

Men & Women as Spouses

Hey guys. Good to see you this morning. My name is Jeff, if we haven't gotten the chance to meet. I'm one of the pastors here. If you've got a bible, go ahead and turn with me to that passage we just read, [Ephesians 5](#). If you're new here this morning, we've been in a series for the past month and a half called *Intentional*. It's a series all about gender, and how we think about our gender as followers of Jesus.

I don't have time to recap the *whole* series for you at this point, but I'll try to really quickly hit the highlights. A lot of it has been working from this idea that men and women are created by God to be both *equal* in dignity and worth, and also distinct from one another in significant ways. And we've said that while those ideas can seem difficult to hold in tension with one another, they're both *beautiful* ideas worth fighting for in how we think about men and women.

So a lot of the series has been processing how to embody those ideas in our understanding of *ourselves*. And then *last week*, we turned the corner and started talking about how those ideas play out in our *relationships* with one another. Last Sunday, Kent talked about how gender informs the way we think about *friendships* between men and women—something that often doesn't get much airtime in the Church.

This week, we're going to talk about a different type of relationship: that of *marriage*. **And specifically, we're going to ask and answer the question: how does our gender inform the way we think about and approach our marriage?** Now, real quickly before we get into the passage: I want to mention the thing we say *anytime* we do a teaching on marriage at our church. Our church is really blessed to have somewhere around 50% married people, and somewhere around 50% single people in it. We *celebrate* that—we think it helps us have a really balanced approach when it comes to teachings like this. But that does mean that in a teaching about marriage, it may *feel* like it doesn't apply to about half of the people in this room. So if you're single in the room, how should you think about a teaching like this one?

I'll give you a couple things. One, most statistics out there tell us that even if you're not married right now, in America, somewhere around 3 out of 4 people *will* be married at *some* point in their lives. So even if this teaching doesn't apply to you right this second, there's at least a decent chance it will at some point. But second, even if you're the 1 in 4 that *doesn't* get married, the chances are high that you *know* someone who is married. And especially if you are a part of a church, you'll probably get to live in pretty *close* relationship with people who are married. **So even if the ideas we set forward today don't apply to you, they still could be really helpful in giving you the ability to speak biblically**

and wisely into the lives of your *friends who are married*. So in summary, still some good reasons to listen into what we're covering this morning.

But with that said, let's dive into this passage, Ephesians 5. Because I was up here when this passage was read a moment ago, I had the distinct pleasure of watching Katy read the word "submit," and watching a good many of you squirm a little. And we're going to dig into that word in just a bit. But first I want to make sure we're grasping the overall *context* of the passage. And we'll do that by starting in v. 21. Take a look with me there:

[21] Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

So Paul, writing to the entire Ephesian church, says "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." This, believe it or not, is the *heading* for everything that follows it in Ephesians 5 and at least the beginning of chapter 6. Which means it is the heading for the instructions to husbands, and to wives, that we're going to get into today. Everything that follows are *specific* instructions on *how exactly* we should practice "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

It would be kind of like this. Imagine that I walk back into City Kids during the Gathering today, and everything back there is pure chaos (it's not, parents—Melanie makes sure of that. But just imagine for a second that it is). It's like a warzone. There's biting, screaming, yelling—big, crocodile tears from some of the kids—things are way out of hand. In that scenario, if I wanted to help, I might say something to all the kids like "I want *all of you* to get along with each other." And then I follow it up with "Whit, I want you to share with Stella. Stella, I want you to be nice to your sister. Norah, I want you to stop screaming at people and talk nicely instead. Jonah: I want you to stop hitting Ben over the head with that toy and apologize to him for *it*." And so on. So do you hear what I did? I gave one, big, *overarching* instruction to *everyone*: "get along with each other." And then, I gave *specific* instructions on how to do that, that were unique to each kid. But they all fit under the heading, "get along with each other."

I think that's very similar to what Paul is doing in Ephesians 5. The big, overarching instruction is "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." That applies to everybody. Side note,, while we may cringe at the word submit, it itself can not be a bad word for followers of Jesus because it is an instruction given to all followers of Jesus. But he *follows* that with instructions about unique, *distinct* ways that he wants different people to apply that instruction. Specifically in our passage today, he gives *one* type of instruction to *wives*, and one type of instruction to *husbands*. Here's why that's important: once again, we have to hold these ideas in tension. So if we try to apply the commands to husbands and wives while ignoring that we should *all* submit to one another, we've

misunderstood. But *also*, if we try to apply the command to “submit to one another,” in a way that *ignores* the specific, distinct ways Paul tells husbands to do that and wives to do that—we’ve *also* misunderstood. Do you see the tension? You *might* say that in this passage, there is both *equality*, *and* distinction.

So we’ve talked about the *equality*; now let’s dive into the *distinction*. Let’s actually do the instructions to *husbands* first, and we’ll circle back to the ones to *wives*. Skip down to v. 25:

[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.

Okay, here’s why I wanted to cover the commands to husbands first. I think all the commotion in this passage around the word “submit” may actually be *distracting* us from something very important. I think sometimes, we get so hung up on that one instruction to wives, that we brush right over the radical nature of this instruction to *husbands* in the passage. **Case in point: in my eighteen years of following Jesus, I have probably heard dozens of sermons on what submission from a wife to a husband looks like; I have heard very few sermons on what it looks like for a husband to “give himself up” for his wife.** So today, we’re going to start off talking about *that!* What does Paul mean in these instructions to husbands?

Well let’s start with that phrase “give himself up.” What does that mean exactly? In the Greek, the word there is *paradidomi*. It means to hand over, deliver over, or even to “betray.” It’s actually the same word used for when Judas *betrayed* Jesus to the people who would eventually crucify him. So it’s a fairly *strong* word—the English translation “giving himself up” doesn’t really even fully capture it. What Paul is saying is that **in the same way that Judas handed over, abandoned and betrayed Jesus—that is what we are to do to our own lives for the good of the woman we’re married to.** When I get married, all of my personal dreams, aspirations, life goals—all of those things go on the chopping block. They all now have to be run through the filter of whether they serve just *me*, or whether they serve me *and* my wife.

It means that now, as a husband, my *wants* take a backseat to my *wife's needs*. Now, I want to be clear: when I say “needs,” I mean things like a relationship with Jesus, Jesus-filled community, as well as things like food, clothing, shelter, basic well-being. A while back, my wife Callie was trying really hard to convince me that she *needed* a goldendoodle. And as cute as goldendoodles are, that was not a *need*. I don't mean that everything your wife says she needs comes before you, but the things she *truly* needs do. When your wife comes to you with a legitimate *need*, husbands: you don't really get to say “I don't *want* to do that.” You are called to give up, betray, and *abandon* your very life for the good of your wife.

In addition to that, Paul goes on to say in verses 26-30 that a husband actually has a *responsibility* towards his wife—not just to meet her *needs*—but to ensure that she is thriving and growing and becoming more like Jesus. In defining the role of a husband, Paul observes how Jesus himself gave *himself* up to make the church “holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and [presenting] her to himself radiant, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish.” If I were to *summarize* all that, I might put it like this. **Husbands, you have a responsibility to do everything in your power to help your wife flourish.** Not just to put food on the table, not just to put a roof over her head—but to see to it that she is becoming everything God made her to be. In other words, *most* of the time, submitting to you should be easy because there is such a pattern of you having her good in mind.

So here's what's interesting about this passage in Ephesians 5. This passage would have been every bit as controversial in its day as it is in ours, but for very different reasons. **We tend to read this passage and get uncomfortable about the “wives submit to your husbands” part.** But the Ephesian church would've read it and felt very comfortable with that part. They would've read that and gone, “yeah, obviously that's what wives are called to do.” The part where *they* would've gotten uncomfortable is when Paul said “husbands, abandon your lives for your wife, just like Jesus abandoned his for the Church.” *That's* when you would've seen some people start squirming. *That's* when people would've started mumbling under their breath and walking out. Because *nobody* in that society at that time thought husbands should take that kind of posture towards their wives. But Paul, apparently, thinks that is absolutely essential: *husbands*, abandon your lives for the good of your wife, like Christ abandoned his life for the good of the Church.

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 to live in. This was the next step up for him in his career, and it made sense from a career standpoint to take it; he really *wanted* to take it. But here's what he knew. He knew his wife had a number of gospel-centered

friendships 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 and get back to me*. But the point is that neither of them like waking up early in the morning. **Well, turns out they have an infant that loves getting up early in the morning, as infants often do.** 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 his wife gets a little extra sleep and spends time in the bible. That, for him, is one small part of "abandoning his life" for the good of his wife—so that 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 husbands, here's the thing: according to this passage, in *some* ways, that's *exactly your job*. God literally calls husbands to love their wives *as their own body*. Now, there is such a thing as *enabling*—where you take so much responsibility for her that she doesn't ever take responsibility for herself—but as a husband myself, I would bet that isn't the error most of us are making right now. **More of us err on the side of neglecting to take much responsibility for our wife flourishing at all.**

Husbands: I know I appreciate it when people are blunt with me, so I'm assuming you appreciate it too. Let me get as direct as I know how to be. **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 your 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 are nowhere *close* to "giving yourself up" "betraying yourself" "abandoning your life" for your wife.

Instead, I would encourage you to turn off Netflix, turn off the X-Box—and spend some time asking your wife what she *needs*. Or just observing from the bible and from her life what she needs. And then I would encourage you to do whatever it takes to “give yourself up for her,” so that she can in turn thrive and flourish. And the *reason* I want you to do that is because that is what *Jesus* has already done for you. That is what he chose to do—even when it was difficult, even when it was challenging—because it was the best thing to do. And we as husbands are called to be a picture *of Jesus* to the woman we’re married to. So let’s look for ways to do that, in whatever ways we can.

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. Make sense?

Okay, we’ve talked to husbands. Now let’s circle back to Paul’s instruction towards *wives*. Jump back up to v. 22 with me:

*[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.*

Alright, so let’s dig into *this* word. The word *submit* here means to place yourself under, or after, someone else. That is the posture that Scripture teaches wives should have towards their husband. Now, a couple quick clarifications before we unpack what that *does* look like. First, this is not talking about *all women* submitting to *all men*. Notice that Paul says “wives, submit yourselves *to your own husbands*.” Not to *all* husbands. Not *women*, to *all men*. Wives, to your own husband. Second, this doesn’t mean wives submit to their husband’s *sinful* behavior, or him encouraging her to *participate* in sinful behavior. Wives: if your husband wants you to *do* something the bible forbids, or forbids

you to do something the bible *commands*, you actually have a moral obligation *not* to submit to your husband. Your allegiance is *first* to Jesus, *not* first to your husband.

And third, submission is not silence. Submission is not a calling for wives to leave their brain, or voice at the door. If your husband needs biblical correction, correct him. If he isn't thinking about something the way he should, help him think about it better. Submission doesn't mean you sit idly by when you are sorely needed. Remember from two weeks ago: Genesis calls women to be an 'empowering strength' to her husband. Wives, you are to bring all of your wisdom, giftedness, and strength to the marriage as you submit to your husband.

And fourth, it *doesn't* mean submitting to *abuse* of any kind. When Paul says women should submit to their husbands, he's not saying they should put themselves or their children under the care of abusive men. Wives: if your husband *ever* uses the ideas in this passage to try and keep you suffering under abuse, **I want you to come and tell our pastors.** We will see to it that it is dealt with immediately, and that you are safe in the meantime. *None* of those four things are what Paul means by submitting to your husband.

So with all of that cleared out of the way, what *does* Paul mean by a wife "submitting" to her husband? I think Paul is instructing a wife to submit to the selfless responsibility that her husband has been given. He's asking a wife to honor the effort that her husband puts forward to love and care and sacrifice for her. He means her allowing her husband to work towards her spiritual maturity and benefit, and responding *receptively* to it. It means when your husband engages you on something, responding well to him doing that. It means when he suggests something that benefits you—that *actually* benefits you—whether you like it or not, hearing him out on it and responding humbly to it.

Think about Paul's language: "as the *church* submits to Christ, so also *wives* should submit to their husbands." **So think about *all* of our relationships with Jesus for a second. In *that* relationship, Jesus via the Holy Spirit is putting forth the effort, daily, to help us become who he made us to be. And as his *people*, it is *our* job to do everything we can to *respond* humbly to his efforts to do that. To do everything we can to *receive* that, and not *fight* that. Do we do that *perfectly* in our relationship with Jesus? Not even close. But we do *aim* for that posture. That's what *submission* means.** And Paul says in that same type of way, wives should submit to their husbands. It means that as he puts in the effort to love and give himself up for her, to help her become more like Jesus, she *responds* humbly to those efforts. She's doing everything she can to *receive* that, and not *fight* that. Will she do that *perfectly*? No. But she does *aim* to make that her posture. That's what submission means.

So ladies in the room: I want to put this as gently as I can, but I do think it needs to be said. Some of you may have areas of your life that you won't *let* your husband engage you on, no matter how gently and humbly and sacrificially he tries to do so. Maybe that's in regard to your relationship with Jesus, or certain sin issues in your life. Maybe it's regarding how you use money, or regarding your relationships with others. Could be any number of different things. But whatever it is, sometimes the tendency is to resist your husband lovingly engaging you in those things. To turn it back around on him, or point out *his* mistakes, or redirect—or whatever the response is.

And on some level, that's understandable. That is *all* of our tendency when someone engages us on things we don't want to talk about. But if you continually respond that way to your husband, a few things will happen as a result: 1) you will crush any desire in him to love and lead you like Jesus, 2) You will leave him extremely vulnerable to *sinful* expressions of leadership—either at home or at work, and 3) you will all but ensure that you are much slower to become more like Jesus (since your husband is the primary disciple-maker God has given to you). Submitting to your husband means letting him love and care for you like Jesus, even when parts of you *want* to resist it. Allow your husband to be who Jesus made him to be in your marriage, for your good. **Submitting to him means placing yourself in a place where those efforts can do their best work. In the same way that a husband is called to *abandon* his whole life *for* his wife, the wife is called to *submit* her whole life to her husband.**

And I am not saying that submitting to your husband is easy. Not at all. Because of our own sin, each and every single one of us struggle to perfectly submit to Jesus even though He loves us and engages us perfectly. So I can't imagine trying to submit to your own husband who is far from perfect like Jesus. So I am hoping this will help with that tension: submitting to your own husband is not blind trust to your own husband. It's actually trusting the spirit of God at work in your husband. That as you submit to your own husband, he is also submitting himself to Jesus, living and repenting into the role God has given him, laying down his life for your good. Wives, your submission comes down to trusting God's work in your husband and his design for your marriage that will bring forth flourishing for you and your family and His glory.

So wives: when your husband comes to you and engages you on bitterness towards a friend or a family member, and encourages you to take it to Jesus: assume that he's coming from a genuine place. Assume that he might see something you don't? Now, does that mean he's *necessarily* right? No. Feel free to dialogue about it. But also give him the benefit of the doubt that he at least has your best interest at heart in bringing it up. When your husband says he thinks your family should be at LifeGroup this week

because you haven't been for a few weeks. Even though you're both tired and stressed, assume that he's coming from a good place in saying that because of the need to be around the community who loves you and loves Jesus . Assume that he's saying it for your good.

I understand this is a widely difficult command but wives, do you know our church would probably not look the same today unless my wife Callie really trusted God's design for marriage. A little quick fact for y'all to know about Callie. She loves the South Carolina Gamecocks. She was an athlete there, did her undergrad and graduate school there. She loves the Gamecocks. Now the Gamecocks return her love with mediocrity but that's not the point. Callie also loves Columbia, South Carolina, where the Gamecocks play. It's her favorite city and I honestly don't know why. If it was up to her, she would love to live her whole life there and dress up our son Luke in only garnet and black, and when she dies, bury her in William Brice stadium.

But she knows God was calling me to plant a church one day, she knows it means one day we will have to move away from her beloved city and the Gamecocks. And she trusted me that this will be not only good for the kingdom of God, it will also be good for our family as well. And in her submission, she didn't play a passive role. It was her pushing me in moments where I started to get comfortable with the life we had in South Carolina and stop taking steps towards planting a church. It was her pushing me to start the pastor in training process at our sending church. She was there when the crushing weight of ministry came down and I wanted to give up. I wouldn't be the pastor or even the follower of Jesus I am today unless Callie truly believed the role God called her to be: an empowering strength and a submissive wife.

Here is a story where I have seen just how beautiful Ephesians 5 is when it is lived out. When Callie and I were engaged, one of the things we did was grab 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 prepared for our marriage. One particular couple met were married for over 40 years. During the dinner the husband shared about how 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 on the last 40 years of how she put herself after her husband as he laid down his life for her. The wife was tearing up as she talked. We thought she was tearing up because she's reflecting on 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 on 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. I think that is an absolutely beautiful picture of what it looks like to model your marriage after the instructions we find in the Scriptures.

So before we're done, I want to try and answer a lingering question about all of this. All of this works great assuming that both a husband and a wife are doing their part. A husband who loves like Jesus, in theory, is an easy husband to submit to. A wife who submits her life to her husband, in theory, is an easy wife to sacrifice for. But what if your spouse *doesn't* embody those things very often? What should you do then? I'll give you three things to do in that situation:

1. Talk to Jesus.

If your spouse isn't embodying these postures regularly, the first and most important thing to do is to pray. Ask Jesus through the Spirit to *change* that in your spouse. I once heard a friend say that he makes it a goal to talk to God about his wife just as much as he talks to his wife about God. I think that's such a good way of putting it. How often do we spend trying to *make* our spouse fit a mold of what we think they should be, versus asking *God* to make them more like him? Because one of those things is going to be way more effective. So when you feel like your spouse isn't embodying a Christlike posture, talk to Jesus about those things. Second...

2. Point your spouse to Jesus.

Secondly, look for ways to direct your spouse *towards* Jesus in ways that he can prompt changes in their posture. Do that in conversations, with the gospel. Do that by encouraging them towards other men or women that *do* embody Christlike character, so they can get a vision for it. Look for ways to encourage them towards who God has made them to be, so that they are *changed by* it. Point them to Jesus. And third...

3. Embody Jesus-like posture towards them anyway.

One of the easiest things to do in a marriage is shift blame. It's easy for us as men to say "well, if my wife would more readily submit to me, I would be more sacrificial in my posture towards her." But do you know the only problem with saying that? The Church *never* perfectly submits to Jesus, and he still chose to sacrifice himself for her. It's sometimes easy for *wives* to say "well, if my husband sacrificed for me like Jesus, I would be quicker to submit to him." The only problem with that is that Jesus *perfectly* sacrificed himself for all of us, and *none* of us perfectly submitted to him.

So here's my point. We can try to shift blame and make it our spouse's fault that we don't heed the instructions Paul gives. But we still have a responsibility to do our part, even

when they *aren't* doing their part. I think it's telling that Paul doesn't offer this teaching as a way to bludgeon your spouse with. He doesn't say "*husbands*, tell your *wives* to submit to you like the Church submits to Christ." He also doesn't say "*wives*, tell your *husbands* to give themselves up for you like Christ gave himself up for the Church." This passage isn't to be used as ammunition to fire at your spouse. It's meant to be used as instruction to help you embody the gospel in your marriage.

And you get to do that, regardless of whether or not your spouse is doing that perfectly for you. And I think what you'll find is that the more *you* commit to embodying these postures, *regardless* of whether or not your *spouse* does, the more they will *want* to embody their part of it too. I've seen that play out time and time again in marriages in our church.

So let's close out our passage and then we'll be done. Look with me at 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.*" So that's a quote from Genesis about the first-ever marriage between Adam and Eve. But look at what Paul says next about it... [32] ***This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.***

So Paul takes this quote from the Old Testament about marriage, and then turns it to say that it is actually *talking* about Christ and the Church. Here's what he's saying. For followers of Jesus, *marriage* is not actually about *marriage*. Marriage is not an end in and of itself. Marriage, according to Paul, is actually *about* the gospel—it's about the relationship between Jesus and his people. Marriage was actually designed to be a *picture*—a living, breathing billboard—of the gospel. Of the fact that Jesus went to the cross to *rescue* us from our sin and grant us freedom *from* our sin. *This* is actually *about* that.

Now here's why that helps us make sense of everything else Paul just said in this passage about marriage. Once you realize that marriage is about Jesus, some stuff starts to click that wouldn't have clicked otherwise. If marriage is about Jesus, it would make sense of why Paul keeps drawing the connection back to the relationship between Jesus and his people. It would make sense of why, when he says a husband should abandon his life for his wife, he draws the connection to how *Jesus* abandoned *his* life for the Church. It would make sense of why, when he says a wife should *submit* to her husband, he points people back to how the Church submits to Christ.

Or, to put it slightly differently, **in a marriage between two followers of Jesus, both spouses get to play the “Jesus” role.** *Both* of them do. A husband gets to play the Jesus role by abandoning and forsaking his very life for the good of his wife. And a wife gets to play the Jesus role by submitting to her husband much like Jesus himself repeatedly submitted himself to the will of the Father. Both spouses are called to Christlikeness, albeit in unique ways.

But something should be alarming about all this – namely, that it’s impossible. It’s impossible for us, as flawed and broken human beings, to love one another perfectly and persistently. It’s impossible for us to reflect the same type of love that we’ve been shown by God.

That’s where it’s helpful to note that the gospel is not only our example—it’s also our forgiveness. Whenever a husband fails to love and take responsibility for his wife, he can lean on Jesus, who takes away his sin and brings reconciliation to his marriage. Whenever a wife’s sin hinders her ability to love and respect her husband, she can lean on Jesus, who removes her sin and restores her marriage. The beauty of the gospel is that it makes much of God, not just through the successes of the marriage—but also through the failures. God’s power is made perfect in our weakness. The gospel gives us the infinite wisdom to work through the most difficult parts of our marriage and our sin. **We now have hope in our marriages because the gospel takes away all irreconcilable differences.**

This is why marriage can be so wonderful and so painful at the same time, because it points to the gospel, which is wonderful and painful at the same time. The secret to marriage is that the more your marriage looks like the relationship between Christ and his church, the more healthy your marriage will be. Because that is what it was designed to point to.