. Thank you, Don; I appreciate that. *(Laughter)*, knowing that these husbands are willing to laugh because it’s being recorded, and maybe their wives listen sometimes. *(Laughter)* But anyway, all right; I’m getting out of hand here.

So we need to be thinking about *the sphere of submission*. And remember that we ended with this the last time that we were together. We talked about the wife submitting in the Lord.

Now I guess I want to say one thing to you before I go any further. And you probably got it the last time. But just in case you didn’t I want to reiterate it here in some different language. Oftentimes there are two ways of looking at the husband/wife relationship. There is what is called the *egalitarian relationship*. And the egalitarian relationship basically looks at that relationship as if it were a 50/50 proposition.

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The idea for that comes at the beginning of the text of Ephesians chapter 5. And starting in verse 21 it says, “*submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ.*” And then verse 22 actually says, “*Wives to your own husbands as to the Lord.*” And so egalitarians will often point out that verse 22 doesn’t have the word *submission* in it, but verse 21 does. And in verse 21 it says that we ought to submit to one another. And therefore this must be an egalitarian sort of relationship.

Now I don’t take that view; I don’t share that view. I have what is called a *complementarian view*. And I won’t take time to say it, but a complementarian view sees things the way I’m teaching. It sees the husband as the head. It sees him as the leader of the home, the loving leader of the home. And it sees the wife as the help meet, the one who is to submit, the one who is to follow the husband.

Now I said to you the last time we were together and we were talking about these things that this is very important. I think that a husband and wife relationship, if I can say it this way, ought to have an egalitarian feel to it. I mean, there ought to be give and take; there ought to be back and forth. And yet, the fact of the matter is this.

I told you the story about my wife and us moving into the church, and sort of if we could come to the agreement that we normally come to in certain circumstances. And so I just said, “Well, we’re going to join.” Remember that? No?

Brave Men: Yes.

Jeff: Okay. *(Laughter)* All right. I wasn’t sure.

Sig Tragard: It’s on the tape.

Jeff: It’s on the tape.

Tom Hansz: She was high-fiving you.

Jeff: She was not high-fiving me, but I prayed for her. *(Laughter)* I double-teamed her and we got her going on the right direction.

Sig: Who was on the double team? Oh, you and God!

Jeff: Yeah.

Sig: O-oh! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: So we prayed. And I’m kind of like “The woman You gave me.” *(Laughter)*

Sig: I’ll send a copy to her. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: No! *(Laughter)* I’m not going to stand far away from this thing. But anyway I’m presenting to you a complementarian view, and I’m unpacking that as we go.

So the wife is to submit. And the sphere in which she is to submit is in the Lord. And I think I talked to you about that the last time. I said to you that if you ask your wife to do something sinful and she refuses to do it, she has every right in the world to refuse to do it. And the example I give is this. Let’s think about—let’s not think about football. Who wants to think about football? Let’s think about hockey! *(Laughter and applause)* Hey, what’s going on here?

Whatever. Anyway, you take a bunch of hockey equipment. And you take it up to your son’s bedroom. And you say to him, “Hey, you know, son, there’s an outfit in there and there’s a hockey puck and a stick and everything else. So have at it.”

And you go to walk out the door and he says, “Wait, Dad. Where are we going to go to play?”

And you say to him, “What do you mean where are we going to go and play?”

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And he says, “Well, I mean where are we going to take this stuff and go to play? What rink are we going to go to?”

“What do you mean rink? Play here in your room.” What have you done? You’ve given him all the equipment, but you haven’t given him the sphere to play in, right? You’ve not given him the place where you can exercise all of that equipment, that sort of thing. So the wife has a proper sphere. There’s a proper place where she exercises her obedience, and that’s in the Lord.

You remember when Fergie gets married? You know, they had that language of obedience. And she says, “I do,” but gives that knowing look? Like “Yeah, do you expect me to believe that?” That’s kind of the way it is today, where we talk submission even in the more formal settings. But we don’t actually believe that a woman ought to submit. And the Scripture is very clear, very emphatic.

I just did a wedding not too long ago where I preached on this very thing because I knew that there was going to be quite a lot of opposition to it. It was kind of funny because the things that I heard after I preached the message were sort of expected. I expected to hear them. But the things that I heard about what I said were kind of shocking to me, because I’m aware that it’s not just the world, but it’s even professing believers who rile against this kind of teaching that I’m giving. So apparently I’m not giving you the popular rendition of this, okay?

What is a wife’s motivation? A wife’s motivation is *“as to the Lord”*—verse 22. It is *“as to the Lord”* that she is to submit. So she is to submit in the Lord, and it is as to the Lord. Her motivation is to the Lord.

Now here is what I tell my counselees as I’m getting them ready for marriage in that pre-marital counseling class. I always tell them this. I always say that if you have wandering eyes that’s bad, except for one Man. You have to look at one Man other than your husband, and that is Christ. And you’d probably better keep your eyes on Him.

And what I tell her is, I say, “You know, there will be times when you look at your husband and you say, ‘Oh, what did I do? I do not want to submit to this guy.’” *(Laughter)* Am I right? Oh, come on! Aren’t their times when you look at your wife and you go, “Do I really have to?”, right? You don’t say it, right? Come on; let’s be honest here. There have been times when we’ve all said, “Come on, Lord! The woman You gave me,” right? And she looks at you and says, “The man You gave me,” right?—that sort of thing.

So here’s the deal. The deal is that she needs to look over your shoulder at Christ. Why? Because He is actually her motivation.

So I always tell the gals. I always say, look. You’re going to look at him and you’re going to say, “Why should I submit to him?” And I could tell you to go back to the early days when you loved him. And sometimes that works.

But I’ll tell you what really works. What really works is when I tell her, look. If you love the Lord then your motivation to obey, or rather to submit, is submission as to the Lord, right?—submission as to the Lord. And so you’re always looking over your husband’s shoulder at Christ who stands behind him.

What’s the rationale? The rationale is important. *“Even as Christ.”* Let me explain what that means.

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Here is the problem of relationships, whether it be man or woman. And we both do this. The problem of relationship is that we both get into this relationship one with another. And there are things that we really like, because remember. We do not operate on an *agape* sort of love when it comes to choosing our spouse. You know, we do not wait for the most homely, ugly person to walk in the door and say, “My heart goes out! *Agape* love; I want to love the loveless!” Right?

No, that’s not how we do it. You know, the wife walks in the door who is not our wife, and all of a sudden we turn into Lennie and Squiggy. Do you remember that? (*Laughter*) You guys are old enough to get that, right? (*Laughter*) I just had somebody mention “Laverne and Shirley” the other day. (*Laughter*)

Anyway, you get the idea, right? “I gotta have her.” Why? “Because there’s something about her.” You know, Gary really knows; he’s still laughing at this. (*Laughter*) So there’s something about her that we want. There’s something about her that we’re attracted to, right?

Now what happens is, we get to know her, or she gets to know us. And those things that we like about her or that she liked about us are still intact. But then she discovers things about us that she doesn’t like. And you know what she says to herself. “I can fix him.” (*Laughter*) “I can fix him.” Right?

Now what happens is that she says this. And she doesn’t say it this way: “I can fix him.” She says, “I’m going to give him to the Lord.” Right? (*Laughter*) “I’m going to give him to the Lord.” And so what she does is that she says, “I’m going to marry that man and I’m going to give him to the Lord.” And so she starts giving him to the Lord. And about three months, six months, nine months, a year into the marriage, he still has those same things and they’re not fixed. And now she’s going, “What’s the matter with you?” (*Laughter*) You know what I mean? And she’s getting frustrated because things aren’t getting fixed.

You know she still loves you. But things aren’t getting fixed. And this is what I say to women all the time when I’m pre-marital counseling with them. I always say, look. You should never look at him like you’re going to fix him. He is what he is. He’s going to move to be a better what-he-is because he’s in the Lord. If he’s not in the Lord you shouldn’t be considering marrying him. But he’s going to be a better what-he-is. But he’s going to be what he is.

Bishop Rodgers: Like Salvations thunder. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: I’m going to start serenading. (*Laughter*)

Brave Man: What is that in public? I still know what’s happening. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: You got it? Okay. Yes?

Jim Hamilton: Jeff, let me ask a dumb question.

Sig: There are no dumb questions.

Jim: But I want to ask you something. When you say, “Lord,” are we talking about any One of the Three in the Trinity? Or are we talking only about Christ? Because “Lord” can reference God or Christ or anyone in the Trinity in my mind. Is that right?

Jeff: Well, there’s a sense in which the Lord takes the name which is above every name. He is the Lord, right? “*Every knee shall bow,*” right? It’s Isaiah 45, I think; I’m not sure. It’s quoted in Philippians chapter 2.

Don Maurer: 45:23, I think.

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Jeff: Oh man, look at this guy! 45:23, where that name is now Jesus. As Mediator He is the Lord. He has always been the Lord. But now as Mediator He is (*unclear*) The idea is that yes, it could be a reference to anyone in the Trinity. But I think that right here what we’re seeing is the relationship between the Lord and His church. And that’s a type of the relationship with our wives.

Jim: in verse 19 it says, “*giving thanks to God the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Jeff: Yes.

Jim: So they’re making a differentiation of “Lord” applying to the Son, not to the Father?

Jeff: Yes, I think that in this situation. He has the name *Lord* in Philippians 2. Do you remember that passage? In Philippians 2 it says “*so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” But that expression comes from Isaiah 45, or at least we’re going to check it. I was going to let—

Bishop: He’s right; it’s Isaiah 45:23.

Jeff: I was going to let him do it when he did the transcript and then let him send an email to me saying, “You were wrong and I was right.” (*Laughter*) But we’ll just check him now. 45:23?

Bishop: Yes.

Sig: Gary Dunbar just verified it.

Jeff: Yes; 45:23. “*By Myself I have sworn from My mouth has gone out in righteousness, a word that shall not return. To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.*”

And who is it who says that? If you go back to 45:5, “*I am the LORD, and there is no other; besides Me there is no God. I equip you,*” and so on. So the idea is that the God of the Old Testament—we oftentimes say the Father—is Lord. And the Son is saying that name is My name. So in this case you’re right. There is a sense in which the Lord Jesus is the One in view here in this relationship between husband and wife. He is the Groom and His wife is the bride.

So the rationale here has to be something other than “I’m going to fix him.” The rationale has to be that “I’m in this relationship yes, because I love my husband. But my motivation and my rationale is not to fix my husband. My motivation and rationale is to be in this unto the Lord.”

Now let me say this. I want to say this because somebody looked at me like I was maybe a little off kilter. But I want to say this because it’s important, and that is this. When you think about who you are as you mature in the Lord, you mature in the Lord. And so there will be things about you that remain. And there are some of those things that remain that aren’t sinful that are just things about you and the way you do things, or the way you think about certain things that will remain. And so a person has to be very, very careful about getting into a relationship with another person and thinking I can fix that, because that thing that you might be thinking you’ll fix is very much a part of who that person is. And that’s not fixable.

In many ways you can take edges off of things; you can help people in different ways. But there’s a sense in which if you’re motivation is to fix someone, and not necessarily to

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see a person sanctified and growing in the Lord and the virtues of Christ and so on, you’ll be very disappointed within a short space of time.

Okay, so I always try to help women especially to see that, because they say that men are fixers. But I really think that women have a tendency to be fixers as well. Once they find out that they can’t fix us then they just want us to hear their problems. (*Laughter*) So the rationale. And then they get to that point where they say that it’s just not working, right?

I want you to think about it like this. And we’re picking on the wives here for a minute but that’s okay, because we’re going to pick on ourselves. But they need some picking on too.

You know, this betrays something that I think that we just need to flesh out for ourselves. That exasperation of “Lord, I’ve prayed for him. You know, I’ve been taking him to the throne of grace for three months, and it’s just not working” betrays something else. And that betrays a mindset, right? And the question that I think gets at what it betrays is who does this man belong to, right? Who does this man belong to?

You could take this whole idea and take it to Romans 14 and 15 where it talks about things indifferent—*adiaphora* issues. And remember what the whole point was. The strong feel like it’s their duty to bring the weak along and pull them along at their pace. And Paul is saying that’s not the way you do it. Who does the weak belong to? “Don’t the weak belong to Me? Am I not their Lord? Have you all of a sudden become their Lord and Master? Are you their Holy Spirit?”—that sort of thing.

And so the question is, who does this man belong to? That’s the real question. And if he belongs to Christ, if he belongs to God, then God will deal with him in God’s own time, right? And so the idea of “I’ve prayed for him for three weeks and it’s just not working”, that kind of thing needs to go out the window. I think that has to be replaced with this man belongs to the Lord; this woman belongs to the Lord. And I’m going to daily bring them before the Lord. And that’s not because I want to see this person fixed. But that’s because I know that this person belongs to the Lord. And so I want to bring them before the Lord every day, because he or she belongs to the Lord. And that’s where they belong, before Him.

Here is something else that I just want you to keep in mind because I think it’s very important and I may forget to say it later. So let me just say it now. Your wife has to realize, and you as a husband have to realize this. Do you realize that your wife only has one husband? And there’s only going to be one wife that he’ll ever have. Now obviously, if you pass away, and so forth, I get it. But my point is that there is only ever going to be one wife that prays for you. There is only going to be one husband that prays for you. There is only going to be one father that prays for your children, and that’s you. There’s only going to be one mother that ever prays for your children, and that’s the woman who is their mother. That’s really staggering when you think about it, because all of a sudden I realize that we all want to think we’re indispensable. And so we all tell ourselves that we’re dispensable. I understand that; we’ve all got to keep ourselves in the right mindset. But in some ways we are indispensable, because there are roles that we are in that no one else can fill.

Now you say, “Well, if I die my wife can remarry; somebody else can fill my role.” Not in the same way.

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Dave and I were just talking. Dave was just sharing a reference out of C. S. Lewis’s book *The Four Loves*. And in that book he talks about friendship. And he talks about how his friend Charles Williams dies. And Charles Williams could bring out of J. R. R. Tolkien things that only Williams could bring out of him. And so Lewis says that there are things about Tolkien that I’ll never see in the same way again because Charles isn’t there to bring them out.

And the point is that as a husband there are things that you pull out of your wife and pull out of your kids and pull out of your home that only you will pull out in that way, right? And the wife is the same way. If your wife disappeared from the map today you would not see certain things in your children that you once saw when your wife was around. And so I think the magnitude of that is what’s staggering, when you really put it to thought, which means that in the husband/wife relationship we need to think about one another in a completely different way. And that’s sometimes really difficult.

But let me just say this: *the scope of submission*. And I kind of dealt with this earlier on. But the scope of submission is that she is to submit in everything except for sin. And so we talked about that. Now let me move on to the husbands unless you have questions about the wives that you want to chew on a little bit.

Sig: I have a question, Jeff. Is it to be assumed when we read the Bible that Adam and Eve knew about this in a relationship? Obviously to me when you talk about it it’s very clear. And I can see that Adam didn’t do a very good job. I know we touched on this last week. But I’m understanding that they were free to do it. They were getting to know the Lord way before a lot of things may be understood. But is that the assumption we would make, that Adam would be told or understand that he is in charge and that Eve is to submit to him? I can hear him say, “Lord,”—the same way you said it—“the woman You gave me.” Is that the assumption, that there is this hierarchy and that Adam understood it?

Jeff: Yeah, I think so. It’s like the whole idea that the woman comes out of the man. The man names the woman. He’s man; she’s woman. He even gives her a name later in the story. And when you think about naming, later on in Philippians the Lord is above everything that is named. Why? Because Augustine tells us and he gives us this kind of beautiful exposition that the namer is the one in authority, right? So Adam is the namer of all creation. As he names all these animals so he names his wife. And so he is the one in authority.

So my guess is that Adam had a better theology than we do in terms of general revelation, and what he understood in terms of positive revelation from God who spoke to him in the Garden. That’s my own view.

I think we sometimes get the idea. Fredrich Schleiermacher had this idea that Adam and Eve were young and infantile and didn’t know much. And so their fall was almost a fall from innocence in that sense. Do you know what I mean? But I think they were well equipped theologically to understand these things and to understand God’s command to them. Anybody else? No?

So when I talk to you about this, And when I said that we need to think about one another differently, it kind of segway into our thinking about husbands. And I want to start with a little story because I think it’s helpful. And it’s in G. K. Chesterton’s book, and I want to say *Orthodoxy*, but I can’t remember now.

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Anyway, the story goes like this. A man gets into a boat. You can help me with this, Bishop. Do you remember this story. He gets into a boat and he sails, and he actually thinks he’s discovering new islands and new lands. He ends up running aground on an island that he thinks is one that has never been discovered before. And he gets to kind of tootling around the island, you know—this new island that he’s discovered—and he starts to recognize things. And he realizes that he’s just at a different place in England.

(Laughter)

And I thought to myself that this is what Chesterton was suggesting. The idea is that something old to us can be seen as new when we get a new perspective on it. And so England was old to this man, yet it was seen from a different perspective. And seen from a different perspective it looked exciting, it looked fresh. It looked new, it looked desirable. But as he began to recognize it for what it was it started to lose its luster.

And I think the idea for us is that it’s always trying to cultivate this new perspective on our relationship. Why do I throw that on you guys? The reason I throw that back on you guys is because you guys are the head of the home. And you guys will set the tone of the home. And in setting the tone of the home you will not be able to throw this back on your wife. This is on you. And so it behooves you to try to cultivate this new perspective on your wife and on your family daily.

And we should not assume that anyone in this room has the perfect marriage, the perfect wife, because we don’t. There are many things about our wives that are wonderful. There are many things about our wives that we wouldn’t trade for the world. But there are things about our wives that challenge us daily.

Sig: Preach it, brother! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Boy, are you in trouble! *(Laughter)* Everybody stays deadly silent. Sig is the one who speaks up. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Why did you have to go and do that? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Because they knew it was you. *(Laughter)* And besides that, You Know Who is going to put it in the transcript. *(Laughter)* “Sig said.” *(Laughter)*

Anyway, my point is that as much as we may not want it to be the case, it is the case that these things fall upon us. And I think that rather than trying to shut that off, we need to know that part of manliness is taking that on, right?—and recognizing it and shouldering it, and not trying to get out from under it, but actually shouldering it. And I would say to you in a complementarian way that means real leadership, right?

I mean, think about it this way. I could give you all sorts of examples. Let me give you an example of a way that looks egalitarian but is actually complementarian in the way that the husband is really shouldering what he is supposed to be doing.

Years and years ago there was a couple; I didn’t marry them. But I knew them shortly after they were married. And they came to service morning and evening. I was talking to the husband one day and we were talking about various things. We got to talking about his marriage and his relationship with his wife. And he started telling me that he never used to attend church in the evening. He said, “My family just never attended evening service.”

And I said to him, “Well, you guys are very faithful attenders in the evening. What happened?”

And he said, “I married my wife.” And I said, “Well, tell me more.”

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And he said, “ Well, my wife’s family always went to church morning and evening.” And he said, “So when we got married my wife had an expectation that I was going to be there at worship morning and evening.”

And he said, “That was sort of a struggle for me because we were pretty content to go in the morning, and that was it.” But he said, “My wife had this expectation and I knew it was a godly expectation. And so I just stepped into it because of that, and so I started doing that.” And he said, “We can’t live life without that sort of practice now. That’s how it came about.”

And I thought to myself, that is a wonderful example of a husband-and-wife relationship, where the husband learns from the wife. And yet once he learns from her, you know, now he’s leading, right? He’s leading the family weekly into worship, and so on. It’s a great example of how there is reciprocity and yet leadership on the part of the husband.

And so I think for us that we always need to be willing to cultivate that new perspective. And we need to be willing to lead, and we need to be willing to learn.

How do we do that? Well, I think we have to focus on love. Notice what we are not told to do. We are not necessarily told to lead. We’re not necessarily told to be the boss. We’re told to love, which I think is really quite striking when you think about it. And remember, I told you that this is the reversal of the curse. The wife is going to usurp; the husband is going to suppress. In this case what do you find? You find the husband loving the wife and the wife submitting to the husband.

And I want to tell you something. When the husband is loving the wife the wife will want to submit to the husband; it will happen that way. When she sees that there is loving leadership exercised in her home she will want that loving leadership. At least that’s what I have found; that happens.

Now what does that love look like? Well, that love looks like Christ. Remember John 13:1-2 where it says that “*He loved his own to the end.*” And He loved them with this *agape* love. And you know what that *agape* love is. It’s a love that really goes out to the unlovable.

And you may not think at the beginning of your relationship that you’ll need *agape* love. But you will, because your wife will irritate you. No one’s laughing; let the record show. (*Laughter*) But your wife will irritate you. And when she does that’s when *agape* love will kick in. And you’ll look at that woman and you’ll say, “The woman You gave me, Lord.” And that’s when you need to—you know, that’s the idea.

So *agape* love. We need to focus on living for her. You know, we all say, “I’d die for her.” And she’s going, “I wish he’d live for me a little bit,” right?—that kind of thing. (*Laughter*) And so that’s the kind of thing that we have to aim for: how can I live for this woman, right?

The interesting thing is this, and I’ll just say this to you. I used to do this all the time in some of these pre-marital classes; I just don’t anymore. But it’s still a good practice.

You know, years ago I was a church planter and I was trying to use my time efficiently. And I was trying to be the best me I could be. So I was reading Stephen Covey’s book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. And one of the things that he said in that book was that he said, “*Identify all your roles.*” And what he said was that in

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identifying all your roles, plug in something each week that’s going to help you grow and develop in your role and that is going to help those under you in that role.

So I am a husband. What should I do for my wife? You know, that sort of thing, right? And you know, when you’re first married you don’t really think about how essential that is until you’re in this marriage for a while. And you’re just rolling out of bed and you realize, “It’s been a while since I told her that I love her. You know, I’m just kind of going through the day and racing through.” You know, that sort of thing.

And all of a sudden then you begin to realize that okay, this kind of thinking is important. How am I going to invest in my children? How am I going to invest in my wife? How am I going to invest in this role and that role? You know what I’m saying?

And that becomes very difficult. And here is one of the reasons that I kind of abandoned this, because this idea of roles gives this idea of parts and compartmentalizing.

But let me ask you a question. You’re at work and your son calls you. Or your daughter calls you up and says, “Dad, I need to talk to you.”

You say, “Hon, I’m at work; I’m in this role now. When I get home then I’ll put on my dad hat and then we’ll talk, okay?”

“Okay, bye.”

You don’t do that. Your daughter calls you and you go, “What do you need, honey?”, right? And you’re all dad. And that’s the point. So you’re all dad, all the time. You’re all husband all the time.

What I tell elders and deacons when they’re in training in our congregation is this. You’re not an elder part of the time. You’re not a deacon part of the time. Just like you’re a dad all the time, you’re an elder all the time. And that’s how you need to think about these roles, because if you think of yourself as being a dad part of the time you’ll have some problems, just like a husband and an elder, and so on.

And then we need to focus on *the pursuit*. Oh yeah, it’s heating up for you, isn’t it?

Sig: Yeah. (*Laughter*) Let the record show that someone laughed. (*Laughter*) The idea here is pursuit. It’s funny. You have ladies come into the church at all ages. And they’ll ask you. “You know, I’ve never been in a relationship with a man that has been healthy. So what should a healthy courtship or dating period look like?”, and so on.

And it’s funny. I will always say that the man needs to pursue you. If the man isn’t pursuing you then he doesn’t want you, right? I mean, if you’re always the one in pursuit you’d probably better rethink this scenario. The man ought to pursue you.

And that shouldn’t change once you marry. And what a husband ought to pursue in his wife or on behalf of his wife is her holiness. He ought to seek holiness in her life, seek to cultivate it and nurture it and cause it to grow. And I think that’s the idea. That’s what Christ did for His bride; that’s what we ought to do for ours. That’s the idea.

And then the rationale for us is that no one ever hates his own body, right? So if you don’t hate your own body, and this is your own flesh, then you love her. That’s your rationale, right? Your rationale is that no one hates his own body. This is your own body.

And then you heard your mom say this to you all your life. It’s not about you. And in the best possible sense God is saying this to us about our own marriages. It’s not about you.

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And you know, I think this is the thing that we need to remember. And I think we need to remember it because it’s important. And it’s important because again, no one on this side of heaven has the perfect marriage—husband or wife. And when you think about the whole idea of marriage you realize that everyone is starting from the same beginning point. Everyone is starting from the Fall. Every husband and wife is dealing with the curse. It’s not just some husbands and wives; it’s every husband and wife.

So for instance you can go to church. And I’ll never—I should probably shut this off.

Sig: We can edit it out.

Jeff: No, that’s okay. I’ll just not tell the story. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Go ahead, go ahead!

Jeff: No, no; it was nears and years, I mean years ago.

Sig: Jeff, you can be honest with us.

Jeff: So everyone is dealing with the curse—everyone. And so what I was going to say I’ll put in a general way, like this. I’m sure you’ve all gone to church with people before. And they walk in the door and they look like the perfect couple. And they act like the perfect couple. Do you know what I’m talking about?

Brave Man: I’ve done that.

Jeff: Yeah, absolutely. And as a pastor, or if you’ve been in any sort of a leadership role, you know that’s not the case. This is why I love the Christian church, because the Christian church ought to be the place where we can be the most honest. Not most sinful, but most honest about the sins with which we struggle. And so we ought to be able to share that.

And here was the whole point of this. When I think about my own marriage, it’s not about me; it’s about Christ and His bride. All I have to do is think about Christ and His bride.

Now I happen to be from a particular theological position that sees the Old Testament as the church under age. In other words, the church leading up to its culmination in Christ. So I’m going to see the Old Testament church as the church.

So when I look at the Old Testament and I look at Israel and God, it is the church under age. So for instance, when I look at Hosea and Gomer, I’m looking at a picture of Christ and His bride. And you remember that story, right? Hosea is the prophet. And he’s told to go and marry the prostitute. And he goes and marries a prostitute and they have a child together. “Oh, we have a child together!”

And then they have the next child and he’s scratching his head. “I’m not really sure if that’s mine.” And then they have a third child and he’s sure it’s not his, right? She’s unfaithful.

All you have to do is read those early chapters of Jeremiah to see that Israel is very unfaithful in many graphic ways. And actually troubling ways, to the extent that her enemies are coming for her. And Jeremiah describes her as fixing herself up as a prostitute, and then to be abused by that enemy.

And the whole point is that you look at that. And you go, “Okay. I guess my marriage is better than that.” But even if it’s not, that’s the point of it, right?

I’m going to throw something out there to you guys. And you guys can think about it however you want to, and I’ll end with this. We’ll go into chapter 6 next week. But if you ever want to read a great book—and I use it all the time,—it’s Bryan Chapel’s book *Each*

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For the Other. I use it all the time in pre-marital counseling. It is a book that is on roles, husband-and-wife roles. And the whole book is really about that. There’s a chapter on parenting and one on living in the world together. But I only have them read the first couple of sections on roles because it’s worth the price of admission. And so I’ve relied on that book for years.

And he’s a complementarian. But when you read the book you’re getting what I’m giving you—the idea that he really seeks his wife and sought out his wife and wanted to know what she had to say, and so forth. There were only some decisions that he ever had to make where he had to say, “I’m leaning in this direction,” and so forth. He talks about his own failures, and so on.

But in that book he gives a story. There is a man whose wife had gotten into gambling. And she would actually steal from the family and gamble away all their funds, and so on. And the man had been counseled to divorce his wife, to be free of her and to get rid of her.

And he was talking to Chapel one day. And Chapel asked him, “Why haven’t you divorced your wife? I’m curious.”

And the man said, “If I can’t love my wife redemptively, how will my children ever see that the gospel actually works?” And that was his rationale.

And that does not mean that his life was not full of misery, because it certainly was. But that’s the kind of thing that I think we’re being told here. It’s not about you; it’s about Christ. It’s about His relationship to His bride, and you’re mirroring that. And as you mirror that, that means that this woman is not going to love you in the way that she should, or respect you and submit to you in the way that she should. And unfortunately, unlike Christ, we will not love her in the way that Christ loved the church. So it’s a process of growth for both of us.

Remember the hand? As we seek to bring the hand from here that looks so monstrous on the screen closer to the screen, so that our hand is not the shadow. But our hand and the shadow of it are in close proximity, so that the shadow mirrors the actual hand itself.

Okay, let’s pray. Father, thank You for this day—for the time You’ve given, for the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, and for Your word which teaches us. It teaches us in ways where we really need it. And Lord, we pray that Your hand of blessing will be upon us as we seek to be husbands to our wives and seek to be fathers to our children, seeking to live out our roles in submission to You and in love for You, for we ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Brave Man: Thank you, Pastor.