

# The Husband's Assignment

*The Family Assignments*

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Look at Ephesians 5 with me, if you will. I have to be honest, this series, this week's message, as a matter of fact, grabbed me in a headlock and wrestled me to the ground and not just the topic but just the weightiness of the truth and trying to figure out what to leave in and what to leave out just for our purposes this morning as we are talking about the husband's assignment and I put it under the subtitle of "headship and responsibility." The husband's assignment: headship and responsibility.

Let's go to Ephesians 5 and I want to read verse 18, then I'll jump down to verse 23. Verse 18,

18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

Well, you've got to have that part right and then the rest of it works. Now verse 23,

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. 31 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

The husband's assignment: headship and responsibility. I. This assignment for husbands is as old as time. It's as old as time. This is not some new development. This didn't begin in the New Testament or Christian era. It has been this way from the beginning. Genesis 3:17-19, this is the setting where Adam has sinned, he and his wife both, of course, have sinned, and now their consequence is being meted out by God the Father. "Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.'"

Now, you'll remember that for the wives, the punishment, the consequence of Eve's sin was: you're going to have difficulty submitting yourself to your husband's headship. What was once natural to you is now unnatural, yet the role of being submissive to the headship of your husband is not going to change. But now when he comes to Adam's curse, it seems to have no mention of how it relates to his relationship with Eve. He says, "Adam, you're going to have to toil. It's going to be by the sweat of your brow. The ground is going to grow thorns and thistles. It's not going to cooperate." What does that mean? Actually it's got everything to do with his relationship to Eve because here's the point: Adam knows, it's very clear to him, that he is the head of the household, he's the head of his wife therefore bears all the responsibility to care and provide for her but the curse is going to be what was once natural and easy in Eden before sin cursed everything, now you're going to have your role as headship and all the weighty responsibilities of your headship are going to be very difficult. Toil and sweat and difficulty as you exercise your headship because just because sin's entered the picture and just because Eve now may be difficult for him, he also is going to be difficult for her and he's also going to have difficulty in exercising his headship that God has ordained. So sin messed up the picture but it did not eliminate God's original assignments.

Further, in 1 Corinthians 11, the New Testament amplifies on this headship and responsibility position, this assignment. "For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." So Paul writing to the New Testament Christian church says, "This truth is being reaffirmed that God's got an order and a function for the way he's made things and in Christianity we start reversing the curse and living out with blessing and harmony instead of going to some newfangled, radical new concept about how the family is supposed to be structured." In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul says man in effect is created first and directly whereas woman was created subsequently and indirectly. In God's grace, a woman comes directly to God just like any man comes to God, yet in creation's order and in creation's function, she is the complement of the man and God's glory shines in and through her primarily in connection to her husband because they're one. As Dr. Rodgers used to say that when a husband and wife come together, the Bible says they're one flesh and they are a new

creation, if you will, and a creature with no heads is dead but a creature with two heads is a monstrosity and God knew that and he settled how that works.

But note there is a mutual dependence between husband and wife that God has ordained. Man is incomplete without a woman, a wife, and the woman finds her completeness through her husband, her man. These are complementary and interdependency principles here. The Creator ordained the man from the beginning as her head and gave him the weighty responsibility for her well-being. That's the part that we always miss. Some church members have a problem with their pastor's authority but they don't want a pastor's responsibility at the judgment seat of Christ. Some wives may have a problem with their husband's authority but they do not want the accountability for the husband's responsibility at the judgment seat of Christ. And far far far too many men are boorish and harsh and coarse and arrogant about their authority when that's radically the opposite of what they should be. There is authority there, yes, but the weightiness is on your responsibility to the God for that wife and that home. Do you understand? You will answer for your wife in ways your wife will not have to answer. This should humble you and even cause you to tremble, not to be arrogant about it. I didn't mean to start preaching so quick here.

Now, you understand that I'm preaching to Jeff this morning. I told Pam, I said, "I feel like I need to be in the first of the line of the repenters in let's get this right and let's do better at this." So I would challenge all of you men to get behind me in line and let's all recommit to do better for the glory of God in the assignments he's given us.

Now, he does say something interesting in 1 Corinthians 11, he said, "You know, a man's not to have something on his head because in the marriage relationship, he is the head, but the woman wears something on her head because she is under the man's authority." By the way, we do not teach or believe that means literally you have to wear something on your head. We know it means the heart. There needs to be a heart that honors God's truth, not just an outward show.

Then he says this phrase in verse 10, "the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." I've always wondered, what does that mean, because of the angels? I think it's simply this: from the beginning, angels who are more intelligent and more powerful than mankind, but they always understood that they were to honor God's structures of authority. They always fully humbled themselves to that. The structures of authority within the spiritual realm are clear in the Bible. Michael is called an archangel. The Bible speaks that in the spirit world there are principalities and powers and authorities. God has given that structure to everything and, likewise, of course, God has ordained marriage with a structure of headship and responsibility for the husband and submission and honoring of that husband to the wife. There is a divine master structure to the entire universe – now listen to what I'm saying – there is a divine master structure to the entire universe of created and even uncreated beings including physical beings and spiritual beings. God in infinite wisdom has assigned structures of authority and responsibility for the proper harmonious function of all beings and all relationships. He's the Creator. He has the right to do it his way.

"Employees," the Bible says, "work for your employers as working unto the Lord. Obey them and submit to them, even those who do not treat you right," the Bible says. That's God's structure for authority and responsibility in the work place. Citizens, "Every person," Romans 13:1, "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities," the Bible says. "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's." That's God's structure of authority and responsibility in civil society. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord," Ephesians 6:1. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands. Church members, obey your leaders and submit to them." Angels are under rulers and authorities and like Michael at the top was the archangel and in the Godhead, Jesus submits to God the Father but Jesus commissions the Spirit under him, God the Holy Spirit. There is a structure of authority and responsibility in the Godhead and when Jesus became man, the Bible says, as his mom asked him about, "Why did you go to the temple and stay in the temple when we left?" And he realized, wait a minute...well, he didn't realize anything, by the way, he already knew everything, but he says in that context, or rather the Bible says about him, "He continued in subjection under her." He knew that, "Living out on the earth requires me, God Incarnate, the one who created everything, to live in obedience and submission to my own earthly mother." So this is all through Scripture. It's all through the universe. Created beings, uncreated beings, physical beings, spiritual beings.

Now I'm going to have to skip through some stuff for time. So here we come to the church at Ephesus, the New Testament church. Ephesus is a Greek Roman culture and they're just beginning to learn how does everything work? How does family life work? How does marriage work now that we're Christians and followers of Jesus Christ? Now, in Ephesians 5 as Paul was teaching by writing this letter to them, if Paul had said the husband is head of the wife, which he did say, and if Paul said, which he did say, the wife must see to it that she respects her husband, Paul would have been teaching the truth and the men of the congregation would have yawned and said, "Well, what's new about that?" That's always been true. Whether you're a Greek or a Roman or a Jew in background, all the men, generally speaking, viewed themselves as the absolute rulers of their households and their wives, and in many cases, in some cases, I should say, plurality of wives and in many cases even concubines and many cases female slaves were all submissive to them and subject to them for everything. Wives were not adored, they were not cherished, they were not loved, they were not considered, they were more or less a piece of property and historians tell us, for example, that some of the men in Corinth were on their 21<sup>st</sup> wife, and the Jews in some cases in history were not much better as they just traded out wives very regularly to get them a new partner in life. So these men when they hear Paul say, "Your wife is to be subject to you, a wife must respect you," they'd say, "We've all known that." Now, these men in their Christian immaturity, likely deemed that after becoming believers in Christ, that they had little to learn about being a husband but they have much to learn as so many of us do.

That's not all Paul said. He went on, not only is the wife to submit to her husband, but verse 25 of Ephesians 5, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her

glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself." So as Paul elaborates on this assignment for the husbands, the men in Ephesus sat up on their seat and said, "Now wait a minute, this changes everything." This changes everything. This is the secret revealed, that the difference is Christ has changed you. You have now a new heart. You have new responsibilities, you have a new perspective and you have a new power within you to conduct yourself in your relations with your wife in ways you never dreamed even possible before and, by the way, men, I'm talking as if you guys are back in Ephesus 2,000 years ago, by the way, this going to be radically contrary to everything you've known before. No, God did not change the position of headship. No, God did not change the role of the wife to be subject to her husband but the way it's lived out has been radicalized by the power of Jesus Christ. That's what he's saying.

So be careful, men, as you exercise your headship that somehow you have because you hold a position you have liberty. You don't have any liberties in that position but what God gives you. And likewise, ladies need to be careful that they say, "Well, in Christ we're all equal and these husbands are supposed to love us so we can kind of pull him off his headship." No, you can't. Headship is settled, submission is settled, the way it's lived out radically changed. So most everything about their past views of their wives and their past manner of exercising their headship over the wives was now to be changed. As Paul told the Corinthians, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, behold all things become new."

So here's the overarching, encompassing aspect, if you will, about the husband's assignment and responsibility toward his wife, that is: love, love is the all-encompassing theme of the husband's headship and responsibility. Love is the all-encompassing thing. In other words, a husband's headship and leadership of his home has to be smothered in Christian love, doused, if you will.

In verse 25, he tells husbands to love their wives just as Christ loved the church. Now, backing up a little bit, to motivate wives to submit to their husbands in everything, Paul gave the wives the example of how the church represents them and the church would, of course, submit to its head, Jesus, it's husband, Jesus, in everything. Now to motivate husbands to love their wives which was a radical concept. These men didn't love their wives, generally speaking, they used them. They were property so this was so new to them, but to motivate them to get started in this, Paul gives them the greatest example of all and that's the love of Christ for church. Now, think about this for a moment: Christ has no equal. Christ is the greatest of all beings. Christ's example therefore is the most worthy. Christ's pattern is the most excellent. So while a wife has the assignment to submit and in Christian truth they equally have assignments that husband and wife, that they submit to out of a heart love for Christ, but husbands have an assignment to be head over their wives, wives that are equal to them but they must now carry out that love even the way that Jesus Christ carried out his love for his wife, the church, his bride.

What an example Jesus is for husbands. Jesus' example is so profound because he loved one, he loved a wife that was so completely unlovely. That was the point. In every way, shape or fashion, we, the church who are now his wife and his bride, we were radically repulsive, obstinate and offensive to Jesus Christ. So the point he's making here, knowing that Jesus could so radically and totally love his bride, the church, then you men should very easily now be able to love a fellow equal sinner, your wives. That's the point he's making. I mean, man's inherent value is almost nothing before God. Psalm 144:3-4, "O LORD, what is man, that You take thought of him? Or the son of man, that You would think about him?" So in comparison, God commands men to love wives who are equal before them and before God in value and in worth. So what a powerful and radical example they are.

So since Jesus is the pattern and example for husbands and he could love such a wife, Christian husbands surely can find with the power and strength of Christ in their hearts to really and genuinely love their wives. After all, Jesus' wife, us, the church, we bring nothing to Jesus. We bring nothing to him. We don't help him look better, feel better. We don't help him be truer or nicer or more godly. You can't do that to Jesus. But when we take a wife, husbands take a wife in this world, she brings immense good to our lives. Genesis 2:18, "the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone.'" He is incomplete without her. "I will make a helper suitable for him." In Proverbs 18:22, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing And obtains favor from the LORD." So with all these thoughts in mind, the point is men should love their wives.

Now, let me give you two additional thoughts here, two points here. All this is basically under this one Roman numeral. 1. The husband's authority requires love. His authority requires love. With Christ as his pattern, he understands he has a position that's dangerous. Men, did you hear that? You need to recognize that since Christ has given you this headship, that's a dangerous thing to have in your hands. Your wife doesn't have that and she doesn't have the accountability and responsibility you have. You've been given that not because you're special but because you're God-ordained and it bears with it a responsibility. A godly husband is humbled by this assignment of authority and love is the oil in the machinery of a husband's headship. Without love, his authority is locked up and ineffective and it damages everything just like a motor without oil locks up and everything is ruined.

He understands the danger from his own person. He knows he's a fallen sinner. He knows he's prone to pride. He knows he's prone to selfish indulgence so he's fearful. "God, will I exercise this headship properly?" He recognizes that the position has given him the potential to do more damage than if he fails than anything his wife might or might not do. Do you understand that, men? You have the potential to do far more damage than your wives because he's given you a position of headship and a much higher responsibility. If a man fails, he will damage his wife and his children.

You know, we've seen this on the news over and over again in our day how minority communities, particularly in our large cities, have a fatherless household rate of about 70% and some say that in some of these inner city communities, it's upwards to 90% of

the marriages and the homes have no father present so no wonder that young men are involved in crime to such a staggering rate in these communities. The murder rate is astronomical in some of these communities. Young men need fathers. They need their love and they need their authority. When father's fail, and here by abandonment, destruction is the result.

Do you remember seeing Toya Graham on television? You probably did but don't remember it. Toya Graham lives in Baltimore. She's a single mom and she was driving, I believe she was driving home from work and she drove by a protest crowd and she saw in that protest crowd a lot of young men were throwing objects at the police and destroying property, and she looked a second time and there she spotted her own 16 year old son wearing a mask, throwing and destroying in that crowd. Here's what she said and I quote, Toya Graham said, "I knew this was not a protest just out for justice." She said, "I knew they were just rioting and being rebels and up to no good." Toya jumps out, begins screaming at her son who resisted his mom, so she commenced to smacking him in the head until he submitted to her, using some choice language too, I might add. Finally he left and came home. Later she told a reporter, quote, "I knew I can't do this for the rest of my life. He's 16 years old, you know." Here's the problem, instead of a 135 pound mother grabbing a rebellious son, it should have been a 235 pound father.

Are you hearing me, church? Fathers, you have a responsibility God did not give your wives, but it requires love. Love or you'll abuse it and misuse it. You probably could interview some fathers in these communities, they say, "Well, I'm head of the household. I can do what I want to do." No, you can't. You're head of the household, you'll do what the God who gave you the assignment told you to do. You're not just head, you're head under a head. The point is: God has given fathers headship responsibility but when they fail destruction follows and this position requires love because he does not want this authority to harm, demean or trample upon his wife or his children. A love like Christ has is not just a good thing for this position, it's essential, the Bible teaches for this position.

II. A second thought here. Not only does his authority require love, his responsibility requires love. In other words, the husband has the highest position in the family and it carries the highest responsibility and accountability. I've hit on this but let me just mention again, James 3:1. James tells the church there, "Let not many of you become teachers because you will incur a stricter judgment." You could say, "Let not many of you get married and become a husband because you will incur stricter judgment." Do you realize that the judgment seat of Christ, men, you will have far more to account for than your wives will. Far more. And ladies, do yourself a favor, don't take his role, let him carry the weight. Don't take his place, let him carry the burden. God meant for him to have it. I thought I'd get an amen there. A husband's neglect of duty to lead with love and by love is more dishonoring than a wife's or children's neglect of their assignment because he has a higher position. 1 Corinthians 6:14 tells all Christians to do everything in love but the Scriptures with more thoroughness require much more from a husband because they hold a position of greater responsibility.

Alright now, let's get to III. It's as old as time. The secret is this is all about Christ. The way a husband loves his wife is a picture of Christ's love for the church. Christ is the pattern. Christ is the example for him and in Christian truth, the new birth, when you're born again your heart is changed therefore men have a new capacity to not just live selfishly and not just live boorishly and coarsely domineering over their wives, but to actually lead them with a loving tenor, the love of Christ. Now we come to the specifics of how that's lived out and, again, there is so much more, brothers, I could say and you might have left in some stuff I left out but time just doesn't permit everything to be in there in one message.

1. or A. in the outline: the wife is the chief object of his love. His wife is the chief object of his love. He says, "Husbands, love your wives." And I might add, she's the proper and primary object of his love. Think about it, a wife leaves the care and the love of others to be his. Just as when Jesus wins us to be his bride, his wife, we left the world, the flesh and the devil, we left our other companions, the others we looked to for our source and our course, and cleaved to Jesus. He's our new one who takes care of us. Likewise, that wife, she leaves the care of friends and family and parents and now begins to look to her husband. God changes her assignment. No longer does she primarily look to her family or her siblings, now she's to look to her husband. So his love for her should be his chief love. She has nowhere else to go, in a sense.

Now, I know the liberals of our day scoff and rage at all of this but it is interesting to me as liberal women, and I believe any honest objective observation will come to this conclusion, they're not getting by without a husband, they're making the Federal government their new surrogate husband. The government is now called upon to meet all these needs and protect in all these ways and secure these things for them and defend them and pass all these statutes and laws for their protection. They've just traded one husband for another one. In reality, they've yielded their care to another other than the one God's ordained.

Now, I just think this should be said: inevitably the truth is way, way, way too many men have had no concept of how to live out and exercise their headship and they've been hurtful and they've been harsh and they've been calloused and they've been unkind and then the dominoes start falling of one generation of women after another being embittered and angry and unforgiving and hurt and, man, you come to our generation and we're going back to the word of God and trying to find the Bible and it's a fight to get back. It's a fight to get back. So much of it lays at the door of men who have not exercised their headship righteously.

Genesis 2:24 reminds us...now let me say this first: a man's friends, a man's children and a man's parents are not first and they are not his chief love. That is the place to be held by his wife and, guys, we should find practical ways, certainly we never neglect our children but we should find practical ways to make sure our children see and know momma comes first. She's first in our hearts and she's first in our actions.



Genesis 2:24, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 24:67, "Isaac took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her." And he loved her. There needs to be the ever-present press of this assignment, this love assignment upon him to keep him from pride and indifference toward his wife and from trampling upon her.

Now, secondly, he loves her in an understanding way. He loves her in an understanding way. He recognizes that God made her equal before God, however for the functions of earth and their complementary roles, he made her out of a different material. 1 Peter 3:7, "husbands in the same way, live with your wives," here it is, "in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor," here's the equality, "as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." He says she's made of a weaker, as a weaker vessel. Now we know she's not weaker in character, she's not weaker in spirituality but I think it's obvious that women are weaker physically and they are definitely made different emotionally. Women feel more deeply. They care more deeply. And amen and thank God for that. The last thing I want is some woman in my life that acts like a rough, coarse man. Thank God God made us different. And they are capable of doing things for society, the church, and primarily the home, because of that capacity emotionally that we don't have.

Now, this phrase in 1 Peter 3:7 about them being a weaker vessel, a different vessel, it literally means a different material. It literally means a piece of furniture. It means men are one kind of furniture and women are another kind of furniture. A man is a work bench in the utility room, a woman is more like a delicately carved beautiful table in the living room. Now there's a place and an importance for both and a balanced, functional, beautiful home needs some of both and, of course, both are equally important pieces in the furniture of God's household. So, men, the challenge is: are you working, because it's not natural for you to think this way, are you working to enter into the understanding that God made her different and I need to act toward her, respond to her and lead her considering that, that is, lead her in an understanding way?

Thirdly. I'm talking about how to apply the concept of husband's headship that's encompassed in Christian love. His loving responsibility to her is to be her provider. To be her provider. Ephesians 5:25 says that Christ gave himself up for his church. So husbands give themselves up. In other words, a husband goes into life and he does not get to just think, "What do I want to do with my life?" No, he thinks about, "How can I give my life that will be best for my wife who is going to submit to me and keep my home?"

I think he should be the provider for his wife materially. In Ephesians 5:22, it says that he's the Savior of the body. Jesus is the Savior of the body and so we are, materially speaking, taking care and saving our wives from destitution, if you will. This is our assignment. A wife's assignment is to be home-centered. Titus 2, "Women, be workers at home." Now if they're going to do that, it means, men, we must go to work. It's the man's responsibility to see to it, that the mortgage is paid, the car is paid for, the clothes are paid for, the utility bills are paid for, the grocery bills are paid for, retirement is taken care of, the insurance is kept up to date, taken care of, the tithes and offerings are returned to the

church, and it's his responsibility to take care of everything else that makes his wife feel special and that she is his one-and-only. Jesus gave up himself to provide for his bride so Christian husbands give up themselves to take care of their bride. A husband that is undisciplined and shiftless is in sin. A husband due to his own negligence neglects to carry the burden of supporting his wife and his home is a disgrace to God. That's your role.

You say, "Well, my wife does this and this." Look, I don't know where you are before God on that. She will not answer for supporting your home, you will. It may be fine in God's economy, you've sought the Lord, I'm not saying a woman cannot have a job outside her home. I'm not saying that but I am saying this: she'll not be held responsible for supporting that home, you will. 1 Timothy 5:8 reminds us, "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." Here's the point: men, you represent Christ to the world with the way you take care of your wife. If you're not doing that, you're bringing great dishonor to the reputation of Jesus who would never do that to his bride. He takes care of his bride. He provides for her.

Now look, this is not a cookie cutter legalism. There are exceptions. There are seasons of time, a wife may do more outside the home than at other times. You go to the Lord and you see where God wants you, but I do not want to take the weight off of the final responsibility bearer, that is the head, the husband. Sir, you must remind yourself that you did not take a wife from her home, from her parents and from her siblings' care for your pleasure only. You took her to take an awesome responsibility for her and that includes providing for her material needs.

Number 2 under this, not only materially but spiritually. How wonderfully Christ provides spiritually for his bride. We see it there in Ephesians 5:26 and 27, "so that He," Jesus, "might sanctify her," that's his wife, his bride, "having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." So the nth degree that Christ goes to to make sure his bride is taken care of spiritually. Now, you have to be careful here in taking the example of Christ for the church identical to the way a husband takes care of his wife because there are things Jesus does for his church you can't do for anybody. Jesus makes his church righteous, no man can make his wife righteous. She has to go to Jesus for that, amen? So though the principle and the pattern is there, there are lots of things only Jesus could do. However this does teach us that as Christ provided for the spiritual well-being of his bride, the husband in the home is prophet, priest and king. He leads with love in the family's involvement in the word of God, whether it's reading or memorizing or meditating or discussing the word, applying the word to life. That's his role to lead out in and this responsibility and this leadership also includes where he takes his family to church. Notice I say where "he" takes "his" family to church. That's his responsibility.

I'll tell you, I can't tell you the number of men I've run into in my life as a pastor who are following their wives in the area of where we're going to go to church and serve the Lord. Now sometimes wives need to be listened to on that point. As a matter of fact, wives

should always be listened to. Don't misunderstand me. But you bear the final decision and responsibility there and you will give an account to God that you have taken your wife and your children to be an active part of a Bible preaching congregation that has vital body life where loving discipline and accountability is practiced.

Number 4, his loving responsibility to be her protector. My, how Jesus Christ gives men an example how he protects his bride. In verse 25 again, "He gave Himself up for her." In dying for us, he protected us from all of our enemies. The Scripture bears out in exhaustive detail the great all-encompassing protection that Christ provides for his bride. The Bible speaks of Christ protecting us from people who are obstinate to us because of our faith. He has protected his people from governments who oppose the Christian faith. He protects us from our own flesh. He protects us from the world's temptation and Satan and death and hell in the grave. He died to eliminate those enemies and those assaults that would come against us. So following the example of Christ, God has given husbands the assignment to be for his wife a defender and a protector. The husband must possess strength, courage and boldness. He must be manly in his protection of his wife. He needs to protect her in case she might be in a sinful environment.

Years ago, my older sister married her high school sweetheart. They don't really profess to be Christians but they moved out of town and she got a part-time job and she would come home in the evenings and share with her husband the shenanigans that were going on in the office where she worked and it was just a den of iniquity, to be honest. Promiscuity everywhere. He said, "I don't like you going to work there." And she said, "Well, I'm not involved in it." Then finally she'd come home again and talk more about what was going on and finally he said, "That's it." He picked up the phone and he called her boss and said, "Melinda will not be coming in to work tomorrow." Well, he was a good example of protecting his wife in an environment she didn't need to be in. And sometimes ladies are gracious, they tend to be more forgiving, more understanding, more longsuffering but sometimes a man out of Christ-like love needs to step in and say, "No, we, you don't need to be in that environment." His role of headship includes protecting his wife from sinful or tempting environments.

Secondly, protect her from unjust slander. Unjust slander. Jesus said to Saul of Tarsus as Saul was persecuting Christians, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" When someone attacks Christ's bride, the church, they attack Christ, and when someone denigrates the honor of your wife, because you're one flesh, they attack you. So many times when something happens in church life, often the leaders' wives come under attack and, boy, that's when men need to stand firm and say, "Now wait a minute. You can come to me but you can't come to her." We need to protect our wives from unjust slander and there can be many applications of this. Also verbal or physical attacks. If a man is involved in accosting your wife, you should tell him to back down and if he doesn't back down, you should back him down. There is a place for that and, God forbid, in a physical altercation.

And I'm having to rush through this but I would also like to say that unruly and rebellious children should be made to back down if they challenge your wife. A husband and wife

both have, mom and dad both have authority over the children in the home but the wife should know if they rise up against me, my husband's coming to my defense. Remember the phrase, "Wait until your father gets home"? There's some good in that. You've got to be careful, moms, because you don't want kids to learn that we can get by with it until dad gets home. That's not what we're talking about. We just mean both barrels are unloading about 4:30 this afternoon.

Number 5: his loving responsibility to resolve conflicts with her. Being in the position of headship, he assumes the major responsibility. He is given the major responsibility to keep harmony in the marriage. Now, wives, I'm not saying that you get a free pass. Not at all. Of course you're responsible for your attitude and your responses for asking forgiveness, etc. but because of his headship, he assumes the greater responsibility. He does this, according to 1 Peter 3 again, by learning to understand her and how God made her different. He learns that being boorish and coarse and harsh and authoritarian is not Christ-like headship in the home. And he understands that he is roughly dealing with a different fabric which causes her to be hurt and then the enmity and the conflict ensues. He's got to humble himself, understand his wife, so that he can quickly find the root cause of the offense he's given and bring them back together.

That's why 1 Peter 3:7 says, "husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life," now here it is, "so that your prayers will not be hindered." That's a powerful point and I often wonder, what does prayer have to do with this particular case? What's the issue here? Here's the issue: a Christian should never think he's going to get in touch with God if he has offended another Christian and didn't get it right. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "If you're presenting your offering at the altar and there remember your brother has something against you." Now look, we're not talking about he might have something, we're talking about in cases where you know for a fact, it's clear, he's told you, "I'm hurt," or she or whoever it is. In those cases where you know it's your fault and you're thinking, "I'm going to go serve the Lord today," God says, "Nope. It's important to go give your offering, that's got to happen, but first go and be reconciled to your brother." Now here's what he's saying: your wife is your brother twice. She's your sister in Christ and she's your one flesh wife, so above and beyond everything, you go out of your way to make sure you two are one before you think you can go to God and get anything. Are you with me, church? The wife has responsibility here but the husband because of the position God's given, bears the most burden here to sit down, be loving and find out, "Where did I blow it? How can I do better? Let's get back together on this."

Skipping right along, number 6: his loving responsibility to humbly know that his headship is limited. A man's headship at home is limited. He knows he is only head because it's God's assignment for him for this season. Now he knows his assignment is limited by, first of all, the truth, the word of God, the Scriptures. A husband does not have the right in any way, shape or fashion to lead, encourage or require his wife to do anything that violates this book. If he does, the wife has the responsibility to respectfully appeal that he not choose that direction and ultimately to respectfully refuse if he insists.

And I think that goes for the marital bedroom, that a wife should not be pushed or coerced to do anything in the bedroom that violates her conscience. Now, the Bible does give very clear requirements for both husband and wife to not refuse one another when it comes to their sexual expression in marriage, you have a duty there, but you should not be asking one another to do that which violates your conscience. So there are parameters. A husband is not head, he's head under Christ. It's under Christ and this is Christ's standard. So the husband should know and the wife should know he can only lead me and be my head within the parameters of sacred Scripture.

Secondly, not only truth limits his headship but time limits his headship. What do I mean by that? Do you know, there is coming a time when, ladies, you won't be married anymore. You'll not have a human head anymore. Jesus said in Matthew 22:30, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." This is only for a time. For the functioning of the present state, men are given the role as husbands and head and wives are given the role as submission to that loving head, but there is coming a day when that husband and wife relationship dissolves into a higher plane. Now, before we get into that higher plane, wives will give an account for her role and the husband will give that weighty accountability for his headship role in the marriage.

G in our outline: his loving responsibility to never surrender his headship and I see this happening all over the place. This is a husband that does not send his wife into a job outside of the home if that job oversteps the boundaries and begins to challenge his leadership and headship of the household. It could even include church activities. I've seen ladies who when they got into an activity, whether at church or otherwise but they just throw their whole hearts into it and they forget their primary responsibilities and all of a sudden the husband's not head anymore, something else has become her head and a husband must step in lovingly and make sure he does not abrogate his headship. It could be her girlfriends. Sometimes wives are more submitted to the opinions of their friends than they are their husbands. It could be the children. God help us, how many households, dad thinks he's in charge and momma thinks she's in charge but Sally is running the place. Men, don't abrogate your headship.

Sometimes it's simply a domineering wife. Some wives have not decided to fight with their flesh, they're not repenters and they're bullies and they're controlling and men should do all they can do gently and kindly to reprove them and if they do not change, they can go to the prayer closet and ask God to break them because if they continue on just like any person in any God-ordained system of authority, if they rebel against authority, they bring destruction. Now, here's the challenging thing for husbands, wives or anybody, listen to me: very often the destruction is most seen in the second and third generation. You say, "Well, it worked for us." You might ought to consult your children and your children's children. Can I just says this: aren't you glad for grace? Aren't you glad? Now you know why I want to be first in the line to repent and say, "Lord, help me do better."

But, men, be mindful on this point, now listen: it's perverse for a husband to yield his headship to another because you are in the place of Christ in the home. You're not Christ but as Christ is the head of the church, so you are the head of the home and you cannot yield that because you've been given an assignment. Look, you are AWOL on God if you yield your headship. Not, again, coerce, demeaning, demanding, authoritarian. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about gentle, loving, but you are AWOL, you are missing in assignment, you are a rebel against God if you give up your God-ordained assignment of headship. And, men, not only will you give an account at the judgment seat of Christ for how you exercised your headship, you'll give an account as if you exercised headship.

Now, I want to come to one final thought and I'm done. One final thought. There's a phrase here that I think is the centerpiece of all that Paul is trying to get across to us and that's the phrase in verse 28 of Ephesians 5, "husbands ought also," here it is, "love their own wives." That's it, their own wives. Their own wives. Now, down in verse 29, he gives this clarification that applies back to the preceding truths when he says, "as Christ does the church." Husbands, you've got to love your own wives but do it the way Christ loved, if you will, his own wife. Now, again, this was radical to the men of this day were thinking about. "What new wife am I going to get next year?" Some of them would have been thinking about, "Which one of my many wives is he talking about?" Then they were thinking, "I've never really loved my wife. She's here for me. I'm her head. I'll use her the way I need to use her." That was the common mindset of the day so no longer is she just one of several wives, no longer is she the one he's going to keep for a year or two, maybe three, and divorce her and get another one, common among both Jews and Greeks, he's to love his own wife the way Jesus loved his own wife. It means she is now your special, she is not your one-and-only. That was radical to these men of this day. "Are you kidding me? For a lifetime? I'm to have this total devotion to this one woman?" Yes, Paul is saying, just as Jesus for his wife looked at her and said, "You're going to be my one-and-only. You are uniquely, especially, wonderfully mine and I am uniquely, precisely, personally devoted to you." That's the way Jesus is toward his wife.

From eternity past, he selected her. In fact, she was betrothed to him by his heavenly Father. From before time began, God the Father predestined, foreknew and chose for Jesus his one-and-only. In infinite wisdom and love, Christ's love for his church, he selected her and he marked her out to be his very own before the beginning began. In John 17 in Jesus' high priestly prayer in verses 1 and 2, "Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.'" There is so much in that moment as God the Son, Jesus Christ, communes in the high priestly prayer with God the Father and reflects back and says, "Remember, Father? All those you set aside to be my one-and-only, to be my bride, my wife, to be mine, the time has come I'm going to the cross for and we're going to give that special one, my one-and-only, eternal life."

In the fullness of time, therefore, Jesus went to the cross and there the dowry was paid. There he paid the ultimate price for his own wife, his one-and-only. Then he arose for her

justification. Then he ascended where he ever intercedes for her. And one day at the appointed time, he will depart from heaven and return to earth and then he will clothe her and glorify his bride, his one-and-only, his special one that has been on his heart from eternity. He'll clothe her in his own righteousness and glory and she will be his and he will be hers forever and ever. And just as Jesus set his heart, his work, his all on his own wife, his bride, so husbands are called to make sure your wife knows and make sure in your heart it's true she is your own wife, she is your special one, she is your one-and-only because that expressed the love the way Jesus loves his wife, the church.

So at the end of the day, men, that's the secret. This is all about Jesus. This is all about him being seen in our marriage relationship. This is all about him being glorified. This is all about us being humbled and broken over what he would do for us so surely we can give ourselves to love our wives. That's your assignment. You have headship but with weighty responsibility. Now, none of us have arrived and there are 1,001 variables and difficulties and challenges but now listen, we want to end the way the Apostle Paul ended, "I fought the good fight. I finished the course. I've kept the faith. I stood on God's truth and kept pressing forward."

Now, wives, just like last week and vice versa, we've got to be very forgiving and if you've got a man who is decently humble and trying, you need to thank God. You need to thank God. And likewise, husbands, if you've got a wife who is striving to be biblical and honor the Lord, she may blow it some but you ought to be thankful and let's keep striving forward for the glory of God in our marriages.

Let's stand together, alright?