

The Life-Giving Power of Authentic Masculinity

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Part 2

Our Identity in Christ

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 3. This has been a real joy to work through this epistle. All of Scripture is 2 Timothy 3:16, it says it's profitable, so rich and helpful, and this book seems so relevant to our day. And we come again to 1 Peter 3:7, which we began to look at last Sunday and the title of the message is the same as it was last Sunday. This is part two. So the title of the message is "The Life-Giving Power of Authentic Masculinity." The life-giving power of authentic masculinity. I say authentic masculinity, that is genuine masculinity, and genuine masculinity is defined by God, the Maker of man, male and female. He made us to be male and female, and he put in the wiring of his creation his design to image his glory, that somehow man, male and female, image God. That's what we see in the very first chapter of the Bible, Genesis 1, when the Lord says, "Let Us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness," and then he makes man in his image, "male and female He created them," to replicate, to reflect to represent the greatness and majesty of God in the creation. He created man in two genders. And so we see that throughout the Scriptures, the definition of what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman. In this passage we come to, 1 Peter 3:1 to 7 is the larger passage, speaking about the roles within the marriage relationship, verses 1 to 6, the role of the wife, and verse 7, the role of the husband, and we've noted that this passage speaks directly to femininity and masculinity. In fact, just to point that out a little more clearly, I'm going to read the verses in a moment but when he mentions the weaker vessel because she is a woman in verse 7, because she is a woman, he uses a word which speaks of femininity. It's actually a word only occurs one time in the whole Bible, and it speaks of womanly. It's actually an adjective to describe a person who's womanly. I mean, it's a woman. It's a way of saying she's a woman but it speaks of femininity and he's defining for us how male and female relate in the marriage relationship.

Certainly, that's the primary focus, that's the driving thrust of this passage, but we can think it's reasonable and right for us to infer out some principles that apply even to you as a single man or a single woman. If God has not willed for you to become married, and he certainly does that, the gift of singleness is something he gives to many of his precious followers, and when he calls you to that, it's not a lesser calling. It's not anything to be devalued. In fact, in many ways, you read 1 Corinthians 7, it is to be even more highly esteemed. Paul says he wishes all were like he, that is not married in 1 Corinthians 7, and

yet there is tension there. You know, the beauty and glory of marriage and the way it pictures Christ in the church, Ephesians 5, the gospel pictured in a marriage relationship, and yet he says in other places, what he says in 1 Corinthians 7, if you're not married as a woman, you're not married as a man, you're unencumbered by having to please your wife or please your husband. You can be just focused on pleasing the Lord and that is a great privilege. And so if God gives you that privilege, don't let in any way what the world says or what even other Christians who may mean well say to you. You follow Jesus. Like we said last week, remember when Jesus told Peter, "What is it to you what I do with John? You follow Me."

We all follow Christ with the calling he's given us but we can learn about masculinity and femininity from this passage and what we've seen already is that femininity, the female, God has made the glory of his person made known in these two genders and there are aspects of each gender that reflect parts of his glory, and so masculinity, maleness is normally about initiating and leading, and feminine-ness. I'm coining a word there, but I can't even use it. So femininity is about supporting, affirming, helping and bringing all of that help, and as we said last time, the reality is, and I think this is accurate biblically, remember we talked about this last Sunday, when God said it's not good for a man to be alone, he was pointing out what Adam wasn't yet aware of. Adam didn't come to God and say, "Hey, I've got a problem." No, the Lord said it's not good and how that when you read Genesis 1 and 2 and you read it back to back and you read those seven times God says in Genesis 1, God saw that he made and it was good. God saw that he made and it was good. God saw that he made and it was good, and finally the capstone after verse 31 after he's created man male, and female, "Behold it was very good." And then you read right into chapter 2 and everything's happening. God's describing day six again like a zoom lens, he's zooming in to instant replay, tell you what happened on day six. And he walks through that, makes the man, puts the man in the garden, gives him the work, gives him the command. Man's excited, I know the man must have been just overjoyed, "Look at this great work I've got to do." And sin has not entered the world, everything's going to work the way it's supposed to work. "Let me get to work, Lord," and the Lord says, "Wait a second, it's not good for man to be alone," that is not good is meant to be jarring as you read the text. God's creation is all good. What he's saying, no, God's not made a mistake. He's saying it's not good in that it is not complete without woman and the force of that is supposed to ring in our hearts and we, as men, should take time to ponder that because we tend to undervalue, we all tend to undervalue others. The most important person to you and me is, most important to me is me. Most important person to me is me. Most important person to you is you. That's why he says love your neighbor as yourself. You already love yourself, now love your neighbor like that. We tend to undervalue what God, the good things that God has given us, and so we need to see this, the beauty of this, and that's exactly what we're going to see today that the man is called to do. He's called to change the way he naturally sees his wife.

So we're talking about authentic masculinity. I mentioned last time that it's a topic that's so relevant today as we're seeing really kind of a cultural wildfire, if you think about it. I mean, just in the last decades, so many foundation stones to a culture and to the way God has defined life have been just lost. I mean, it's like a forest, you know, the horror of what

happened on Maui and you see these things other places that, you know, wildfire breaks out and things are consumed and one thing leads to another and loss after loss after loss. You think about, you know, what's happened in the last even 10 years. You know, homosexuality and the dominance and acceptance in the culture led to the redefining of marriage. Marriage was no longer what God said it is, a union of a man and a woman for life. That's what marriage is. It's not a union of two consenting adults for life. It's a union of one man and one woman. That's what marriage is according to God. So we lost that. And now we're losing what it is to even be a man or a woman. What is a woman? What is a man? Completely on the table and basically they're saying it's nothing, it's whatever you want it to be. In fact, it's just a social construct just like marriage was. It's in a part of the oppressive regime of patriarchy, this is the the language of the culture. And so we see that and and why our calling is not to be overly, I mean, it's we can mourn over that and be saddened and we can grieve over how these lies are robbing people of what it means to live life to its full. Everyone that's believing these lies, it's only leading to misery and agony of soul. Initial happiness and euphoria at defining your way of life, you know, I mean basically the lie is you can be God. You can make yourself what you want it to be. You may have been born a man, but you can be a woman. You may have been born a woman but you can be a man. You be what you want to be. Do as thou wills, that's essentially Satan's motto.

We've come, those of you who belong to Jesus, we've come to understand that the biggest problem in our lives is our own hearts, our own sin nature, our desire to live life according to our will and not his, and the best thing that ever happened to you, if you know Jesus, is that when you came to know him and he became your King and your Master and your Savior, and now you live for him. I mean, it's a battle. Yes, as we confessed earlier in our confession of sin, we still have an old nature that's to die every day through the cross of Christ through reunion with Jesus, but the best place in the world to be is to be submitted to God, to live life as he lived it, to be changing our thinking from what appeals to us initially, what the world says is life, to being what God says in his word. This is essentially the calling that Peter is all about in his epistle. When you understand the thrust of his epistle, remember the larger context of Peter, he spends the first section of his book telling you who you are if you're a Christian. It's all about identity in Christ. You were formerly dead, and now you've been made alive. That's verse 3, you've been born again to a living hope. That's who you are. You're no longer your own. You're to live holy lives. You're a sojourner. You're a stranger in this world, chapter 1:14 to 17. You're to live lives of transformed thinking, chapter 2:1 and 2. You're to be like newborn babes and long for the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby, change your thinking. But really who you are is you were not a people, now you are the people of God. You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people belonging to God. You formerly were not belonging to God. Now you belong to God. This is who you are if you're in Christ. What a tremendous reality Jesus says what he's done for us.

So that's the first section, chapter 1:1 to 2:10. Know who you are. You can't live in a world that is hostile to you unless you are rooted in who you are in Christ. But then he turns the corner at 2:11 to the end of the book and he says now that you know who you

are, how can you live? What are you to do? What are you to do in this world? And he essentially says in 2:11, you're to let your behavior, your life be so excellent, so good. The word when it says keep your behavior excellent, 2:11, could be translated beautiful. Let your let your way of life, and the word behavior means your way of life, let your way of life be so beautiful that those who were slandering you for your way of life will start glorifying God as they continue to look at your way of life. They look at your way of life, initially they slander you. They think you're crazy. But they keep looking at it. You keep loving Jesus. You keep loving them. You keep walking the way God has given you to walk. You keep patterning your life after his word and they finally, not all of them, but those that God is working in their hearts, they finally, the lights come on and they say, "You, even though I thought you were crazy because you were living according to the patriarchy, because you were living according to masculinity and all of that," and they think it's toxic, they think it's deadly. And as I said last time, masculinity is often toxic because masculinity can be sinful, and sin is toxic, but masculinity itself, as God created it, is not toxic. It is good and beautiful, just like femininity is. It's his idea. Spirit-led, Scripture-obeying masculinity is life-giving. So they look at you and they were slandering you. "You're a nut. You are harming me. You're making me feel guilty. You're heaping judgment on me," even though you're not saying that. You're just living a righteous life. Why do they hate you? Because you're light in the midst of darkness and men love darkness rather than light. But you keep loving them. You don't hate them in response. You keep loving them and living this and they start looking at the beauty of your life and they see, at some point the lights come on and they say, "You are living life as I was created to live it." God becomes real to them. That's the calling we have. That's what's at stake in living and obeying what he's saying in 1 Peter 3:1 to 7. That's what's at stake for you and me who are men to be the kind of men he's called us to be, single or married, to live as he's called us to be. We can, by our lives, testify to the reality and power and rightness of the gospel.

So, the life-giving power of authentic masculinity. We're going to read chapter 3:1 to 7. Verse 7 is what we're focused on. 1 Peter 3:1,

1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, 2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. 3 Your adornment must not be merely external braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; 4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. 5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 6 just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. 7 You 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, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Let's pray.

Father, we ask that You right now would grant by Your grace the power of Your Holy Spirit, that in Your light, the light of Your word, we might see light, that You might truly open all of our hearts, give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and hearts to repent and hearts to trust more deeply in the glory of Your Son. We pray this in His name. Amen.

So Peter says, husbands, that the duty of husbands is to really do two things. Scripture, other passages fill this in, but he focuses on two particular things, and it's seen in the two verbs in the translation. It's two participles in the original. When he says, you husbands in the same way live, with your wives in an understanding way, the word live is a verb there, and it's a participle, living with your wives in an understanding way, living with your wives according to knowledge. You're to do this. You're to be living with your wives according to knowledge, and the second verb is show her honor. It's another present tense participle just like the other. Present tense in Greek means continuous action. So the idea is you husbands in the same way living with your wives according to knowledge, with a weaker vessel since she's a woman, and showing her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life so that your prayers will not be hindered. You're to be two things. You're to know her, you're to be living with her according to knowledge, and you're to be honoring her. And so we said that, essentially, I shared last week that this outline of this verse as a whole, basically a husband's to do two things, he's to study his wife and he's to honor his wife. Last week we talked about that first participle, living with your wives according to knowledge, weaker vessel and all of that, we talked about last time. This morning, we're going to talk about the second, honor her.

So he says look the way that you're to lead, you're not to lead like the world leads, and we looked, remember, last week at Matthew 20:25 to 28 where Jesus corrects the disciples and says, listen, you know, they're talking about who's the greatest. They're arguing over who's the greatest, who's getting first place among the disciples, jockeying for position. He says, "Listen, you know, the Gentiles, the rulers, they lord it over them. When a ruler of the Gentiles is a ruler and rules in authority, he lords his authority over others. It is not to be so among you. But whoever is greatest is to be as servant of all. If you want to be first, become a slave of everyone else." That's what Jesus says. That's how you lead. Leadership is not lording it, leadership is serving. Leadership in the body of Christ is all about service. He says, after he's given that command, you're to be serving of all for even the Son of Man, even the highest, most honored man that has ever lived the Lord Jesus Christ, fully man, fully God, even the Son of Man who deserves to be worshiped and must be worshiped and honored, but even that same Son of Man who is to be worshiped and honored came not to lord it over. Even the Son of Man, Matthew 20:28, did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Jesus came as a humble servant. You're a Christian. You serve a God who served you, who humbled himself to serve you.

The Christian gospel is so incredibly wonderful. It is so staggeringly amazing and this is what leadership looks like among us. You want to be a leader? Gird up yourself like Jesus did when he washed their feet and serve others. You want to be a good husband?

You want to be a good leader? And listen, we believe that what these verses say is true. I mean, I was talking to a young man this week who was saying, "Why don't you just go out there and say we believe patriarchy?" And you know, because I've said it, I think you need to be wise about how you say things because people misinterpret them. They hear that and I still think you need to be wise about how you say things. I mean, I've said before, I think this is modeled in Scripture. Jesus was asked often, "Are you the Messiah?" And he wouldn't answer. Jesus is truth. There's no deception in God. God cannot lie so why would he heal somebody and say, "Don't tell anybody"? When Peter says, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God. You are the One sent from God." Jesus says, "You're right. Blessed are you, Simon to Barjona. Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." And then he goes on after that to say, "Don't tell anybody." Why? Something theologians have called the messianic secret. The reason is because in the infinite wisdom of God, he knows that if somebody comes up and says, "Are you the Messiah," and he says, "Yes," in reality, a falsehood has been understood. He's not spoken falsehood. They've understood falsehood. They have all kinds of wrong conceptions about what it means to be Messiah and if he just simply says, "Yes," he's rubber stamping all of the lies they believe about the Jewish Messiah. So he says, "Don't tell anybody, don't tell anybody about the Messiah because I'm going to show them what the Messiah is. And then you can say, yes, that's the Christ." Do you see that?

I remember, you know, one of my professors in seminary was saying, you know, when people ask you if you're a Calvinist, I think he was actually quoting something from Spurgeon, you know, but essentially you don't just say yes. It's foolish. Why? Because they say, "Are you a Calvinist?" Well, I am a Calvinist, I could say yes, but if I say yes too quickly, what am I saying? I'm saying yes to whatever wrong conceptions they have of Calvinism. What do they mean by Calvinist? They mean, are you one of those people who don't believe in evangelism? That's what they think a Calvinist is. Well, I'm a Calvinist who believes in evangelism and therefore, if I had said yes to that, they would have had this faulty understanding and it would have just been propagated rather than, hey, get to know me and you'll see that I'm a Calvinist and Calvinists believe in evangelism. In fact, read "Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God," a great book by J. I. Packer about that issue. But anyway, I digress. The point is, he wanted me to talk about patriarchy more, you know, just more boldly. But even there, the problem is not just how the world sees it – listen to me very carefully – the problem is how you man in Christ, and I, man in Christ, wrongly view male headship because you and I don't think about it enough like this Scripture calls us to. It's service. It's lowly, brokenhearted service of those you lead. It's laying down your life for your wife. Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

That's what male leadership looks like in Christ and we all need to be challenged. I, as much as anyone here, have tended to overreact to the world saying that they don't believe in male leadership, so we'll show them we believe in male leadership. I'm not the worst at that. There's other guys who are better at that than me, but I still have erred that way. You know, you hear what the world's saying, well, go to the Scriptures. Don't just react to them. Go to the Scriptures and let God's word not only correct what's out there, but

correct what's in here. This is what we're going to do and this is what this passage does for us.

So he says, if you're going to really love your wife, you have to understand her. You've got to study her. And we talked about that last time. You've got to live with her as a weaker vessel. The Lord's made her more delicate. There's something beautiful about femininity that needs to be cared for in a way that you wouldn't treat her the way you treat your brother. You've got to be gentle, you've got to learn, you've got to understand there's more delicacy to the female soul, the way God has wired it, and the body as well. We talked that last time. Now, this week, you not only do that, you have to honor her. So there's really two tasks, study her and honor her, and we want to talk about the second task, and the theme today is the life-giving power of masculinity when a man honors his wife. And this is part of what masculinity is, too, in general. You're single. Learn how to honor others, especially females. But learn how to honor others. Learn how to value other people. That is what God says, men, we need to do. The problem is, see, we want to be honored, don't we, guys? We want to be honored. The Scripture says you are most male when you're learning how to honor others, you're valuing others.

So the task is honor her and there's four points this morning about the task that I think come out of this second half of verse 7, "and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered." I'm reading from the New American Standard. Show her honor. And I want to say that this task, there's four things about the task, four points. The first point is it is a reasonable task. In fact, I would say it's a rational task. And what I want to say is if you don't do this, you're acting irrationally. You're being unreasonable if you don't honor her. Now, what's that mean? Well, I draw that from the reason that he gives when he says "honor her as a fellow heir of the grace of life." Fellow heir. Heir together with you. Heirs with you in the grace of life. He's talking about salvation. You are heirs together with your wife. If you're married, you are heirs, and she's a believer and you're a believer, you are fellow heirs of the grace of life. That is, you have the same share in eternity. She has the same share that you do. She has the same portion. Now understand about, in fact she may have more when you get to heaven and she gets more rewards than you do but what he's talking about, the share in Christ, and he's saying she has exactly the same share that you do. That's the point of that word "joint heirs." It's literally, it's a compound word that contains a preposition meaning together with the word lot, and then it has a word which speaks about law, altogether compressed into one word. Together with, lot or share according to law, all in one word. That's the word "joint heirs or fellow heirs." Two English words translate that one Greek word, fellow heirs. It's found in Romans 8:17 where we're told we're fellow heirs with Christ. Paul says there if you're children of God, then you're heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

So she has the same share, the equal portion. Think about this. If you own a business or you own stock and you have, you're a 10% holder, let's say you're 20% holder and somebody else has 20%. Do they have the same amount of voice and vote that you do? Yes, they do. They have the same position that you do. The chairman of the board is going to want to be very nice to both of you, I mean, because together you're 40% of the

whole business. He's saying essentially she has the same value. She's equal. He's really saying, listen, though you are positionally in authority, she is your equal in being and you need to understand that and grant her the honor that is due her. She's your equal before God. She's equal in standing with Christ. She's equally loved, equally foreknown, equally predestined, equally called, equally justified, equally glorified. She will have an equal stake in glory. She has it already. So he says, honor her as your equal.

You can see that if you're the head and you're making the decisions, and like we saw these verses before, and a wife is supposed to submit and to follow her husband, and we talked about biblical submission is not being a doormat or being silent, it's giving all that she has to you. She's giving her opinion to you, her very best, and we're going to talk about in a minute, you should value her opinion over everybody else's. But then you go to God and you have to make the decision. But sometimes what happens is we think because we have the authority, we can subtly begin to look down on our wives. This is why he makes this command. Don't do that. In fact, if you're doing that, you are acting irrationally. You're acting like a crazy person. You're acting out of... what does a crazy person do? They act out of accord with reality and if you're not honoring your wife as an equal before God, you are acting out of accord with reality. It doesn't change the fact that you are still the head. No, it doesn't change that. It doesn't change that God has put structural authority together, positional authority, functional authority, structural authority co-exist with metaphysical equality. Both are true. She is your equal, yes, but she must follow you, yes. You must be willing to lead, even take the risk. You must, yes. But she's still your equal.

You know, there's something that's really important, I think, to think about is the fact that it helps you see this is this is one of the ways that humanity, male and female, in the marriage relationship, pictures the reality of the Triune God. Remember I said, God says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." Isn't it interesting that "Let Us make man in Our image," first chapter of the Bible, hint at the Trinity. Who's "Us"? I wonder what the, you know, Jewish rabbis were thinking all through the centuries and even now; those who've rejected Christ don't believe in the Trinity. How do you explain that? Was God talking to the angels? "Hey, let Us..." That's ridiculous. Like he's consulting with the angels and he's saying, "Do you think it's a good idea for Me to make man in Our image, like you and Me?" That's absurd. It's a dialogue among the Trinity. "Let Us make man in Our image," because it says that man was made in the image of God, he made them. Not in the image of God and the angels. He made him in the image of God. He thought about it and he did exactly what he thought about, which was to make man in his image. But when he did it, how did he make them? Male and female.

"Let Us make man in Our image," and one of the things that's happening is man is made for relationship. That's part of what's going on. God is a relational God. Yahweh is his name. He gives us a personal name. He's a God who's not just the creator and ruler. He's not the impersonal god, Allah, that Muslims mistakenly worship. He's the true God, the living God, Yahweh, Jehovah, who relates to his people, who's characterized by lovingkindness and tender compassion, and who calls himself, God is love. And how is

he loved? How can he be loved? He's always existed in a communion of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in person, one in substance for all eternity.

And you see this beautifully pictured in 1 Corinthians 11:3. In fact, turn to that. Now I mentioned he makes man in his image and he says male and female, somehow they're picturing "Us" male and female picturing I think attributes of masculinity and femininity are doing it, yes, but also even the relationship itself, the relationship of a husband and wife is somehow picturing God as well because within the Godhead there is authority. You see this, 1 Corinthians 11:3, but I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of a woman, God is the head of Christ. If you look at that, and you draw it up on a diagram, you'd have, well, you'd start off with Christ, and you put under him man, the husband, and under him the woman, the wife, and then he says, but God is the head of Christ, then you go back on top and put God. Do you see that? God, Christ, man, woman. God, Christ, husband, wife. That's the way God has structured it. But think about the top two and the bottom two. What do you have, God and Christ, you have two persons who are equal in power and glory and yet one is said to have headship. Equal in power and glory. Equally worshiped. And on the bottom you have two human beings who are equal in glory, equal in value, and yet there's authority. Do you see that?

So God has made authority but what he's saying is, as you and I exercise it, we must know that in the truest sense, we are completely equal before God. Galatians 3:28, this is why it says, there's neither male nor female in Christ. A part of the reality is when God saves us, there's no longer these distinctions that there were before as far as our spiritual well-being. Now, in this era, of course, there still is in the marriage relationship. These truths have to be held together. Functional authority, metaphysical equality. Metaphysical is a fancy word for saying equality of being. It's a reasonable task. You're supposed to do this because it's only reasonable because she's your equal. Treat her like she's your equal. Why? Because she is.

So honor her. It's a reasonable task. Secondly, it's a lawful task. Second point, it's a lawful task. The word translated "show her honor or showing her honor," ESV, "treating her," NIV, "giving honor," that verb only occurs one time in the New Testament, this particular verb one time, and it's hard to translate. I don't think any of those words really do it justice. It means to assign or to apportion; to dispense according to a designated predetermined amount. It's a word which actually speaks of apportioning out, and it has the word law in it also, just like the word fellow heir, had the word law in it. The word law, or the word nemo, from which the Greek word nomos, law, comes from, nemo is in this word. The idea, it has the force of when you show her honor, you're portioning out a precise amount that has been predetermined. That is, it's not up to you. And so I think it's not really giving. Giving doesn't do justice to this, giving her honor. Giving her honor sounds like you as a husband, I as a husband, are giving something that belongs to us to her. Give her honor. I mean, you're the head, give honor to her. That's not the idea. It's not giving something that's yours. It's actually passing along something that's God's. And it's not showy. It's not just demonstrating. It's not, I mean, this is the struggle of

translation, to translate from one language to another, it's always a difficult thing. But here the idea is, it's not yours to give. It's really like God has handed something to you that you must take in full and pass on to her. Full honor. If you hold any back, who is going to be upset with you? Well, she should be, but who's really going to be upset with you? God who gave you that to pass along. You see, it's really, it's a lawful task. I mean, it bears the force of law. You must show her honor. You must give to her honor, the appropriate honor God has designated as an equal heir.

It's an inward issue of faithfulness. As a Christian husband with a Christian wife, God says give her the honor that she deserves as a fellow heir, and even if you're married to an unbelieving woman, you give her the honor as God's creation. You give her the honor as your helper that God has given you. But as a believer, you really better take this seriously. If you're not honoring your wife, you're embittered against your wife, you're being unkind to your wife, you are not bestowing. God has handed you the task of seeing that this honor, full honor, is given to her, that you value her the way you value yourself, the way you value any other believer that you have the highest regard for. She has that place.

It's a lawful task. It's a reasonable task. It's a lawful task. Third point, it's a consequential task. If you don't do this reasonable task, this lawful task, if you fail to do the lawful work God has given you of honoring her, you will experience God's discipline. That's what he says at the end of the verse. Back to 1 Peter 3, "so that your prayers will not be hindered." So that, in order that your prayers will not be hindered. He's saying your relationship with God, my relationship with God is intertwined with the way I treat my wife, the way I honor her. So if you're not honoring your wife, you're not loving and valuing her and expressing that to her and showing her that by the way you treat her, you're not showing your children how much you value their mother, you're not making them respect and honor her. You're not letting them know that when they disrespect her, you know, this happens when, especially as teenagers, daughters can start, you know, fighting against their mom just naturally, right? It's the sin nature. Sons can start acting like, "Who are you telling me?" I mean, they don't always say that, but the kind of attitude, "Stop bothering me, stop nagging me, mom," whatever, that's coming across in their attitude. That's when you and I, as fathers, are to step in and say, "Listen, you have an issue, you speak respectfully to this woman. She is my precious wife and I expect you to honor her. And she's your mother, and you should honor her for that reason because how you treat her, the Bible says that, you know, children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right, and if you obey your parents in the Lord, it's a first commandment with a promise that you will live long upon the earth." That's where we need to step in and do that.

Now, so it's a consequential task though. If we're not doing it, he says your prayers are hindered. It's interesting the word he uses for hindered, it means to cut into the original word, to impede. The picture of this is like, it's like cutting into a road, creating an obstacle to impede an advancing army, to disrupt their mobility, you cut into something. And in this case, what's happening is communication lines are being cut. Like if you read about war, you see how important it is to maintain communication and mobility in warfare, right? And this is stopping that. Well, more than that, this is stopping your

access to God. This is stopping your communion with the Lord. This is hindering your prayers getting to God. God says, "I'm so serious about this that if you mistreat this woman that I've given to you, I am going to mistreat you. But my mistreatment is not really mistreatment, it's accurate, right treatment. I'm giving you what you deserve."

1 John 4:20 says, "How can you love God whom you have not seen while hating your brother whom you have seen?" How much more powerful that is if that's in the home in a Christian marriage. How can you say you love God if you're hating your spouse? Repent. Listen, there are times, we've had times in our marriage, we've been married now for 37 years, and there were times I know where we felt like we hated each other. She hated me because of how I was not doing these things, wasn't living with her in an understanding way. I wasn't honoring her. I was trying to please people and exalt myself and being completely selfish and she was hurting and in her sin nature, she wasn't just what the the damage I was doing, she was sinning against me too. And it came to a place where we got marriage counseling. I was a pastor of the church and I got marriage counseling. And I would do it again. I mean, I've asked counsel from brothers and sisters even recently in my life. "Will you help me?" We all should be that way because we're not an island. We need help. God made us to need others to tell us what we already even know. There's power in that. But the Lord worked wonderfully in our relationship. There was a place where, I mean, I didn't know if we were going to be married because I had so failed in this. My prayers were being hindered. And I was telling others to love God and I thought I was loving God, but I wasn't loving my wife. What a terrible, awful, dishonoring to God situation that was. You may be there right now. The Lord Jesus can lead you out of that. He is mighty to save, not just to save you from the consequences of your sin, but to save you from the power of sin because the reality is, when you're there, it's because you're a sinner and your spouse is a sinner and you both need to start walking in humble reliance upon Christ and part of this is learning to do what he's saying here.

Husbands, it's a reasonable task, it's a lawful task, it's a consequential task, and fourth point, it's an intentional task. The verb "showing, showing her honor," I mentioned it has the idea of law in it. It's a portion. It's to bestow, to portion out, to give the assigned designated amount. It's not something that you can do haphazardly. It's not something that comes naturally. It doesn't come easy. The word itself pictures a thoughtful and deliberative process. If you're going to bestow, it's like you're portioning out something that's been given to portion out. You're to give the precise amount. It pictures you laboring at that, working hard at it. And this is what he's saying, "I want you to value your wife. I want you to honor her with intentionality." It doesn't come naturally. Now listen to me, you may naturally please your wife. Listen to me, you may naturally please your wife because you want to please her to have her love you better. You know what I'm saying? You may think I'm doing really good at this because I keep my wife happy, but the motive of your heart is only ultimately to serve yourself. You've learned how to push the right button so that you get what you want. That's not what this is talking about. That's not valuing her, that's using her.

We can use others to love ourselves. That's not what God's calling us to. The work of loving your wife, sacrificial love, loving her as your own body, as Ephesians 5:28 says,

honoring her as an equal heir of the grace of life can only be done by grace. It can only be done by clinging to Christ and putting yourself to death, crucifying your flesh through union with Christ, walking in his power because this is talking about seeing her not for what she can give you, but honoring her for who she is before God, respecting her value to her Savior, treasuring her true spiritual worth. It's loving her soul. It's coming to understand that she doesn't belong to you, she belongs to Jesus. Yeah, God's put you together to be one, but ultimately you both belong to Jesus. And to really do this takes effort. It takes focused, prayerful effort. It takes dying daily but it takes cultivating our hearts. It takes prayer, repentance, yes, continual prayer and repentance, continual trusting and looking to Jesus by faith to live his life in you. Like Galatians 2:20 says, "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God."

But it also takes intentional effort to retrain your mind and to think biblically, and I want to talk to you about three little subpoints here: we need to cultivate new thoughts; we need to cultivate new actions; we need to cultivate new attitudes if you want to do this intentional task. That is, as I said, it doesn't come naturally. It doesn't just come by praying and saying, "Lord Jesus, live through me." That's key. That's foundational. But the Spirit uses the word. So you don't just say, get saved and say, well, I'm just going to walk in the Spirit the rest of my life and I'm going to ignore the word of God. No, if you want the Holy Spirit to work in your life, you're going to continue to fill your heart with the word. You're going to be not conformed to this world, you're going to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Or as we saw in chapter 2, verse 2, you're like newborn babes, you're going to long for the milk of the word so that you can grow in respect to salvation. New thoughts. You're going to meditate on the fact that she is your equal, that she has an equal stake. You're going to make sure if you're having trouble seeing that, you're going to meditate on that. Pray about that.

Think about the Scripture. Talk to yourself about it. This is what meditation is and it's interesting the words in the Old Testament. There are a number of words for meditate. A couple of them are actually related to mumbling. It's kind of like talking to yourself. You know, that's actually, I think that's a really good thing to do. Even though you've gotta be, now you don't have to be careful of that anymore because people always have the earphone. In the old days, you walk down the street, somebody's talking out loud, you're like, "Uh-oh, watch out for that person," right? Now it's just commonplace. Crazy people can pass undetected now. But meditation is speaking the word of God to yourself and it goes hand in hand with prayer.

So you're reading the word you're thinking about it. God says that we are joint heirs. We have the same stake. And so I need to see my bride, my wife as my complete equal. "Lord help me," and see how I'm talking, I'm saying, "I need to, I need to do this. Lord help me do that." You see how meditation goes to prayer. Back to meditation, back to prayer. This is what the Scripture is supposed to do in our hearts, and then also not just me alone with the Lord, but us as brothers in Christ. When you get together with another brother, we need to do this more regularly, we need to be helping each other, "How are you doing in honoring your wife? Tell me what you've been thinking about lately, what

you've been meditating on." And they start sharing what they've been sharing, and you're blessed by it, and you speak to them or maybe they say, "I'm having trouble with this," and I love this, this is one of the joys of being a teacher and preacher, or really just a counselor, it's more one-on-one that it happens this way, I find myself talking to someone else and telling them about their problem, what the Scripture says to them, and I always find this happen, "You need to do this." The Scripture points right back at me and I'm so blessed that they had this question and I got the chance to tell them what they needed to know because I needed to know it more than they did probably.

And this is how the word, let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, Colossians 3:16. That is a plural, let the word of Christ dwell within you richly. We tend to read it as Americans, especially as a singular, because we're always thinking about ourselves, even more so than Eastern cultures, right? Western cultures, more individualistic, Eastern cultures, more corporate, think about yourself as parts of groups, family name, for instance, family names first. In West, first name, your called name is first, family name second. That tells you a lot right there. But anyway, so we need to think about ourselves not just atomistically. So he says, let the word of Christ dwell within you richly. He says, let the word of Christ dwell within you all richly. That's how it should read. And how does that happen? Teaching and admonishing one another. He's not talking about meditation in that verse. He's talking about communal meditation, where you are teaching and listening and being taught and admonishing and being admonished. That's the word of Christ richly dwelling. And what happens in those kind of relationships is you find your heart is full and overflowing.

So we need to do that. We need to be about cultivating new thoughts, dwelling, meditating on these things. We need to cultivate new actions. Secondly, new actions. We need to intentionally place value on our spouse. We already think we value them. We love them. But God says, "No, you keep working at this." You may have been married 50 or 60 years and you think the best thing that ever happened to you next to you coming to Jesus was you marrying your spouse. I hope that's the second best thing that ever happened to you. And if you're like, "I got this, yes, amen. Preach it to all these other people out there." We still, God's saying to you, even though you're doing very well, you can still do better. Don't stop where you are. Keep growing in this. Praise the Lord for what he's done in you. Praise God that you're an example of that. But though you're excelling, excel still more. And then you do that with new actions, even place, "Lord, how can I see?" You know, one of the practical things, I think that every husband needs to get the habit of asking his wife's opinion about just about everything, everything of consequence. Things that she doesn't care about at all, you know, "Do you think this quarterback is the best quarterback of all time? I think they are." No. My wife's pretty good on that kind of stuff but anyway, your wife probably is not on average. That's not something she wants to talk about. My wife probably doesn't want to talk about it near as much as I would either, even though she would have something to say about it. But you find out, "What do you need help with?" Even stuff you're doing at work, even stuff that is complicated she doesn't know about, hire this person, not hire this person. Talk it out with your wife because why? Just think about this. This is your helper. God said you need this woman. He worked in all of his providential wisdom, even with whatever, you may

have been sinful in the way you got married, you may have done it wrong, but now you're married and I've got good news for you, you have the helper God wanted you to have, wants you to have right now. No doubt about it.

And so if you ignore this help, that's insane. "I need to know." And so ask her counsel, and maybe since she doesn't know so much about the particulars, so just fill in and help her understand. But so often, I've been helped by my wife, her sense of something, or she'll bring up something totally I never even considered. I'm like, "Man, I really would have messed that up." So make a point of doing that. Ask her opinion. Be a careful and active listener. Let her finish her sentences and her thoughts. Don't think that you already know because you've heard it before. No, discipline yourself. Love is listening. Hearing someone out all the way. Asking good follow-up questions, clarifying questions. "Hey honey, when you said this, what did you mean by that? Help me understand that." That's honoring her. You're valuing her. Now listen, you're just doing what's just common sense actually but it is so radically different. God's ways are not our ways but God's ways are right.

You protect her. You protect your relationship with her. Valuing her is keeping short accounts with conflicts. You have conflict with your wife, that is of the highest urgency in your life if you value her rightly. There's nothing more important than getting it right with your wife. And you as a man, I as a man, we're supposed to initiate that. There's a problem in our relationship, we gotta work it out. Don't let the sun go down upon your anger. Finish it tonight. Work through it, but graciously, gently. Understand. Listen. Work through conflict. I'm starting a study on Wednesday night "From Conflict to Companionship." You need to learn how, people don't know how to handle conflict and they just make a mess of their lives and the mess gets worse and worse and worse because they don't handle conflict biblically. God's given us the blueprint of how to handle conflict. We should learn how to do it and we should be actively doing it and husbands and fathers, we need to lead the way.

New attitudes. Cultivate new attitudes. New thoughts, new actions will help with this, but also just meditating on... I'm going to share some stuff that's going to be a little odd at first, but I want you to hang in there with me. I want you to turn to the Song of Solomon. It's the last book in the writings after Ecclesiastes before Isaiah. So it comes after Psalms, before Isaiah, after Proverbs, right after Ecclesiastes. You know, the Bible says a man's supposed to leave his father and cleave to his wife. Genesis 2:24, when God makes the woman for the man, he brings her to him and he says, "For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife." I think the reason it says that, that the man shall leave and cleave, is because it's not as natural for the man to cleave as it is for the woman to cleave. I think it's a regional inference. It's much more natural for the woman, once she's married, to cleave to her husband than it is for the man to cleave to his wife. It's more unnatural for him to leave than it is for her. That's why it says leave and cleave.

Now, cleave means to join yourself to her. So he says, "The man shall leave his father and mother, cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." And when you look at the Hebrew in Genesis 2, Adam, his exclamation when God brings Eve to him, "This is

now bone to my bones and flesh in my flesh." I mean, he is ecstatic with what God has done. He is ecstatic. Now I want you to think about this. I think one of the reasons, this is a little bit, I'm theorizing a little bit, but I think this is a good inference. You can test it and give me your feedback. I think one of the reasons that men are more visual and women are more beautiful to look at is because God is helping us leave in cleave. As men, we are like Adam. We would be just doing our job. Everything's great. Got no needs. I'm just excited about the work here. "Lord, thank You for making me. It's going fantastic." God says, "It's not good for a man to be alone." Makes a woman, brings her and says, "Now you cleave to her." Same thing with us. But he makes a woman so desirable to the man and I talked about this a couple weeks ago, sex was created by God. It's his idea. He invented it for our well-being. We need to not cede it to the world. Satan's made a lot of hay out of it, but he just takes it and perverts it and distorts it. When sex is used as God intended, it's the most beautiful and wonderful gift and I think it starts the cleaving of the soul.

I'm going to ask you to read this later, because we don't have time to read all of it, but just Song of Solomon 4:1. This is Solomon expressing to his bride how delightful she is to him. Now what I'm going to suggest to you is that we are supposed to as husbands delight in our wives in their physical beauty, the Scripture is authorizing this. You delight in your wife though. But I think God does this to start the movement because if you're going to cleave and become one flesh and you're being drawn to her, God wants there to be a deeper and deeper oneness of soul that will grow out of that. So he starts the motion. You know, a guy that's so often is the case, right, the guy sees the girl, is smitten and pursues the girl. Look at this, what Solomon says, chapter 4, verse 1, "How beautiful you are, my darling, How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves behind your veil; Your hair is like a flock of goats." Now listen, you understand that in that time, maybe not a line you want to use, young men, right now, but in this time, it was something that resonated with this woman because they didn't have TV. They didn't have, you know, pictures of the Grand Canyon, pictures of places. They could only see what they had seen with their own eyes. They didn't have rapid rail airplanes to fly all over the world. They'd seen what they'd seen and he says, listen, "like Mount Gilead, you've seen goats down Mount Gilead. That's what your hair's like." Okay, enough of that.

Down to verse 3. Verse 3, "Your lips are like a scarlet thread, And your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a slice of a pomegranate Behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, Built with rows of stones." Skip down to verse 5, "Your two breasts are like two fawns, Twins of a gazelle Which feed among the lilies. Until the cool of the day." The Scripture is just very frank, isn't it? It says this is beautiful for a man to love his wife like that.

Look at verse 7, "You are altogether beautiful, my darling, And there is no blemish in you." Verse 8, "Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, May you come with me from Lebanon. Journey down from the summit." He wants to be with her. He loves her. He's attracted her. He wants to be with her. Verse 9, "You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride; You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes,

With a single strand of your necklace. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is your love than wine."

He does the same thing in chapter 7. He describes her with this kind of detail and she says, "I'm my beloved's and my beloved is mine." There is this oneness. He's pursuing. He sees this beauty. Listen to me, what God wants for you and me as husbands is he wants the delight in our wife's physical beauty to then lead us into the pursuit of the beauty of her soul. He wants you to value who she is. He wants you to value her spiritual gifts. He wants you to treasure the things that make her tick, the things that she loves to do, the abilities that she has, the insights that she has, the passions of her soul. He wants you and me to treasure that, to value that, and that is masculinity, and when you see that and you value that, like Solomon is valuing the outward appearance of his wife, you treasure it. You want to be with it. You want to understand who she is. You want to sit down and talk and have her pour out her heart when she's frustrated, when she's afraid, when she's scared. You don't just say, "Straighten up. God says, you know, don't be afraid. God says, stop worrying and just shut up and just kind of do that. Get in the boat," like I said last time, "Get in the boat and be quiet and row." That's not what God's saying. He's saying you want to stop and say, "Honey, pour out your heart to me. Let me understand your fears, your anxious thoughts. I love you." And as she does that, as she pours out, so much is going to come out that you've never seen before, that you've never imagined. She's going to help you think about life differently. You're going to say, "What a treasure. What a gloriously beautiful woman. What a gift God has given me." And you're going to show her honor. You start by placing honor. You may not think there's anything to honor right now and there was a time in our relationship where we both felt that way about each other, but I can tell you, God's changed my heart dramatically and I now see what more and more, not like I need to, I need to keep growing, but I see more and more of the treasure he's given me and my wife.

He can do the same thing for you. And he's ready to do it. There's a promise in 2 Chronicles 7:14, not 7, 14. It's in Chronicles. I'll look at the verse later. It says this, "The eye of the Lord runs to and fro throughout the whole earth, searching for a man whose heart is perfect toward God, that God might show himself strong on his behalf." And it's in the context of hopeless odds. The people of God are surrounded and the Lord delivers them because the eye of the Lord runs to and fro throughout the whole earth looking for a person who's in hopeless odds, who's willing to trust fully in God, and God says, "That's a heart I can use. That's a heart that I can work through to do something impossible and I will get all the glory and they will marvel in the wonder of My grace and My salvation." God will do that for you. Wife, husband, God will do that for you if you just will follow him. Now, even if your spouse, you can't guarantee what your spouse is going to do, but if you set your heart to do what God wants you to do, I'm telling you, you will have more joy and contentment and happiness than you ever imagined, even if she rejects you or he rejects you. I'm telling you, God is faithful and if you set your heart to obey him and to surrender to him, he will never fail you.

Now, we as Christians, we know this is the way to live and when we live like this, the gospel is made beautiful. People see the reality that Jesus Christ is the answer. And we

get to say that. We get to give testimonies. "This is what it used to be like for me, but this is who I am now. I know you think we're crazy for masculinity and femininity. We're not. God is true."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the glory of the salvation You've made known to us in Jesus Christ. We thank You for the beauty of how You've designed man, male and female. We ask You, Lord, to search our hearts. You know every heart, You know every relationship. You know some who may be holding on by their fingernails. Lord, let them know that You see them and You are ready, You're ready to send forth Your word and heal them. You're ready to bring them out of darkness and misery and into the light and glory and beauty of Your perfect ways. Make our marriages more like Jesus and the church so that people want to love and serve our great Savior. We pray in His name. Amen.