

Matt Kruse - NBC
5-11-14 AM Service

“Your Home for God’s Glory”
Series: Marriage – What’s the Point? – Part 4
Ephesians 5:22-33

Introduction: On this Mother’s Day it is crucial for each of us to look with thankful hearts upon what God has given us in our Mother’s. For oh so many of us, God has blessed us with mothers who taught us the most important things in life, who blessed us with constant love and compassion, who made known to us the depths of forgiveness and mercy, and who showed us and taught us about the character of God. We have so many reasons to praise God for our moms today, and we should!

One of the realities of our mother’s influence on us that we tend to forget, or simply never think about is the impact our moms had on our view of what it means to be a wife. Certainly all of our moms had or have their flaws in how they relate to their husbands, but for the most part so many of us have so much to be thankful for in what we have seen in our moms in their role as a wife.

As we continue our 5 part series on marriage this morning, I want to consider this most crucial role as a wife, and then next week we will come back to the husband’s role. And so to do that we are going to focus our attention on the text of Ephesians 5, Ephesians chapter 5.

Some may call it risky, or even downright silly to preach a message on Mother’s day about being a Godly wife. However, I am going to take that risk this morning, mostly because that is where we are at in our sermon series, and because Mother’s Day provides a great opportunity for all women to evaluate how they view marriage and how they act in it if they are married. So, for better or for worse, let’s consider this idea of the role of the wife in marriage.

We have seen from the study of God’s Word on marriage that marriage is God’s idea. He planned it and crafted it and he made it happen by joining Adam and Eve together in the Garden of Eden on day 6 of Creation. He then decreed His universal will about the nature of marriage for all time when he said in Genesis 2:24 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This universal decree was made and given by God because in the covenant of marriage God has put His own image on the line. So, we looked at Ephesians 5 earlier in this series to see the eternal value of the lifelong covenant of marriage. Marriage has been designed by God and decreed by God to point to the greater reality of the covenant relationship between Christ and the Church. And so, every marriage, good or bad, every marriage is speaking about the covenantal bond between Christ and His Bride, the Church. Most marriages are not telling the truth about this covenant relationship. Their marriages are poor representations of the truest reality of Christ and His Church. They are still

speaking about this relationship, but they are often not speaking the truth. But we as followers of Jesus Christ, as those who have the privilege of being a part of His Bride – we of all people should long to have marriages that rightly testify of the covenant relationship between Christ and the Church. We should long for and pursue and support Christ-exalting marriages – for this is what marriage is ultimately intended for – to exalt Jesus Christ. But as we saw last week, the greatest hindrance to having a Christ-exalting marriage is our own sinful flesh. The desires of our flesh are in constant competition with the desires of the Holy Spirit of God, and if we walk according to the desires of the flesh we reap the fruit of sin-filled marriage that makes little of Christ and much of us. But, by God's grace, we do not have to walk according to the control of the flesh, but rather we can walk according to the control of the Spirit of God and we can then have a marriage that exalts Christ as we better tell the truth of His covenant relationship with the Church. And so in a sister passage to Galatians 5, where we spent most of our time last week, we come to Ephesians 5.

In Ephesians 5 the church is being called to the imperatives and the implications of the Gospel in everyday life. So in other words, the argument goes like this: Based on the glorious truths of the Gospel as they have been expounded in chapters 1-3, this is now how everyday life should be impacted by those glorious truths as they are explained in chapters 4-6. So, because you have been saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, you must walk worthy of this calling that God has placed on you by giving you eternal life. Because you have been united into one body by this very grace of God you must be equipped and matured in Christ to fulfill your role in the body for the glory of the Head – Jesus Christ. And, because you who were once dead in trespasses and sins, but have now been made alive together with God, your relationships to others should look different than before.

- I. **Submit to One Another as an Evidence of Holy Spirit Control – 5:18-21**
 - a. And so, specifically in chapter 5, verses 18-21, we see that this Gospel of Jesus Christ should so transform us that we are now fundamentally changed in how we relate to others. Instead of being dominated by unwise and foolish decisions like being drunk with wine, we are now to be filled with the Spirit. Instead of our actions being determined by the will of the wine, our actions are to be determined by the will of the Spirit. This requires a submission to the Spirit. This means that we crucify ourselves and mortify our flesh and willingly place ourselves under the power and the work of the Spirit of God in our lives to produce in us His fruit for the glory of God. This is not possible without the work of Jesus Christ being applied to our lives. We must be identified with Him in his death, burial, and resurrection before we can be dead to sin and alive to God. And this text is written to those who know Christ and have been redeemed by His blood.
 - b. So before we go further to investigate the duties of husband and wife in these crucial roles in the home, we must make this point clear. Without the new life found only in Christ it is impossible for one to fulfill the duty of husband or wife

as God intended. The context of this passage makes it clear that in order for the wife to submit as she ought to and for the husband to love as he ought to the Spirit must be controlling them. And the Spirit cannot control the one who is not bought with the precious blood of Christ. So, to you who may be here this morning who have not yet received Jesus Christ as your Savior, I must let you know that you cannot live in your marriage as God intended you to. You can in part do this, but your flesh will be always winning the war in your life and you will continue to live in sin that will destroy the blessing God intended marriage to be. So, before you are called to the duty of Christian marriage, you must be united to Jesus who can be the Savior of your soul.

- c. For those of you who know Christ, who have been forgiven of sin through His substitutionary work, who have been given new life through your identity with Christ – you must see that the duties given to husband and wife are given in the context of an explanation of the ramifications of the Gospel at work in us. So, because of your new life in Christ you should no longer be controlled by another substance, but you should operate according to the direction of the Spirit as your thoughts, actions, and words become the fruit of His work in your life. This will change you from being a primarily self-interested, self-serving, self-concerned individual to being a self-sacrificing others-focused individual. And so, this instruction in verses 18-21 about the implications of the Gospel in real life ends with telling us to be submitting to one another as a display of the Spirit's control over our lives. This submission is out of reverence for Christ and it has as its general idea a concern for the other. It means we are now changed by the grace of God to be those who can genuinely and consistently consider others to be more important than us. It means that we must now set ourselves aside and place ourselves underneath others so as to serve them. In other words, under the control of the Spirit your life will now be for others so that it can ultimately be for the glory of Christ. Jesus himself led the way on this, as we will see in this very text, and in so doing he has given us the pattern for our lives. We do not need to pioneer the way of submission to one another, nor do we need to guess at what it entails. We must simply look to Jesus Christ and follow Him. His life was entirely consumed with the needs and concerns of others as he loved them sacrificially. As His disciples we then must be those who submit ourselves to others, and especially within the context of the Church.
- d. This idea of submitting to one another is the thought that stands as the header to the verses that we are considering this morning. We are to submit to one another, and now the text is going to give us a real life explanation of how this submission to one another should play out in the context of the Christian Home. So, the wife's submission to her own husband is the carrying out of this Gospel implication of submitting to one another. The husband's love for his wife is the carrying out of the new life he has in Christ as he submits himself to his wife by

making the self-sacrificing love of his wife more important than himself. The child's obedience to Dad and Mom is the carrying out of Spirit led submission to one another in the parent child relationship. The slave's obedience to his master is the carrying through of this work of the Spirit in the relationship between master and slave.

- e. Each party addressed in this passage is addressed in the area where they specifically need to contribute so that these relationships can be Christ-exalting. There is more that needs to happen for each of these parties addressed, but it is this one specific area addressed for each of them that is especially crucial. So, for instance, there is much more to say to the husband about his duties as a husband, and other texts say some of those things, but what stands at the heart of this duty is to love his wife. It is when a marriage is functioning as described in this text that is especially exalting of Christ. But it is impossible for the wife or the husband to function as described here without being filled by the Spirit. But in being filled by the Spirit and under His direction and powerful enabling each party – both husband and wife can live for the other in the marriage in completely selfless ways. In fact, both of them need to. Both of them must lay down their lives for the sake of the whole – the wife is to do this by submitting to the husband and the husband is to do this by loving his wife. Let's look this morning at the Gospel imperative given to wives.

II. Wives Selflessly Submit to Your Husbands – 5:22-24

- a. Verses 22-24 make known to the wife that her primary selfless contribution to the whole is to submit to her own husband. The term for submission carries with it the idea of placing oneself under. It is commonly used in a military or government context where one official with a higher position in the set hierarchy is to be submitted to. So, we are to place ourselves under the authority of the government officials as commanded in Romans 13. As citizens we are to submit ourselves to the government official. Also, the private in the army is to place himself under the sergeant. The word for submission does not denote value, but rather function. And so the wife is here told that she is to selflessly submit herself to her husband. Notice that this is a singular submission.
- b. Singular Submission – “to your own husbands”
 - i. So the phrase “to your own husbands” makes it known that each wife is to submit to the husband that is her own, and to no other. This is a singular and exclusive submission. The female gender is not to totally submit to the male gender simply because of their genders. No, specifically, the wife is to submit to her own husband – exclusively. She is to treat other men with respect and honor and is to generally submit to them as part of the body of Christ as we are all to submit to one another. But it is not every man's prerogative to lead every woman, and especially in the context of the local church. Now, in the church there are assigned offices of

leadership established by God that are to be held by men, and all the members of the church, male and female alike, are to submit to their loving and self-sacrificing leadership. But it is not true that all women should submit to all men.

- ii. So, for instance, let's say that we are having a fellowship here at church and the hospitality committee has everything set up and ready to go down in the Family Center and one of our men, who has no connection to the committee and no position of recognized leadership in the church thinks that they do not have enough tables setup for the event. And as he walks into the kitchen to tell the ladies on the Hospitality Committee that he thinks they need to put more tables and chairs up. In doing this he must remember that he is not their husband, and therefore they are not Biblically required to submit to him. He is not the final say on this decision. So, as he tells them of his concern if they answer by letting him know that they have it figured out and they think they have enough tables – he should at that point leave it alone. He is not to think that since they are women and he is a man that they should listen to his every opinion and do it the way he thinks it should be done simple because he is a man. That is not what this text, or any other text in Scripture, is calling us to. In fact, at that point it would be a good place for him to submit to decision of the committee because they have been tasked by the elders of the church to oversee decisions like this and so he should feel free to respectfully voice his opinion to help them, but then he should follow through with whatever decision they make.
 - iii. The reason that this submission is a singular submission is a logical one. She is not to place herself under the authority of someone that God has not placed her under. So, she has been placed under the authority of the husband because of the set position that God has given the husband and the wife in marriage. But she does not have that set position with any other man in the church and so therefore her relationship to them is to be different than her relationship to her husband.
- c. Set Position – “the husband is the head of the wife”
- i. And so, this singular submission is based upon a set position. The text goes on to describe this set position by saying that the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. So, the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the Church. Notice first of all that this is an indicative statement. So, the text is making a fact known to us, not giving us a command to follow. It is like the difference between saying, “The barn is red” and “Paint the barn red.” Men are not being told in verse 23 to make themselves the head of their wives, but rather we are all being told that

this is how it is. This is a “the barn is red” kind of statement. Many men harm their marriage relationship with their wife by taking this verse as an imperative, as though it was his job to force his headship and her submission. But that is not what the text calls us to.

- ii. God has designed marriage to have the husband as the head. This is his design. Remember in the Garden when Adam was created by himself first and the text tells us that God said that it was not good for the man to be alone. Remember how we talked about why God would do this? Certainly he could have just created Adam and Eve together just like he had done with all of the other species of his creation. But he didn't, he made Adam alone and then he brought this aloneness to Adam's attention through the naming of the animals, and then God chooses to do something about it. He puts Adam to sleep and takes a rib from Adam and crafts the woman. And remember Adam's response when he finally wakes up – Oh wow – this is finally bone of bone and flesh of my flesh. My name is Adam and her name shall be Adama!
- iii. This was most certainly done to draw attention to the fact that woman was taken out of man. Her existence is dependent upon him by the simple fact that she was taken out of him. Man is also dependent upon her in that later in chapter three of Genesis the Adama – the woman – is called Eve – the mother of all living because out of her all men have come into existence. But for our purposes this morning it is important to see that even in the creation account this set position of man as head is being communicated. Adam was created first and then attention was drawn to the creation of Eve out of Adam's side. This creation order is significant in setting the positions within the marriage.
- iv. This is exactly what 1 Corinthians 11 makes clear:
 1. ⁸ For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. (1Co 11:8-10 ESV)
 2. In the society in Corinth the cultural norm was for the woman to have some symbol of authority on her head – some kind of covering. This was being rebelled against by a first century women's liberation movement and so Paul is writing to affirm to the ladies in the church that in their culture it was important for the married women to have a sign of authority on their head because they indeed were under the authority of their husbands by the design of God in Creation. The man was created with an orientation toward the task and the woman was created by God with an orientation toward the man. She was created to be his

helper. He has a void and she was designed by God's power to fill that void and better enable mankind together to complete the task.

- v. And so Ephesians 5 is also making known this central truth to marriage – the husband is the head of the wife. Marriage is not marriage without this central truth. It is seen in the Creation order and it is reiterated in the New Testament. This means that the husband is tasked with inescapable leadership. He is the head of his wife, therefore he is now responsible to lead her. Verses 25-33 will make known what the main ingredient of this leadership must be, but for our purposes here we must not miss the point that the husband is tasked with inescapable leadership. He may lead poorly or he may lead well, but he will lead and his leadership – whether good or bad, will set the course for the marriage and the family. If the husband is godly and Spirit led then the leadership in the home will mirror Christ in that he will selflessly love his wife and his family and lead through serving them. But if he is ungodly in his leadership or if he rejects this role and leaves the home, the leadership will still be there, its fruit will just be sour. This headship of the husband in the marriage was designed by God for good and glorious purposes, and it is an indicative reality that cannot be escaped.
- vi. So Doug Wilson says it this way –
 - I. “If a husband tries to run away from his headship, that abdication will dominate the home. If he catches a plane to the other side of the country, and stays there, he will dominate in and by his absence. How many children have grown up in a home *dominated* by the empty chair at the table? If the marriage is one in which the wife ‘wears the pants,’ the wimpiness of the husband is the most obvious thing about the marriage, creating a miserable marriage and home. *His abdication dominates.*”¹
- vii. So the leadership of the husband is an inescapable reality because this is how it has been designed by God. The husband has no choice but to be the head. He can be a bad head in which he hatefully and destructively dominates the marriage with his own concerns ruling the roost, or he can choose to follow the example of Paul through the powerful enabling of the Spirit and lead through selfless love for his wife. He can choose how to play the role of head, but he cannot choose whether or not to be the head.
- viii. And so with the wife. She can choose how she will respond to the head who is her husband, but the fact is, she is under the head. She can fight it or struggle against it or bicker with it, or she can, under the powerful

¹ Doug Wilson, *Reforming Marriage*, 1995, pg. 24.

enabling work of the Spirit of God place herself under the leadership and authority of her husband. She can selfishly contend with him, or she can selflessly submit to him.

- d. Parallel Submission – “as the church submits to Christ”
 - i. And we are given a picture of this type of submission in the text when it says that she is to submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ. So, again, we don’t look to marriage to see the intricacies of the relationship between Christ and the Church, but rather we look to the relationship between Christ and the Church and see the beautiful intricacies of how the wife is to respond to the husband. And so, in looking to the church’s response to her Lord we see that the Church submits to one head – and so the wife is to submit to one head – her own husband. We see that the church submits to the Lord in all things – and so the wife is to submit to her own husband in everything. And so, for the wife who struggles to know what this submission to her husband should look like, she should gaze upon the relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church. She should study how the Church submits to the Lord in everything and she should seek to follow that pattern in her submission to her own husband. This submission she is called to is a parallel submission to the submission of the Church to Christ.
 - ii. And in this, the bar is raised for this submission. This is not about the husband getting his way or being more valuable in God’s economy, or about the wife being less valuable or less important. No, this is about telling the truth about Christ and the Church. In this submission the wife is like the Church, and in this her submission to her husband takes on eternal value as she seeks to exalt Christ and his relationship to the Church.
- e. Christ-Exalting Submission
 - i. But this is a foreign thought to most women in our Western World. The idea of submitting to one’s husband sounds so prudish and medieval in our modern day. It seems so chauvinistic to tell a wife that she has an authority over her that was placed there by God through the design and decree of marriage. In our day of women’s liberation and equal rights we think that submission to someone must necessarily devalue the person who is submitting. Our Western World has taught us that to submit to someone else is to admit their increased value and your decreased value. And so, we look at Ephesians 5:22-24 and we long for explanations that get us out of what the text plainly says.
 - ii. The answer to all of this is to consider Jesus Christ. Not only does he provide the great example for the husbands through his self-sacrificing love, but he also provides the great example for wives in this area of

submission. So, just like the wife has a set position in which she is under the authority of a head, her husband, so also Jesus Christ has a set position in which he is under a head, God the Father. So 1 Corinthians 11 says:

1. ³ But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (1Co 11:3 ESV)
- iii. So Jesus has a head over him, just like the wife has a head over her. Is this text saying then that Jesus is inferior to God the Father? Well, if it is saying that then we know it is in contradiction to so many other passages. So, for example, what would you do then with John 1:1 where we are told that the Word, Jesus, was with God and the Word was God. Or how about in John where Jesus declares that he and the Father are one, or when he says that if you have seen Him you have seen the Father? Obviously this statement in 1 Corinthians 11 is not speaking about the essence or the nature of Jesus as being different than or somehow inferior to God. They are One nature, One Essence, One God.
 - iv. But they do have differing functions. So we cling to the truth of the Triune God having the same nature and essence. God the Father is fully God, God the Son is fully God, and God the Spirit is fully God. But for the accomplishment of the sovereign will of God in Creation the three members of the Godhead have different functions. And so, God the Son selflessly submitted to the will of the Father and came to Earth as a man so as to accomplish our redemption through his substitutionary life and death and resurrection. The thinking of Jesus in this process of submission to the Father is made known in Philippians 2.
 1. Turn with me to Philippians 2. In this passage we are being told to think like Jesus thought. We are to assume his mindset, his worldview about ourselves as we relate to others. Verse 6 makes it clear that Jesus was fully God when it says – “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped”. He was God very God and yet the Son had a decision to make. He had to decide if clinging to His rights and the full expression of His deity was something worthwhile, or if he was going to place himself under the authority of God and leave Heaven for the mission of redemption to which he had been tasked in Eternity Past. And so he does. He empties himself of Divine Prerogative and comes to Earth under the direction and will of the Father and makes it his food to do the will of God the Father.
 - v. You see Jesus does not lose value here. He does not become less of God nor does his glory diminish because he has chosen to submit himself to the

Father and have the Father as the Head. In fact, as this very text goes on to explain, we do not think less of Christ because of this selfless sacrifice of servanthood to all of mankind, but actually we think more of Him. His submission to God as the Head does not decrease His value and worth, but rather it enhances it. And eventually, oh glorious day that will be, God the Father is going to exalt the Son to a position that is far above all things and all of Creation will bow the knee and declare the Son's glory.

- vi. You see the issue in submission is not an issue of superiority versus inferiority, or value and non-value, or power and weakness. The issue is simply one of function. And God has designed marriage to function in a similar fashion to the Godhead. The husband and the wife are equal in value and in worth. Their spiritual position before God is the same, but their functions within the marriage differ by God's design, just like the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit differ by design.
- vii. So wives I trust you can see from this text that the issue before you in submission is not an issue of value, but an issue of function, and that when you choose to operate in the function given to you by God that you actually enhance the glory of the whole. By submitting to your own husband as the Church submits to Christ you are not belittling yourself but rather you are contributing to the glory of the whole.
- viii. Just think of the alternative to this. So let's say you think this submission thing is a bunch of gobbledygook and it is the last thing you are going to do. So instead of submitting to your husband as the head you start acting like the head. You make decisions independent of him, and when he tries to make decisions for the family you counter him or disrespect him or give your approval as if you are the one with the final decision. When a wife chooses to operate in this way, she is making much of herself in the marriage to the detriment of the whole. She is saying loud and clear through her actions that lack submission that she is more important than the whole. She belittles the one-flesh union established by God so as to exalt herself. And so the marriage becomes about two individuals competing with one another, instead of about two individuals so intertwined with each other that they harmonize life and look like one. You see lack of submission to the God appointed design of marriage makes much of the individual and belittles the marriage.
- ix. But the alternative makes much of marriage, and ultimately of Christ. When the wife considers the marriage worthy of her selfless investment by willingly placing herself under the leadership of her husband and respecting his God-given role, she is saying that the marriage is more important than her. We celebrate this thought when we see it in other places in society. So when the individual soldier gives himself sacrificially

for the sake of the whole we lavish honor and praise on the selfless acts of the soldier – and we should. When the point guard selflessly makes it their job to feed the ball to the other players so that the team can win, we respond with praise for his selfless acts that made much of the whole. And yet, in our society, the one place this is not celebrated is marriage. When the individual sacrifices themselves for the sake of the whole we are told it is chauvinistic and disrespectful and cruel.

Conclusion: But this is at the heart of any marriage that is going to exalt Christ – selfless sacrifice. And for the wife, this selfless sacrifice means that you as a wife are to set aside your own rights and agenda and desires for control, and you are to place yourself under your God-given head – your husband. This makes much of the whole at the sacrifice of the individual and this exalts Christ! For this is exactly what Christ did – he sacrificed himself for the sake of the whole – the covenant union between him and the Church. So mom's, the greatest thing you can do for your kids is to sacrifice self for the sake of the whole through submission to your husband and respect of his God-given position. And this can only be done through the powerful enabling of the Spirit of God as you learn to be controlled by Him. Let's pray!