

# Gospel Powered Love and Respect

## Ephesians 5:33

### Good Morning: Biblical Marriage Part 2

Well, marriage 'made' the news or should I say 'dominated' the national news this week with the video revelation of how a star professional football player chose to behave terribly towards his then fiancé now wife.

And while the news-folks and those they interviewed looked at it from seemingly every possible angle, for me it put a real spotlight on this delicate relationship between men and women and especially the domestic violence that far too often goes on behind the scenes between people who do love each other and yet don't know how to escape this dangerous cycle of handling conflict.

These are people in our neighborhoods, our schools and our churches who are caught in this pattern of expressing themselves abusively to the one person they love and usually don't want to harm, and end up terribly regretting the use of their words and actions.

As we turn our attention this morning to God's specific instructional Word for husbands to **LOVE** their wives, and for wives to **RESPECT** their husbands I want to briefly yet intentionally call attention to this human problem. Causing physical, emotional or verbal harm to one another in a marriage or family whether intending to or not is always contrary to God's command to Love.

Biblical Submission to one another never causes physical or verbal injury. There is no excuse for it. And I believe this cycle of violence will not be broken until someone (either the perpetrator, the victim or someone close to them) is willing to humbly admit what is going on and begin to seek help that is needed and available. There are resources that are available right here in our community that are confidential and safe.

As your pastor, I appeal to you if you know this is happening to reach out, take a risk and help others that maybe caught in this cycle of abuse. And if you yourself are caught in it please go to someone you trust and seek help. Before we continue let's pause for a moment to pray not only for this family in the national spotlight but for those in our own neighborhoods and churches who need help in order to bring change to their marriage.

"Lord we come to you as a merciful and compassionate Lord to bring the help and healing that we truly need. Please reach out and touch this family on the news as well as all families caught up in some form of physical violence. We ask you for:

- Grace for perpetrators to take responsibility and admit their need and humbly submit
- Grace for the victims to seek help and support
- A willingness for family and friends to risk rejection to help bring a stop to this cycle.
- I ask you to lead troubled marriages to the most helpful resources that would bring forgiveness, healing and would draw people to you.

Now, we ask you Lord to turn our heads to your Word as we look to you and the power of your Spirit to apply your word so that our marriages and all our relationships you have gifted us with would truly reflect and honor you in all your Glory. In Jesus Name."

Last week, we set the stage for verse 33 where in Ephesians 5 by thinking through the **BIG PICTURE** of marriage – God’s purpose in why He created the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. If you weren’t here last week I announced that we were taking a 2 week break from our study in Luke to focus attention on this all important subject of marriage. I mentioned that our local body here at EBF has, in the last year especially, been under great attack in regards to our marriages – marriages coming apart and being challenged in severe ways. We as elders ask for your prayers as we look to support, help and give wise counsel and teaching to husbands and wives struggling to love and to stay faithful to the Lord and to each other.

Marriage we said last week, is the foundation of the family and all of society, and is to be a glorious picture of Jesus and His Bride, the Church, you and I. Jesus left His Father’s home to woo a bride to Himself to demonstrate the unity between the God Head. Marriage is to be an expression of what our compassionate and eternal God is like. It is to communicate, to a watching world, the love, harmony and oneness of our triune God, the eternal relationship we talked about between God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. **Ephesians 5:31-32**

Now, out of an understanding of this blue-print, this purpose and reason for marriage we come to Paul’s inspired admonition in verse 33.

He instructs the husbands to ‘love’ their wives and he instructs the wives to ‘respect’ their husbands. Marriages and the surrounding relationships will bloom and grow when these distinct qualities are present and they will wither when they are lacking. Just like a plant (Biology 101) needs good soil, sunshine and water to thrive so a marriage needs love, which I will equate to sunshine in this analogy, and it needs respect which I will equate to water. It also needs good soil.

The soil is analogous to the security and the significance that only Jesus Christ and His gospel can give to each of us as believers.

So let’s start here with the soil, the foundation in which this plant or Christian marriage is to be grounded in.

When I’m counseling an engaged or married couple I try to make it clear in our sessions as well as in the wedding talk itself that everyone born into human existence comes into this world with the non-physical needs of security and significance. You can also equate them with the terms love and respect.

Let’s define terms:

**Security: An internal need to be unconditionally and completely loved. It is a total acceptance that is freely given, doesn’t have to be earned, and therefore cannot be lost.**

Secondly we come into the world looking for and needing,

**Significance: An internal need for meaning, purpose and value. To have a meaningful impact on others in this world.**

I believe, that we all, men and women come into this world unconsciously hungry to have these 2 internal and basic needs met. You might use other words but I believe they all point to these same specific areas.

My belief is that before we come to know and follow Jesus each of us were, in essence, digging or searching to satisfy and meet these two basic internal needs of our soul. Unconsciously, we bought into

Satan's lie and attempted to meet these needs for security and significance through things like achievements, education and through other people – even our own spouses. “If only I can find the right spouse than I would feel truly secure and significant we, maybe unconsciously, think.

And guess what? All of these counterfeit places where we have gone digging in one way or another and maybe still do haven't truly fulfilled this vacuum. My degree didn't do it, my job isn't doing it, my bank account and my spouse aren't doing it! Sorry Nancy!

In coming to faith and believing in Jesus Christ and His gospel we recognize that we have been looking in all the wrong places and that ONLY in God, through Christ can these two needs of love and meaning be met in our lives. Because of the gospel we are deeply and unconditionally secure or loved as well as given an eternal purpose or significance that far outweighs these temporary pursuits.

**Psalm 63:3, 5**

*“Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you...*

*My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you”*

And as Paul declared in **Romans 8** – “*nothing in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*” That is security!!

As for a sense of significance or meaning look what God has done for us in Christ.

**Ephesians 2:10**

*“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, (for what?) to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”* What greater significance there is than to be a part of those things. That God Almighty wants us to be involved in with all our gifts and abilities. In Christ and His gospel we can be truly secure and significant!!

Therefore, getting back to our marriage analogy today, the soil, the foundation of Christian marriage is the security and significance that only God can provide.

No matter how accepting Nancy is she cannot meet my deepest need for significance. And no matter how loving I am, and I am called to love her well, but no matter how loving I am, I can never fully meet Nancy's need for security. It was never God's intention for other people to meet these deepest needs of ours.

It is only as we recognize and believe what Christ has already provided for our security and significance that we can then put aside our selfish wants and give ourselves more fully to others and to our spouses. This is the soil for a godly marriage to grow in.

In today's analogy our plant needs sunshine and the photosynthesis (if I remember) that sunshine initiates to produce healthy growth and vibrancy for the plant.

For marriages to grow and produce the oneness and other fruit that God desires the wife is called in **v. 33** to RESPECT her husband. This Greek word is translated respect. It literally means to hold in high regard, to honor, to give great value to and even a sense of reverence. Although this reverence is not in the sense of worship but in one of high esteem or honor.

Even though both wives and husbands are to treat one another with high regard and value, the respect that wives are to give to their husbands flows out of the position or role that God has assigned to the

husband within the marriage. This role, assigned by God, is commonly known as 'headship' and comes out of the beginning of this section on marriage here in Ephesians 5.

#### **Ephesians 5:22-24**

*"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the Head of the church, His body, of which He is the savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything."*

Now, we do not have the time today to give a full treatment on what headship and submission are meant here. I'm not trying to duck it – you can talk with me or Richard or any of the elders in private about this – I'd be glad to tell you more about what we think about this.

But let me say this in regards to how this 'headship' position relates to the respect/honor the wife is called upon to give to her husband:

Headship is a biblical concept or position that God has assigned the husband responsibility for in regards to the marriage and resulting family only – it's not a position over all women in general. We believe the basis of headship are the roles assigned to Adam and Eve at Creation. We also believe that men and women are equal in relationship with God, equal in worth & dignity and equal in the inheritance as 'heirs' together under Christ. Men, however, according to scripture, have been assigned this role of what rightly has been described as a 'servant-leader' within the marriage. Men didn't earn it – quite the opposite really – and we didn't merit it by our supreme Christ-like character.

But it's a position or a role of leadership that God has given husbands to live out of, and the best way husbands can be a servant-leader successfully is by having the honor or respect of their wives in letting themselves, as wives and their families be led by their husbands.

Biblical headship has to do with responsibility, not primarily gender or ability.

When you or I are hired and go to work for a company we are usually assigned to a supervisor or manager who is given the responsibility or position of leading the particular area we were hired for. Now I may not see eye to eye with my boss on everything but I must honor and respect the position of this person and let them give leadership in order for me to both keep my job, and to be successful towards the goal we are working towards. And my boss will be held accountable for the outcome of our assigned work area.

In healthy marriages both husband and wives use all their gifts and abilities to fulfill their obligations towards the family. Wise is the husband who defers to the gifting's, abilities and particular wisdom of his wife. He doesn't need to make all the decisions. But I believe husbands are ultimately accountable to God for their servant-leadership position.

Wives, did you know that, for a man, respect and the trust that goes with it communicates your love to him like almost nothing else can?

A survey of a significant number of men was taken and when given a clear choice between either feeling alone and unloved in the world, or feeling inadequate and disrespected, guess what? 3 out of 4 men chose to feel unloved and lonely rather than inadequate or disrespected, not because of our huge egos

but because, I believe, that men are hard-wired by God to take responsibility and provide for those under their care.

So wives or women who one day will be married, please remember: If you want to obey the Lord and show love to your husband in the way that he hears it the loudest – ensure that he feels your genuine respect and honor most of all.

Let me suggest two ways to apply this instruction from the Lord:

**#1:** Husbands are encouraged by their wives' respect for their abilities and judgments.

When Nancy tells me either directly or indirectly that she believes I can handle something either within or outside family, it causes me to feel very respected and thus loved. We men struggle with self-doubt and inadequacy issues more than you might know we do.

Wives, how often do you find yourself questioning your husband's judgments at home or find yourselves trying to take control by telling him what to do?

Two things – wise is the husband who listens and takes his wife's opinion, with her abilities and skills into account when considering a plan of action. And secondly, wise is the woman who assumes the best in her husband and regularly encourages and affirms him as the responsible leader in the family.

Shaunti Feldham, a Christian woman author who wrote the book, "**For Women Only**", that I recommend quotes these words from a man she interviewed.

*"You know the saying, behind every good man is a great woman? Well, it's true. If a man's wife is supportive and believes in him, he can conquer the world – or at least his little corner of it. He will do better at home, work, everywhere. By contrast very few men can do well at work or at home if their wives make them feel inadequate."*

Choosing to respect/honor your husband is a choice, out of your reverence for Christ and the love you have for your husband.

So, #1, husbands are encouraged by their wives' respect for their abilities and judgment.

**#2:** Respect is demonstrated through her private and public communication about him.

Because of time I'm going to abbreviate this point. Let me just say this: wives hold an incredible power in the way they communicate to their husbands privately and about their husbands publicly.

What does your husband really hear when you say things like:

- Don't forget the garbage again!
- Did you fix the leak?
- Is the car safe to drive?
- We need to call the repairman to fix the toilet

Even if unintended, men can interpret these statements as nagging or an accusation of laziness or mistrust. Check it out with your husband and ask him to be honest with you.

Again, after multiple surveys with both men and women author Shaunti Feldham writes:

*"Considering that most men appear to be highly sensitive to disrespect – including seeing disrespect where none is intended – I would argue (from a women's point of view) that it is not the average man*

*who needs to be less sensitive to a women's words, but the average woman who needs to be more sensitive to her man's feelings."*

Men report that the way their wives talk about them in public is huge. Whether intentional or not I have witnessed wives, in public places around friends criticize, put down, and question their husbands judgments in very damaging ways.

One husband put it this way, "My wife says things about me in public that she considers teasing. I consider them torture."

This of course goes both ways.

So respect in communication is huge. I know your husband, like me, is not perfect but if you're going to talk about him in public boast about the things you really appreciate about him.

Now, finally the water that refreshes, nourishes and washed the beautiful plant called marriage. Husbands are to love their wives in the same ways that Christ loved the Church, His bride – sacrificially, compassionately and unconditionally or contra-conditionally.

Guys, we need to give our wives this kind of love, which is only possible because of how our ultimate Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, has demonstrated His love towards us. Romans 5:8.

Everyone read this out loud!

**Romans 5:8**

*"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

How many of us guys if we're honest think thoughts like, "if only my wife would change – spend less money, listen more, lose weight, discipline the kids consistently then I would be more happy and love my wife more."

As I stated last week – it is not our responsibility to fix or change our wives, that's the Lord's business. It is my business, while acknowledging weaknesses, as I also have weaknesses myself, it is my business to accept her as she is, contra-conditional now as I want her to be. And I am to trust Christ for the power to sacrificially love her this way every day.

My call to us men this morning is to not just love our wives a lot but to intentionally love our wives well. I must learn to focus on and appreciate her talents, gifts and the personality that God has given her. I see things in Nancy now after 38 years that I just didn't see clearly or appreciate that much before. I'm learning about how patient God is with me.

Guys, don't let that fantasy or dream idea of what you wish your wife to be keep you from loving her the way God wants you to love her.

Now, we also love our wives well when we take time to both listen to them and to share our own thoughts and feelings with them. This speaks loudly about our love for them.

**James 1:19**

*"My dear brothers, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."*

We men are fixers right? And our wives, most of the time, don't need us to fix them or their problems. They need us to just listen, right? What wife doesn't yearn for a husband who will quit doing whatever he's doing (or fixing) and sit down, look her in the eyes and say, "tell me what on your heart?" Then, he actively listens with both ears and eyes until she's done. He might even summarize to her what he heard – her facts AND what he heard her feeling to be.

How many women have felt very loved when your husband tries hard to do this? Not fix! But just listen. Fixing, even if she wants your help comes after thoroughly listening. We like Jesus are to die to our own impulses in order to love our bride in the way that she most needs to be loved.

Last thought about loving our wives guys is sharing our lives and hearts with them. We men, have a tendency, intentionally or not shut our wives out from the deeper things we are thinking and feeling. Nancy tells me that one of the ways she feels most loved by me is when I include her into the hidden world of my thoughts and feeling about the different areas of my life – my walk with Christ, my work world, my relationships, with my family and those things that I'm happy or most discouraged about. When was the last time you men took your wife on a date (evening, overnight or weekend) and purposely told her what was really happening in the 'individual rooms' within your brain.

We lay our lives down for our wives when we regularly open up and explore one or more of our 'rooms' with them. Jesus loves to hear us pour out our hearts to him and so do our wives. Husbands, love you wives as Christ loved the Church.

So now, before I close this, you may be asking the somewhat obvious question: how does a wife respect and honor a husband or a husband love his wife who has broken their marriage bond in some way either by attitudes, actions, betrayals or even in-action and passivity.

I know that there are a number of people sitting here today who have experienced harmful and very hurtful behaviors and attitudes from their spouses. I can only point you back to the promises of the gospel, the Lord knows your heart and your betrayals. He does not turn a blind eye to them. He wants you to come to Him – pour out your hearts to Him and find in Him the forgiveness that you yourselves have received and to pass this forgiveness onto you less-than-perfect spouse. Remember, the Lord doesn't leave us but stays faithful even when we are spiritually adulterous to Him and run away from Him. He pursues us, and because of the cross forgives us and waits oh so patiently for us to return to our first love, just like the father waited for his prodigal son.

I don't say this lightly – but how many times has the Lord given up on us? How many times has the Lord forgiven you and me for the sins that so easily entangle us? So we are to do with our husbands, and husbands towards our wives.

Sometimes, I say this carefully, separation in a marriage is needed along with wise and godly counsel. It can be needed for a time until true forgiveness, healing and reconciliation can occur to bring that couple back together.

It is only by the grace and mercy of Jesus Himself our great and beautiful Bridegroom that we can truly love our wives, and it is only through the His gospel that wives can respect their husbands.

In closing:

Remember your promise before the Lord- who, by the way, turned His face to the cross and never looked back. Remember your promise – “for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health till death do us part” – remind yourself of this life-long commitment you have made to your spouse, and by the power of the Holy Spirit move far away from the edge of quitting.

God is more concerned with your holiness than your happiness so that he, our redemptive and resurrected King, who brings life out of death would be seen in us and glorified.

**Let's Pray!**