

Servant-Leadership in the Home

Ephesians 5:25-33

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 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. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

This is not a sermon series about the Song of Solomon, but the book does give us a very powerful picture of what God intends for marriage to be.

When reading Song of Solomon, notice how many times marriage is compared to a garden. God makes this comparison for good reasons.

1. Marriage is one important place on earth where sinful man can experience the blessing of the personal presence God (i.e. the Garden of Eden).
2. Marriage takes work. It must be cultivated, watered, cared for, and prayed over.

Only after a long period of producing favorable conditions can we see the full result and blessing of marriage (i.e. the fruit). Marriage is not a short-term contract but a lifetime covenant!

We live in a culture where many people acknowledge the need for good leadership, but very few people are willing to put in the effort to become great leaders.

It is striking that a conversation of Biblical masculinity is essentially about how the Bible defines leadership. This necessarily points to the example of Jesus Christ, the head of the Church.

A Christian view of leadership understands it as an act of service. Effective leaders must lead their people the way that Christ does: by serving them.

We saw last week that women fulfill a God-like leadership role when they become helpers in their marriage. Men, likewise, are following a role that Christ lays out when they function in headship over the home. The short answer of how to be a better husband or a better wife is to be a follower of Jesus! When, as a husband, I fail to love my wife, my real failure is in

recognizing the love that Christ has for me.

The American evangelical church is at a crisis in our lack of understanding of sanctification. While conversion to Christ is absolutely essential for eternal life, we have developed an unhealthy obsession with one-time conversion experiences. The American church has lost the notion that the only way to know that you belong to Christ is by abiding in Him every single day.

Anybody can cry, pray a prayer, have a religious experience, and be baptized. Only those who have a relationship with Christ can even begin to walk daily in glad submission to Him.

We see a parallel with this crisis in marriage.

How many couples spend years of planning and tens of thousands of dollars to create one special day known as a wedding? How many storybook weddings have you attended that either ended in divorce or with a husband and wife who have no meaningful life-giving connection to one another?

Is a wedding ceremony necessary? Absolutely! Covenants are made on purpose, not by accident.

But what value is a wedding unless it defines the beginning of a husband and wife truly coming together as one flesh?

Every couple I have ever married has been given this simple piece of advice in pre-marital counseling. You had better be spending far more time planning for your marriage than you spend planning for your wedding. Your wedding is guaranteed to be a good experience just because you show up for it. Your marriage, on the other hand, will only produce the fruit that you are cultivating.

We could spend hours and hours talking about the parallels between the union of husband and wife and the union between Christ. Ephesians sums all of these up with the notions of submission and unconditional love.

Christ loves his people so much that he was willing to experience hell for them. His people can only experience life when they submit their interests to the greater call that Christ places on their lives.

A husband and wife can only experience unity when they die to their own interests and place the interests of each other as the greatest good in their own lives. The wife primarily does this through Biblical submission. The husband primarily does this through selfless love.

The husband and wife must both experience love and submission. The wife should seek every day to build her husband up as a man. The husband should daily seek to lead his wife to become more and more spiritually beautiful.

The wedding only makes sense when husband and wife love and submit to each other every single day that follows. This is why we often say that marriage is hard, but worth every bit of effort!

Questions for husbands:

- If your wife is a garden, what fruit are you trying to grow in her life?
- How is your love for your wife stirring her to:
 - Love Jesus more than she does today?
 - Grow in confidence as a person?
 - Experience life and love?
 - Prosper as the unique person God made her?
 - Live in submission to Christ?
 - Grow in Biblical femininity?
 - Live in spiritual victory?
- What do you communicate to your wife through your actions?
 - Is your wife just a sex object?
 - Is your wife only a support system to help you achieve your goals?
 - Is your wife a convenient relationship?
 - Is your wife an emotional crutch?
 - Is your wife part of you? Are you living as one flesh?
- How is your love for your wife characterized by self-sacrifice?
- Has your wife become a better person since your wedding? How does that reflect on your leadership?

Questions for wives:

- How do you receive your husband's love?
- Have you told your husband how he can express his love to you?
- How have you been fulfilled in the midst of sacrificing yourself?
- Are you ever tempted to replace your relationship with Jesus with your marriage?

Questions for singles:

- How do you know when a potential mate has the capacity to love you the way Jesus loves you?
- Should you marry a narcissist?
- How do you spot a narcissist?
- Do you expect that your husband/wife will grow as a person?
- How much should a person change before you agree to marry him/her?
- What can only be changed by getting married?
- How do you identify sanctification in your own life? In the life of a potential mate?