

August 27, 2017 – Bryan Watson

Submission? Love? Whose Idea Is This, Anyway?

Good morning.

25 years. I find that hard to believe. What was life like 25 years ago?

- The Saskatchewan Roughriders quarterback was a guy named Kent Austin
- Roy Romanow had just been elected Premier of Saskatchewan
- Brian Mulroney was Prime Minister of Canada. There have been 5 different Prime Ministers since then, so there is hope.
- My hairline and my waistline were inversely proportional to what they are now.
- And Brendon Galger was getting ready to begin Kindergarten, and I know this because Lori babysat both Brendon and April, and I would have to pick her up from Maxine's on Saturdays to go out on a date. Usually to a place called Indy's, if anybody remembers that name.

I know that August is a bit of an odd time to preach a sermon about marriage. Usually, we tend to do this in February around Valentine's Day. But since we were doing a renewal of our vows today, this has kind of been on my mind a lot. So today, I'm preaching about marriage.

Our scripture passage for today's message is from Ephesians 5:22-33. I'll be reading from the NKJV. This is Paul's description of how the relationship between a husband and wife should be.

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. 24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. 28 So husbands ought to love their own 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 the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, [b] of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." [c] 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Now, before I unpack that passage of scripture, I think we need to back the truck up a bit and understand why it is that we should even pay attention to that. I mean, really, who does Paul think he is to tell us how to act within marriage? He was just a man, wasn't he? And, so far as we know, he wasn't even married. So, what authority does he have?

Well, the fact is that this passage from Ephesians is included in the Bible. As Christians, we believe that the Bible in its original form is the inerrant, infallible, inspired Word of God. If you read the core values and the statement of faith for this church, you'll see just how seriously we take the authority of scripture. That means that scripture, including this passage, has authority in our lives.

Now, specifically, why does Scripture have authority over marriage? This is a great question because a lack of understanding of the answer to this question has led to an extreme confusion in our society today, even in some churches who no longer respect the authority of scripture. They think that man gets to define what marriage is in any way we choose. The fact is that we can take our instruction about marriage from Scripture because Scripture was written by the One who invented marriage in the first place.

Turn with me if you will to **Genesis chapter 2 verse 18**. Beginning there, we read, *And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."*

Skipping down to verses 21 through 24, we read, *21 And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

23 And Adam said:

*"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."*

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

So, you see, **God gets to define what marriage is** because He's the one who invented it in the first place. So He gets to make the rules for it. And He defined it as one biological man to one biological woman, and any other definition is just sinful man's misplaced ideas, and it's just wrong, plain and simple. And because God invented it, and He gets to define it, so He can instruct us in it. And that brings us back to the book of Ephesians. So let's go back and unpack that.

Wives Submit to Husbands

Ephesians 5:22-24 says, ²² *Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

²³ *For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is*

the Savior of the body. ²⁴ *Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

Now, I'm going to say it again... I didn't make the rules, I'm just reciting from the rule book, so don't shoot the messenger.

So, what does it mean to submit? Ladies, does it mean that you are supposed to just be some kind of door mat, to be walked on and trampled on whenever your husband decides he's going to lord it over you? Absolutely not. If your husband is treating you that way, then he is in error when it comes to God's instructions about marriage, and I'll be dealing with him in just a moment.

But for now, let's talk about this word "submission" which seems to get some people all lathered up and ready to rumble. What is submission, anyway?

Well, when I tried researching this term in the context of Ephesians 5:22, I found all kinds of politically correct mumbo-jumbo that defined submission as anything but submission.

But I think Webster's 1828 dictionary got it right when it defined the word "submit" in this way: **To yield**, *resign or surrender to the power, will or authority of another.*

There's no shame in that. We all submit in one way or another. Here at LEF, I submit to Pastor Dennis. He is my boss. At my regular day job, I submit to a boss. That's the way life is. Hierarchy provides order. It doesn't mean that I am inferior to Pastor Dennis, or my boss at my other job. But without that hierarchy, there would be chaos. Verse 23 says that the husband is the head of the wife. I'm sorry, but that's what it says. Anything with two heads is a monster. But men, just remember, that with leadership comes responsibility... this is not a license to be an ogre, and rest assured, you will be held accountable by God Himself, as we will see in just a little bit.

The other thing we need to note is that this is a direct instruction to wives. "Wives, submit to your husbands." There is nothing conditional about this statement. It is what it is, and wives are to submit to their husbands because God commanded it.

The only exception to this that I could see is if the husband were to ask the wife to do something illegal, immoral, or in some way a violation of God's law. For example, in Acts chapter 5, the high priest instructs the apostles that they were not to teach in Jesus' name. **But in verse 29**, we read, ²⁹ *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men."*

So, does this mean that the wife has no input into anything? Not at all. In my marriage, for example, I need Lori's input and feedback. She is my helpmeet. Every decision I make is better because of her input. Sometimes we disagree, but her opinions always give me a different perspective to consider, and I treasure her for that.

So, wives, submit to your husbands, because it is God's will that he be the head.

Husbands Love Your Wives

Ok, guys, now it's your turn. **Verse 25**: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,*

Husbands, love your wives. Period. This, too, is an unconditional command by God. It doesn't say, "love your wives as long as she shows you respect." It doesn't say, "love your wives as long as she obeys your every order without question." No, it says "love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." Remember the definition of love from 1 Corinthians? ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Men, do those things and you will be loving your wives.

Guys, Christ died on the Cross for the church. Are you giving yourself up for your wife? Do you love your wife enough that you would die for her? Do you love your wife enough that you would die to yourself for her? It's more than just going to work to pay the bills.

I'm saying, are you man enough to carry her purse down the street in Langenburg in front of your friends if her hands are full? Are you willing to take the garbage out without being asked? Consider the One who was the greatest leader of all. **In Mark 9:35**, Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

I remember being at a Promise Keepers event in Regina back in 2002. Steve Masterson from Promise Keepers said something so profound that it has impacted my marriage ever since. He said, "How many of you men out there have young daughters?" I put up my hand. Masterson said, "**Your little girl** is going to grow up to marry somebody who treats them exactly the same way you treat their mother."

That hit me like a ton of bricks. I have opened a lot of car doors over the years. I have learned that it's ok to get wet in order to bring the car right up to the door when it is raining. I have learned to know when she is cold and give her my jacket. Chivalry is not dead. You think my daughters aren't looking? Pity the poor dude who thinks he's going to take my girls' hearts without having to earn it. And folks, the bar is set high! And quite frankly, there are few feelings as good as seeing some other couple in a parking lot watching me open Lori's door for her, and then the lady in the other couple just stands there with her arms crossed, not moving, while her guy looks at her and says... "what?"

And guys, a word of caution in case you think that God doesn't take this seriously. **Flip over to 1 Peter 3:7**. *Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be **hindered**.*

I'm telling you right now, that if you don't treat her with love... if you don't cherish her like a daughter of the King, then even the effectiveness of your prayers is at risk.

Guys, get a copy of the book, "The Five Love Languages" by Gary Chapman, and learn how to love your wives. Ladies, that's good reading for you, too.

So love her, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Washing by the Word

Ok, next up, **verses 26 and 27**: husbands are to *sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

Men, YOU are to be the spiritual leaders in your home. YOU are to wash her with the Word. YOU are to help her be holy and without blemish. YOU are to establish the spiritual habits like praying before meals. Like family devotions. And if you aren't doing any of this yet, then the place where you need to start being the spiritual leader in your home is to be the spiritual leader of YOU. Read the Bible. Get into the Word and learn how to apply it in your life. Develop a habit of prayer. And get rid of any habits or behaviours that separate you from God. The spiritual well-being of your wife and your family is YOUR responsibility, guys. And there's no point arguing with me about it. You will never have to stand before me and be accountable. But you will stand before God. And you will take accountability before Him.

There are a lot of women who do a fantastic job in this area, but the truth is that **the responsibility for** the spiritual health of the family belongs to the husband.

Love Her As Your Own Body

Now we come to **verses 28-30**. *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

Men, we need to consider that our wives are an extension of ourselves. **Our wives** are not the enemy. Turn with me to **Ephesians 6:12**. *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the **heavenly** places.* Who is the enemy? Not our wives. The devil is the enemy. He hates our marriages, he hates our families, and he hates us. He would like nothing better than for husbands and wives to hate each other.

The fact of the matter is, when we love our wives (and I mean love as in doing something about it, not just feeling the emotion of love), when we love our wives, we are loving ourselves. As the saying goes, Happy Wife, Happy Life. I know that's pretty simplistic, but the reality is that when we make sure that the deep needs of our family members are satisfied, our quality of life improves as well.

Leave Mom & Dad... One Flesh

Ok, I'm running out of time here, so we need to move along. **Verse 31** "*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*"

This is actually a direct quote from Genesis 2:24, which we've already heard today. Men, we are to be the heads of our own homes. Focus on the Family has an entire section on their website dedicated to helping marriages survive their brushes with in-laws. Now, nobody in their right mind would intentionally sabotage their children's marriage, but the reality is that Focus on the Family wouldn't need this section of their website if it wasn't an issue. Husbands and wives, set healthy boundaries that your parents are not allowed to cross. And parents of married children, you need to be respectful of your child's marriage if you want to leave a legacy of blessing.

And the two becoming one flesh? Besides the basic biology that proves that out, I heard a great analogy of this, again at a Promise Keepers event many years ago. Imagine two sheets of plywood. Take the strongest wood adhesive that you can get and literally paint it onto one of the sheets of plywood so that it is completely covered. Then, put the sheets of plywood together and secure them with many clamps.

Come back a week later, and try to separate those sheets of plywood. You can't. Not without inflicting severe damage on both of them. For all intents and purposes, they are now one.

Christ and the Church

Verse 32 - ³² *This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

I am talking about Christ and the Church. **Marriage is to be an illustration** of God's love for the Church. Hierarchy; submission; love; sacrifice. It's all there.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Christ refers to himself as the Bridegroom.

In Matthew 25, Jesus compares himself to a bridegroom in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Revelation 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

Folks, Christian marriage is supposed to demonstrate to unbelievers the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. I have to ask myself: Both inside and outside of these doors, what do people think when they see and hear Lori and I interact? What do they hear when we are talking about each other when we are apart? Is your wife, "the old lady", or "that battle-axe?" Is your husband, "the old goat," or worse? What testimony does our marriage display?

Love and Respect

Finally, **in verse 33**, Paul summarizes his instructions by saying, *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

Love and respect. Is that really what it comes down to? When you boil it all down, that's a pretty clear statement. I'd recommend the book "Love & Respect" by Elmer Eggerichs. Dr. Eggerichs does a great job of really fleshing out this thought.

No Condemnation

I want to conclude with this: nobody here can change the past. I can't, and you can't. I've made mistakes in my marriage, and perhaps you have as well. Maybe your marriage seems so far gone that you think it's too late. Maybe divorce has already occurred, or maybe you are widowed and it's too late to change the course of your marriage. I'm not here to be your judge. My intent today was to strengthen existing and future marriages. My prayer for you is that you take heart in **Romans 8:1**, which says *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Jesus Christ has the power to forgive, the power to heal, and the power to make all things new. If you are here today and you don't have a personal relationship with the One who can save you and your marriage, then please come and speak with Pastor Dennis or myself after the service. We would love to have the chance to pray with you.

Let's pray...