

# Wives, Husbands & the Gospel

*21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing[ her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 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. 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.”[c] 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

*Ephesians 5:21-33*

Very good to see you guys. My name is Jeff, I'm one of the pastors here at City Church. I oversee our groups & discipleship as well as pastoral care and finances of our church family. Because of what I do, I don't get many opportunities to dive into scriptures with you guys on Sundays, which is something I also love to do. That's primarily what Kent does for our church family. Not only is he the primary teacher, he also organizes what topical series or books of the bible for our church family to go through, as well as scheduling out the teaching calendar on which passages fall on which Sundays. So when him and I were talking about going through the book of Ephesians, one passage stood out to us as a passage that's a bit harder to teach because of how many times we have heard taught incorrectly and in unhelpful ways. A passage that can be misunderstood in so many different ways that could cause a lot of pain. One particular passage. You guys see where I am going with this? So I was looking over the teaching calendar earlier this summer, I noticed Kent coincidentally scheduled his vacation on the Sunday that this particular passage falls on. So c'est la vie here I am with you also this morning. Well played Kent, well played. I'm sure Kent is going to listen to this on podcast in preparing for LifeGroup, I would love for us to collectively and lovingly boo him. So on count of 3... Turn with me to Ephesians 5.

If you're new around here, we've been spending the whole summer walking through this letter that Paul wrote to a church in ancient city of Ephesus. The first half of the book was very theological. Paul spent a lot of time talking about all the different things that God has done for us in Jesus. The hope we have in what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross. And then the second half, which we're in now, is very practical in nature. A lot of specific details on how we should live as followers of Jesus, in different arenas of life, in light of what Jesus has done for us on the cross. So everything today Paul is speaking into, is in the context for someone *already* following after Jesus, not before. Paul doesn't assume for anyone who doesn't know Jesus or love Jesus will agree with what he has to say. So if that is where you are at today, I want to say I'm really excited you are here. I am going to do my best to teach this in a way that you can understand why these are instructions for followers of Jesus.

Today, Paul turns his attention to the arena of *marriage*. **Now before we get any further, I feel like I need to say something about how the church and followers of Jesus have been talking about marriage in the**

last few decades. The church at large has been unhealthy in over emphasizing marriage and framing it as the peak of human existence, where you find ultimate joy and happiness. So if you're single here today, I want to say I'm sorry because that way of talking about marriage is extremely unhelpful when you are single and even more detrimental when you are married. As a follower of Jesus you are a whole person because of what Jesus has done for you and your worth is not based on which box you check for your relationship status. You have complete joy, are completely accepted, are completely loved because of Jesus.

So if you are single today, can I ask something from you? Would you not check out during the sermon today because of how this topic has been discussed in the past? I believe there will be things that will be very helpful for you right now as you follow after Jesus and it will also be helpful for you to love and encourage other followers of Jesus in your life who are married on what marriage really is all about. Sounds good? Ok, let's get going.

Because I'm up here, I have the privilege of watching everybody in the room tense up just a little when our scripture reader read the line "wives, submit to your husbands." The air got just a little thicker in here when that happened. And to be honest, that line is very problematic for a lot of people. And I would say in many cases, very understandably so. Verses like that one have been used to silence, oppress, and subjugate women in a lot of destructive ways. And for some of us, when we hear the word "submit," it conjures up those ideas. But what I hope to show you this morning is that those ideas are not what this passage is attempting to teach. Not at all. And more than that, in many ways, it's attempting to teach the exact opposite.

So let's start with the first line, v. 21. As a heads up, I'm gonna be reading from the NIV translation today instead of the ESV like we usually do—so feel free to click over to that translation on your app, or follow along on the screen if you only have an ESV. So v. 21 reads

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

We have to start our understanding of this passage with v. 21. Part of the reason I'm reading out of the NIV today is because it structures this part of the letter closer to how I think it is meant to be read. This v. 21 is the set-up for today's teaching, as well as the next two weeks. The next three weeks are all about how we should interact with one another in different types of relationships, but all of it references back to this one verse. So while the bulk of our verses deal with marriage, it is really just one extended example of how **we all** are called to love and serve and sacrifice for one another, in singleness and in marriage. So this passage is actually extremely relevant to all of us, even though it specifically addresses marriage. All of the instructions Paul gives for the next three weeks are details on how *all of us* are to "submit to one another."

It'd be like if one of our City Kids volunteers looked at a big group of kids fighting with each other and said "I want all of you to get along with each other." And then followed it up with "Whit, I want you to share with Rory. Rory, buddy I know you want to be Batman but I need you to stop punching your sister Evangeline in the face. Evangeline, girly, I know you love to sing I need you to stop screaming as loudly as humanly possible directly into Violet's ear." And so on. The instruction to all the kids there is "get along with each other." And everything that follows that are the *specifics* of *how* we want the kids to "get along with one another." That's very much what Paul does here. He says "*Everyone*, submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. Now *wives*, here's the way *you* are to do that towards your husbands. *Husbands*, here's the way *you* are to do that towards your wives. *Children*, here's the way *you* are to do that towards your parents." And so on.

One reason we know that is because in v. 22, the word "submit" isn't even in the original language. It refers back to "submit" in v. 21. So it literally reads "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. *Wives*, to your own husbands..." So this tells us that before "submitting" is something *wives* are to do, it's something *all of us* do. We are all called to submit to one another. *Submit* simply means "to voluntarily place yourself under, or after" someone else. So while we cringe at the word because of its cultural connotations, the bible just sort of assumes it among followers of Jesus. All followers of Jesus. Just like Jesus *submitted* himself to the Father, we are all called to imitate Jesus in *submitting* to one another.

The other thing you need to know about what's going on here is that **Paul is subverting the power structures of his day**. First century Ephesus was a very hyper-patriarchal society. Men had plenty of

rights, women had almost no rights. The average marriage was at best utilitarian, and at worst downright abusive. We know from historical documents around this time that most men saw their wives as useful for having and rearing children, but would often seek sex and companionship with multiple people outside the home often. Fidelity as a virtue was virtually non-existent among husbands. Wives were silenced, oppressed, and cast aside like it was nothing. So while we obviously have significant problems with how we treat women in America, even today—it's nothing like the culture Paul was writing this into.

I tell you all that to help you understand how this passage would've read to Paul's audience, how they would have felt. What's funny is that this passage would've been controversial to the original audience just like it's controversial to us. They would've bristled when they read Paul's words just like some of us do. But for *entirely different* reasons. **In Ephesus, when Paul started off by saying "wives, submit to your husbands," everyone would've nodded in agreement: "well, of course they should—that's what women do." But then when he went on to say "husbands, love your wives, as Christ gave himself up for the Church?" That's when you would've seen some people squirm. That's when people would've started walking out. That's when people would've started throwing things. "Husbands, giving themselves up for their wives? That's ridiculous."**

So when Paul writes this, part of what he was doing was subversively breaking down these abusive power structures: by telling wives to submit to their husbands, sure. But also by telling husbands to *give themselves up* for their wives. But let's be honest, because of all the commotion that the word "submit" causes in this passage, we usually brush right over the commands to husbands. I think it's somewhat telling that in my 14 years of following after Jesus, I have heard countless sermons on what submission from a wife to a husband does and doesn't mean. But I can't think of a single sermon I've heard unpacking in detail what a husband "giving himself up for his wife" means.

So let's find out what it means. What does it mean for a husband to *give himself up* for his wife? Well the word is *paradidomi* (which I would never in a million years force you to try and say)—and it means most literally to *hand over*, *betray*, or *abandon*. It's the same word used for when Judas *betrayed* or *handed over* Jesus to the people who would eventually crucify him. So to say the least, it's a strong word—the English translation "giving yourself up" doesn't fully capture it. **So husbands in the room, in the same way that Judas handed over, abandoned, betrayed Jesus completely—that is what we are to do to our own lives for the good of our wives. When it comes to our own dreams, our aspirations, our life goals—when we get married, all those things go on the chopping block. They all have to be run through the test of whether or not they are actually for the good of our wives, to encourage her to love Jesus more. It means that your wants take a backseat to her needs.** Now, I want to be very clear—when I say "needs," I mean things like a relationship with Jesus, community, food, clothing, shelter. I don't mean that everything she says she needs comes before you, but the things she *truly* needs do. My wife Callie has been trying so hard recently to convince me she needs a goldendoodle, and with all the love in my heart, that is not a need. However, when it comes to her actual needs, relationship with Jesus, community, food, clothing, shelter and so on, husbands, your wants and desires becomes less important than her needs.

Are you starting to see why first century men in a patriarchal society would've been uncomfortable with this language? In fact, if you just think about it objectively, who has the more difficult command to obey in this passage? Which of these sounds like stronger language to you: "placing yourself after your husband" or **"abandoning your life, betray yourself, for the sake of your wife"?** I wonder if sometimes we get so

distracted by our hang-ups with the word “submit” in this passage, that we miss how the most difficult, life-altering instructions are actually given to the *husbands*.

Paul then goes on to tell us the *purpose for which* husbands are to “give themselves up” for their wives. Husbands are to give themselves up for the same reason that Jesus gave himself up for the church, to v. 26: “...to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” To summarize, *Jesus gave himself up for the Church to make the Church flourish. To help the Church become everything she was made to be. Radiant, beautiful, without blemish. In the same way, husbands should give themselves up for their wife, so that she becomes everything she was made to be. Radiant, beautiful, without blemish.*

So I've got a friend who's married, a couple years back he got offered a job paying twice what he was currently making, in an amazing city. This was the next step up for him in his career, made sense from a logical standpoint to take it, he wanted to take it. But here's what he knew. He knew his wife had a number of gospel-centered friendships with other women in the city they currently lived in. He knew she was growing spiritually and emotionally more than she ever had during their marriage. And so he thought about it, prayed about it, talked to her about it, and decided to turn down the job. For him, that's what it looked like to “abandon his life” for the good of his wife—so that she could continue to grow and thrive and flourish. It meant that what he *wanted*, took a backseat to what she *needed*.

I'll give you one on a smaller scale. Another married friend of mine, his wife and him are both whatever the polar opposite of morning people are—*afternoon people? Night people? Somebody work on that terminology...* But the point is that neither of them like getting up in the morning. Turns out they have an infant that *loves* getting up in the morning. In fact, waking up every morning at 6:00 am sharp. But my friend knows that one of the best ways for his wife to grow and flourish is for her to get a good night's rest, and then wake up and get to spend time in the Scriptures, first thing. So here's what he does, and has done every day for the past three years. Every morning, he sets his alarm for 5:45am (which he tells me feels the slightest bit like torture to him), so that he can be awake, spend some time in the Scriptures himself, and then be ready to hang out with the baby while she gets a little extra sleep and spends time in the bible. That, for him, is part of what it looks like to “abandon his life” for the good of his wife—so she can flourish.

Here's another way of putting it, husbands in the room: if your wife is struggling spiritually, what are you doing about it? I think my own tendency when Callie isn't doing well is to go “well she better get her stuff together—I can't pull two people's weight around here.” But according to this passage, in some ways, that's *exactly your job*. Now, there is such a thing as *enabling*—where you take so much responsibility for her that she doesn't have to take responsibility for herself—but that's not where most of us are at. Most of us err on the side of being very hands-off and neglecting to take much of any responsibility for the spiritual good and nourishment of our wife.

In fact, “nourishment” is precisely the type of language Paul uses to describe all this. Look at v. 28:

*[28] 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 [in*

other words, *nourish] their body, just as Christ does the church—[30] for we are members of his body.*

In general, we take care of our own bodies, to nourish it, feed our own bodies. In the same way, we are called to see our wives as integrated as who we are, to nourish and to take care. It's amazing the difference it makes when you stop seeing your wife as just another person you do life with, and start seeing her as she is *your life*. What's good for her, is good for you. What spiritually benefits her, spiritually benefits you. That's a massive perspective shift.

Alright, husbands in the room, I know I appreciate when people are blunt with me, so maybe you do too. I'm just going to project that onto you. Let's just get real direct on this: **if your expectation of what it means to be a husband is that you go to work and make money, so that you don't have to do much of anything else, you have not gotten that understanding of being a husband from the bible.** If you're thinking that going to work each day earns you the right to come home and sit in front of the TV or X-Box all evening while your wife makes dinner, cleans the house and keeps the kids breathing and alive...you, my friend, are nowhere close to "giving yourself up" "betraying yourself" "abandoning your life" for your wife. Nowhere *close*.

Here's the way you *need* to think about it: when you clock out at work, your day at home *begins*. A friend of mine calls this his "second shift mentality." At 5:00pm, or whenever you get off work, you are clocking out of work and you're clocking in to your second shift. Not meaning your marriage or family is a job—but meaning that you better be just as ready to work hard and put forth effort at home as you were at work. If you're expecting your wife to work two "shifts" so that you can only work one, we've got some repenting to do ASAP. One of my favorite pastors says "if somebody is worn out and exhausted because they're busting tail at work and at home—it should be the husband." That is part of what it looks like to *abandon* your life for the good of your wife.

And husbands, I will be first to confess to you: I am failing at this. This has been incredibly hard for me to do. I am not up here saying this is easy. I am not saying abandoning your own life is easy. I am not up here being this stern and direct at you because I am an expert or excelling in this area of my life.. I am this stern and direct because I am also calling myself to repentance on this. To see just how much I need Jesus to help me grow in this area. On my drives home from the office I am praying and begging Jesus to help me to have this mentality - that my day at home is about to begin, that I am called to abandon my own life to love and serve Callie to the best of my ability. But no matter how difficult this is, as followers of Jesus, this is our calling as husbands. You guys tracking with me?

Okay, now that we've done that, let's talk to wives in the room about this whole "submission" thing. What exactly does Paul have in mind here? Well, first it's probably helpful to mention **three things submission doesn't mean:**

- **Submitting to all men.** Hopefully this one's obvious from the context, but this passage is not talking about all women submitting to all men. It has absolutely zero implications for how we think about women in leadership positions in the workplace, in culture at large, how much we do or don't pay women for the same jobs men do, or any of that. There are pastors who would say the bible teaches there are certain positions of authority women shouldn't hold out in the workplace. I would say that is a *substantial* misunderstanding of what Paul is talking about here. Paul's focus here is on how a wife relates to her husband. Period.



- **Submitting to sinful behavior.** Paul is not saying you need to submit to your husband's *sinful behavior*. If your husband is doing or encouraging *you to do* things that contradict what Scripture plainly teaches, you actually have a moral obligation to *not* submit to him. "Submitting" doesn't mean neglecting to confront your husband about his sin, correct him on his sin, or rebuke him in his sin. In fact, as his sister in Christ you are instructed *to do* all of those things. So if your husband is working a job that preys on the poor or powerless, you have an obligation to help him see that's not what followers of Jesus are called to do in the world. We are called to help the world flourish and not take advantage of the weak. Or if your husband has a pattern of coming home and says he's too tired to go to LifeGroup, you are called to correct him on his laziness.
- **Submitting to abuse of any kind.** When Paul says "everything" he is not including submitting to a husband's *abusive behavior*. Let me say it loud for the people in the back: *Paul is not asking you to submit to abuse*. Under no circumstances. That one to me seems like a no-brainer, but apparently there is some significant confusion on it among male evangelical leaders lately. So I wanted to make it abundantly clear. **Wives, if your husband ever uses the ideas in this passage to try and keep you suffering under abuse of any type, I want you to come tell me or Kent and we will make sure it is dealt with immediately, and see to it that you are safe in the meantime.**

So there are several things Paul *doesn't* mean when he says wives should "submit to their husbands." But with those cleared out of the way, here is what I think Paul *does* have in mind: he has in mind **allowing your husband to love you like Christ loves the church. Allowing him to work towards for your spiritual maturity and benefit, and responding receptively to it.** It means when he engages you on something, responding well to that. When he suggests something that will benefit you, whether you like it or not, hearing him out on it and responding.

And Paul's instructions is that you should be willing to do that "*in everything*." Let me try and explain what he means by that. Ladies in the room, I say this sincerely and with all the love in my heart for you. **Many of you have areas of your life that you will not let your husband engage you on, even if and when he tries.** Maybe it's in regards to your relationship with Jesus, certain sin issues in your life, maybe it's in regards to how you use money, maybe it's in regards to your relationships with others, maybe it's how more often than not you view yourself better than other people around you, maybe it's bitterness you are holding onto against other people –could be any number of different things. But whatever he engages you on, many of you fight him tooth and nail, you lash out at him, you mock him, you change the subject, you hold his own mistakes over his head, or you deflect. You use any number of strategies to avoid letting him engage you on things you need to be engaged on. And if you persist in responding that way, I will guarantee you of three things that will happen as a result: 1) You will absolutely crush any desire in him to love and lead you like Jesus would. 2) You will leave him extremely vulnerable to sinful expressions of leadership, either in the home or at work, and 3) You will all but lock yourself into a lifetime of immaturity (because your husband is the primary disciple-maker God has given to you). In everything means that in every *area of your life*, you are placing yourself under the love and leadership of your husband. **Just like the husband is called to abandon his whole life to his wife, to betray himself for the good of his wife, the wife is called to submit her whole life to her husband.** That's what "in everything" means.

I tell you all this to say, allow your husband to be who Jesus made him to be in your marriage. And when he does, respond with receptiveness to him. Will he always do it perfectly? No. Will he always do it with

precisely the right tone? No. But is any of that an excuse to shut him down when he tries? *Absolutely not.* Submitting looks like placing yourself under the self-sacrificing love of your husband, and giving him the space to be who Scripture calls him to be. That's what true *submission* looks like.

When Callie and I were engaged, one of the things we did was grabbed dinners with other married couples, to ask them about their marriage and try to learn from them as much as we can as Callie and I prepare for our marriage. One particular couple met were married for over 40 years. During the dinner the husband shared about just hard it was to lay down his life over the years. That was challenging to hear but what stood out for Callie and I was when the wife shared her side. As we talked, we got to see her reflecting the last 40 years of how she put herself after her husband as he lay down his life for her. The wife was tearing up as she talked. We thought she was tearing up because she's reflecting the difficulties over the years. She went on explaining she was tearing up because of the joy that was welling inside of her as she recounted all those years. She was reflecting how just how much she flourished in the last 40 years. It was apparent this wasn't just a joy that her marriage brought, she explained it was the joy of knowing and loving Jesus more and more over the last 40 years. It was the joy of flourishing in a marriage as Paul is describing in our passage today. It brought tears to our eyes as we listened to her.

Now, I want to get to some very practical homework for all of you on this in a second. But first, I need to give you two pitfalls to look out for now that we know what these passages are trying to say. **First, these are all instructions on what we are to do for our spouse—not things to demand that our spouse do for us.** Are you tracking with the difference there? *There is a reason Paul doesn't say "wives, tell your husbands to love you more like Jesus." "Husbands, tell your wives to submit to you."* I know husbands that have tried to do it that way and none of them have made it out alive. This passage and this teaching are not weapons for you to fire at your spouse when they're not acting like you want them to. They are instructions we should all *decide to be* for our spouse. That's a very different thing.

And along those same lines, **this passage is not to be bartered with.** The temptation with all of this is for us to say "well, if she would be these things for me, then I'd do those things in return." "If my husband would love me like Jesus, I'd submit to him like I submit to Jesus." Here's the problem with that logic: Jesus loves us *perfectly*. Any of us in the room ready to claim that we *submit* to *him* perfectly? Any of us who would say we never fail to do what Jesus asks of us? I'm gonna go out on a limb and say that even though Jesus loves all of us perfectly, all of us still fail to respond to him perfectly. So for us to hold our spouse's lack of performance out as a justification for *us not being* who *we're* called to be is a very unhelpful posture to have. We'd all be better off saying "I'm going to be this for my spouse, whether or not they ever do this for me."

Which brings us, quite literally, to the crux of this passage. Notice what Paul says in v. 31:

[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."*

Paul quotes the first words in the entire bible about marriage—from Genesis 2. That marriage is about a man and a woman being united together and becoming "one flesh" together. He references this in a passage that is very much about marriage, but then he goes somewhere unexpected with it—v. 32:

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



So a lot of people want to know the *secret* to marriage. There's no shortage of answers offered to that question: "Compromise." "Good communication." "Romance." "Lots of sex." "Lots of good sex." One comedian says it's knowing "the wife is always right." No shortage of guesses as to what the secret to marriage is. **Here's what Paul says is the secret to marriage: *the gospel*. Christ and the church. The secret to understanding marriage is understanding how Jesus relates to his people. How he relates to us. It's realizing that marriage is actually about more than just marriage. It's about Jesus. Marriage is actually meant to serve as a symbol—a living, breathing billboard that points the world to the relationship Jesus has with the Church - his people. It is meant to point to another man who *gave himself up for his Bride, the Church*.**

Paul says until you understand that relationship, the ideas in this passage about marriage won't make much sense. *Why would I give myself up for my wife when she doesn't respond well to it? Why would I place myself under the leadership of my husband when he leads so imperfectly?* Those are valid questions. But once you understand that marriage is actually about the gospel, the answers start to make a lot more sense. *Why give yourself up for you wife even when she doesn't respond well to it? **Because Jesus gave himself up for us knowing we would often respond poorly to it.** Why place yourself under the leadership of your husband when he leads imperfectly? **Because you've entrusted yourself to the leadership of Jesus who is perfect—your husband doesn't need to be.***

So husbands and wives in the room, are you going to do this perfectly? No. You will not. But when you fail, remember the Gospel. Remember Jesus was perfect on your behalf. Remember the grace, the undeserving love that God has for you. And let that fuel in how quickly you repent and apologize one another, how you go about fighting for your marriage to become a living, breathing billboard for the gospel.

We're told in the bible that Jesus gave himself up for his bride on the cross, and he's coming back for the wedding. The book of Revelation, all of human history comes to a head in the reuniting of Jesus and his people. And in the meantime, what he is doing every single day through the work of the Holy Spirit for all of us is "making us holy, cleansing us by the washing with water through the word." He is taking responsibility for making us into who we were made to be all along. And for those of us who follow Jesus, our job is to receive that and respond to it. Allowing all of those things to have their effect so that we grow into who we were made to be. And that's the relationship that husbands and wives are called to imitate. The relationship between a husband and a wife is meant to put that reality on display. That's what marriage is all about. That's the model we're working from.

And there's something else that means for the single folks in the room that I don't want us to miss. Y'all have been very gracious and very attentive throughout the teaching today, so thank you. **Here's what this passage also means: *marriage is not ultimate*.** Being married is not the peak of human existence. And I know that is what you are bombarded with every single day and it's exhausting to not buy into that. But with all the love in my heart and for your good, that is not what life is all about. What is ultimate is *life with Jesus*. The Scriptures tell us that one day, our marriages will be no more. It will end. It is not everlasting. But what is everlasting is life with Jesus. In the new heavens and new earth, there will only be one marriage—the marriage of Jesus to his Church. So I hope today as we talked about the relationship between a husband and wife, you see how this fits in how every follower of Jesus is called to live. So in light of that, let's not talk as if marriage is the only way to live. Let's not operate from the expectation that

every person should eventually get married—that's not a belief you'll find in Scripture. Singleness and marriage are both equally viable and equally faithful ways of living, and so let's continue to make space for both in our church family.

But as we close, I just want to give all of us, everybody in this room, married or not—some homework for this week. A lot of big ideas in this passage, so I want to give us a way to bring it down to earth. So here's your homework. I know there's a lot to write down, so feel free to just get out your phone and take a photo of these slides, and/or we'll post them online with the sermon and you can get them there.

- **Husbands:** sometime this week, I want you to ask your wives some combination of these questions. Find a night to go out somewhere, or stay in if you think it'll be better that way, and ask her these questions:
  - *Where am I not contributing well to your relationship with Jesus?*
  - *Where am I refusing to abandon my life for your good?*
  - *Where are your needs having to take a backseat to my wants?*
  - *How could I "let you in" more than I do now?*
  - *In what ways I am doing well?* Now I know this last question feel very different than the rest but it's just as important. Here's what I know: our tendency is to only see the worse in our spouse and if the Holy Spirit is alive and working in their souls, there will be wins worth celebrating, big or small.
- **Wives:** I want you to ask your husbands this question at some point this week. Go out on a date, or just find some quiet after the kids go to bed, and ask him some combination of these questions:
  - *Where am I not placing myself under or after you?*
  - *Where am I fighting against your good desire to love and serve me like Jesus?*
  - *What part of my life am I refusing to let you speak into?*
  - *How could I "let you" in more than I do now?*
  - *In what ways I am doing well?*
- And lastly, **unmarried people** in the room, there are actually *two* things I'd love for you to do:
  - Ask the married people in your LifeGroup those questions about themselves. If you're a guy, ask the married guys in your group *where they aren't contributing to their wife's relationship with Jesus*. If you're a lady, ask the married girls in your group *where they are fighting against their husband loving them like Jesus*.
  - And secondly, pray. Pray for the marriages in our church. If marriage among followers of Jesus is meant to be a powerful pointer to the gospel, we need strong marriages in our church. And we can't get there without prayer.

Let's pray together as we close.