

Ephesians - The One Body of Christ

“The Marriage Story”

Ephesians 5:22-33

I invite you to open up your Bibles to Ephesians 5:22-33. We get to continue now in our series on Ephesians. We'll probably wrap this up over the course of the next month, and then we will go right into Advent, where we will look at the different ways in which Christ is anticipated throughout all of Scripture. And now, if you're available tonight, we'd love to have you come back for our Amos series. Tonight, we'll be discussing, actually, an interesting part in Amos, where Amos wrestles with the idea of what does it mean to pray to a sovereign God who has ordained all of life, and to have him respond and change the course of history in response to our prayers? How should we think about that? So if you're interested in that topic, come back this evening at 6:00 to hear from Amos.

Now, this is Paul's writing to the Ephesians. And I was going to say, before we continue on as I in this, I will say, **this is the word of the Lord**, and you can respond as we do in our responsive reading sometimes in the service with **thanks be to God**. How about that? How about we begin that as a thing? All right, let's do. I know some of you have been wanting to say it when I say this is the word of the Lord so I'm giving you permission now to say it back.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church, his body and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. And the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

This is the word of the Lord. Wonderful. Have a seat.

Well, you've probably noticed that throughout Scripture, the Lord reveals himself and his relationship with his people in a variety of ways. Sometimes he just explains it outright. He just says, this is what I'm doing. This is how I feel. This is what I'm calling you to. And then

sometimes he does it through a metaphor or through an illustration. And we know the common metaphors that God uses. Sometimes he'll say, okay, being in a relationship with me is like being a tree that's planted by a stream of water. And then you'll unpack how that's the case. Or sometimes he'll say something like this to be in a relationship with me. It's like you are a vineyard and I am the owner of the vineyard, and I am cultivating you to bear good fruit for good wine. And sometimes I'll say, I'm like a shepherd, and you are like a flock. And in the way that I lead you and guide you and discipline you is the way that a shepherd like is the way that a shepherd leads his flock.

But do you know that most commonly, the way that God talks about his relationship with us is actually through the illustration of the metaphor of the family? As a matter of fact, you can even say covenants, which is how God relates to us. Covenants make families, covenants make families. Now, this is literally true. And we know this just in our own lives that as you enter into a marriage covenant, what are you doing? You are by document and public proclamation. That's a covenant you are making. A family can also happen in the form of adoption. And we have a wonderful adoption ministry here at Briarwood. It's wonderful to hear the stories about adoption because adoption is another case where you make family not by blood, but by covenant. Covenant with the child, covenant with the state publicly proclaimed. We even say in those covenants, those adoption trials, you say, I will care for them as if they are my own biological relative, right? See, covenants make families. So it's literally true. But it's also metaphorically true. It's an illustration. It's a matter of fact. It's one of the most common illustrations that we find throughout the scriptures.

As a matter of fact, apart from the parent child relationship, father and son marriage is the most commonly used illustration of God's covenant relationship with his people in the Bible. As a matter of fact, when God wants to talk about how he loves his people, when he wants to talk about how he disciplines his people, when he wants to talk about what the goal is for his people, he most often uses that relationship of marriage. As a matter of fact, we see this all over the Old Testament. Even, being the wife of a prophet was a was a frightening, a terrible calling, you know, in many ways, because if you were the wife of a prophet, you would often see your own marriage become a kind of illustration for the way that God loves his people. We see this, obviously, in the marriage between Hosea and Gomer, and I think the only way we can understand that marriage relationship is that this is after the fact. This is after Gomer is, unfaithfulness in the picture of Hosea going around as his wife is meeting with her, her other lovers, her affairs, people who don't care about her or her dignity in any way. And he's leaving food and he's leaving clothing behind because he loves her and he cares for her, and he honors her dignity. Okay, the long story of your marriage is actually an illustration of how the Lord has loved his people, even though they have run after lovers who do not care for them or honor

their dignity. There's both a kind of hope and a trepidation that we see in this idea of God loving us like a husband loves a wife.

The hope is this that the God of the universe has chosen, by his own good pleasure, to love us with the same affection and care and intimacy and knowledge. Empowering love that we see in the best kinds of marriage. However, there's also a kind of trepidation in there too, isn't it? Particularly as we think about our own unfaithfulness, but how often like, Gomer with Hosea we didn't enjoy and rightly value the love that God has for us, and rather we turned after those illicit failed relationships of our former lives.

The old affairs that were abusive and enabling and destructive, the idols of our youth. How terrible it is to think about the way we live, oftentimes turning away from the Lord in light of his love of us, and yet even more, what an amazing grace we have it in spite of our unfaithfulness, God stands there, ever faithful, pursuing us, offering us a path of return, of restoration and reconciliation.

You know, I think one of the most sweet but also terrible pictures of marriage as an illustration of God's love for his people is found in Ezekiel 16. And there the prophet is talking about the city of Jerusalem, and he's talking about the fact that Jerusalem is kind of found by God in this parable that he tells the Lord is on a path kind of like the Good Samaritan.

And he finds this baby who has been cast aside on the side of the road. And we know that it wasn't by mistake because she's left there in her afterbirth. It says she's described as if she was just giving birth to. And she's laying there in the gutter on the side of the road because her parents have discarded her. They didn't want her. And the Lord finds Jerusalem and he takes her up to himself again, like the Good Samaritan is reminding the Israelites that Jerusalem was a great city of old, and it had other nations that ruled over it at different times. It was already well known by the time David comes to it, and yet those cities had not been able to give it anything of value.

Those nations had not been able to give it anything of value. And yet the Lord found it exposed, left to die. Whereas Moses says in Deuteronomy, the least of nations, they were the least of peoples. And yet the Lord drew them to him. So he takes up Jerusalem, and he takes her as a child to a home of nobility, where she's raised in wealth and education, and she's given every opportunity, every possibility, every experience is available to her.

And then he returns when she is older and he takes her as his one and only wife, and he dresses her in the robes of a queen, and he makes her a queen amongst the nations. The cities of the earth. She's this beautiful picture of how the Lord takes this unwanted nation, Israel, and makes her a queen amongst the nations.

But then the story becomes terrible. It turns to horror when the young wife, Jerusalem, turns away from the husband, who not only saved her from sure death in her infancy, but raised her up with every blessing, and she turns away from him to chase after other lovers who don't care about her well-being. They don't care about her protection.

They don't care about giving her every opportunity. And a story that begins with Sweet Love ends as a terrible story of betrayal and shame. You see, this metaphor is spelled out here in Ezekiel 16, but it's found in almost every prophet of the old Testament, warning Israel don't return to the failed relationships of your past in Egypt and Canaan in fullest.

You don't return to those old lovers of the idols, the false gods who you worship before. They don't want your best, they want your destruction. You see this throughout the Old Testament and the new, that God's relationship with his people is depicted as a kind of marriage. As a matter of fact, we get to the very end of the Bible.

The end of all of human history is as people are gathered together in the second coming of Christ, you know, how it's described is described as a wedding feast. And it says that now New Jerusalem, the one without blemish that Paul just talked about in our passage, is now offered up. The people of God, the elect. They come out of the heavens as a beautiful bride without blemish, washed and cleansed by the lamb.

And they're presented now to the groom, Jesus. And it's at that point that we finally realize what all of human history was ever about, and it was to get and find the appropriate bride for the son. It was to find the one who could be loved by the son and given to him forever and ever. See that that's why we're here.

That's what the world is for in a way, for us to be united to our groom, to our husband, Christ Jesus our Lord. You see, it's from Christ to Paul himself, to John the Baptist, to John the gospel writer. Throughout the whole of the New Testament, the Church of Jesus Christ is his bride, and she is indeed beautiful.

So we talked a little bit about how covenants make families, and it gives us some entryway into this passage, because Paul is definitely leaning on this idea of God being in a marriage relationship with his people. But I also want to talk about something else is going on here. The way that Paul is using the metaphor. Now, this might seem kind of obvious to some of you, but it's important.

So bear with me. I want to point out the direction of the metaphor, the direction of how this metaphor works. The person and work of Jesus Christ teaches us. This is the metaphor. It teaches us through illustration, something about how we ought to think about marriage, not the other way around. In this case. In other words, we have to recognize that not everything that we could say about marriage is telling us something about our relationship with Jesus, but

rather let Paul instruct us how the work of Jesus, the person of Jesus as Lord and Savior, giving himself for us, tells us something about marriage, not the other way around here.

Let me tell you what I mean. Just give you an example. There's a lot of things in marriage that we might point out. For instance, for most of you who have been married or are married, you know that there was a time before you knew your spouse and there was a time when you met your spouse, and then you dated for a while, and then you got really serious.

Okay. Then you got engaged. And then the engagement lasted for a period of time, and then you got married and then you had a honeymoon. Okay. These are all things that are kind of typical for regular Western marriages. And yeah, we have to be careful not to make sure we don't say something like so in Christianity, there's a time when you are dating Jesus, and then the time when you were engaged to Jesus, and then you get married, and then you have a honeymoon for a while.

You have to be careful about that. We have to be very careful not to reverse the metaphor in a way that Paul doesn't intended. Okay, no one does that with dating and engagements, but we have to be careful about this, saying that sex tells us something about our relationship with Jesus, saying that having children tells us something about our relationship with Jesus.

That's not how Paul is using the metaphor. You see, he's that would be turning it in the opposite direction to tell us how old age or, going on vacations together tells us something about our relationship with Jesus. Rather, we need to recognize that it's Christ and His Lordship that's helping us understand marriage. In this passage. We should also know this in the metaphor that Paul is using Christ's love for the church and the church's love for Christ is considered the greater relationship in the account here in this passage.

Now, this should be hopeful to people who are not yet married, or maybe have been married, but are not now married, or people who are looking forward to being married. We need to recognize this. Not everyone is called to marriage. Marriage is a peculiar calling. Okay, it's kind of like ordination in some ways, or having children or having a certain kind of job.

Not everyone is called to marriage in the same way, and yet we can always remember all of us that we all have available to us a greater relationship of love and respect. You see, this is true for those who are not married. This is true for those who wish to be married. Those are who are young and are maybe anticipating a call to marriage.

It can all be encouraged in knowing that the greater relationship, the greater love and respect, is open and available to you in Christ Jesus, your Savior. You don't have to be married to enjoy the greater relationship. As a matter of fact, to squander that relationship with Christ because of your constant longing for marriage would be to really miss the point.

It would be a tragic loss that you wouldn't enjoy the greater relationship that's available to you. Now. This is also important for people who are married, isn't it? Say you are married. Say your marriage is wonderful, so you just wake up in the morning and you're like, I can't imagine a more intimate, powerful, supportive, loving, affectionate, committed marriage.

I want you to remember that no matter how wonderful your marriage is, it cannot and does not hold a candle to the relationship of love and respect that you share with your Savior. You see, the new covenantal love that is found in Jesus Christ offers a relationship that precedes, supersedes, and lasts forever beyond marriage. It's a greater relationship.

By the way, this should also be encouraging to those of you who are struggling in marriage, maybe for whom marriage is a difficult topic to talk about. It brings up feelings of hurt and woundedness. I want you to remember that regardless of your earthly marriage, your relationship to Christ is untouched by those things. The love and respect held in the covenant relationship between Christ and His church is sufficient, and it alone holds all of the glories that your soul desires.

See, marriage is a wonderful gift, and yet it is not the pinnacle of human love, rather the pinnacle of human love is that love that is found between the truly human Christ Jesus. And we need to remember this because I know in Christian circles, we often want to emphasize how Jesus is God. And that's true. But notice this you do not just have a marriage relationship with a god with the deity.

You have a marriage type relationship with a truly human Savior, Jesus Christ, who shares his love and his respect with his bride. The members of the church. So covenants make families okay, but we have to understand the direction of the metaphor here. It is the person and the work of Christ and his relationship with the church that's helping us better understand marriage, not the other way around, at least not in this instance.

So now I want to come finally to the topic that Paul himself considers to be kind of the topic of second importance here. The second most important thing that he's talking about in this passage, the first, most important thing, is the relationship between God and his people, found in the relationship between Christ and the church. The second most important topic is the topic of biblical marriage between a man and a woman.

So what are the elements of biblical marriage that we find here in Ephesians five? Well, first, notice this humble submission and self-giving affection are the primary elements of biblical marriage. Humble submission and self-giving affection. That's what we mean by submission and love are the primary elements of biblical marriage. Or we can put it another way, submission of the heart, which is what?

What do we call that respect, right? Submission of the heart and an affection of the heart. What do we call that? Love, right, are the foundational elements of biblical marriage. Now, we should notice a couple of things before we dive into the text again. Notice right before he gets to this section, do you look at the verse immediately preceding it in Ephesians, Paul tells the church in Ephesus, you are all supposed to be submitting to one another.

Everyone in the church is supposed to submit to everyone else in the church. As a matter of fact, that's one of the ways we show that Christ is at work in us, because we are loving one another. We are submitting to one another in this specific way, a way that's radical and doesn't make sense to the world around us.

Elsewhere in the book, as we've been reading, he keeps telling us to the mark of true Christian fellowship as a mark of love. Remember that it transforms all the different ways that we see the world. But one way we could describe that transformation is by saying it's a transformation unto love. You see, all Christians, every member of Brownwood Church is called to submit to one another and to love one another.

So why is it that Paul then breaks out of that kind of general statement as he talks about marriage and really focuses in on wives to say, submit and on husbands to say love? Well, why do you think he focuses in on marriage and then breaks it up into this two different parts, you know, this this love for husbands and respect for wives.

Why break it up like that? Well, I think we could talk about two reasons why that is.

The first reason why Paul focuses in such a way is because he recognizes that marriage is an intense, an intensified, a formally committed relationship that really is unlike those other relationships that we have in the church. You see few relationships, few human relationships call to the same kind of life. On life commitment that we see in marriage.

Can we talk about life on life discipleship? If you want to see a real life on life discipleship, get married right. Be with someone who you wake up with and you have to you. You have to go in. You brush your teeth in front of in the morning when you're really at your worst time of the day, when you're your least public self, there's that person sitting right next to you.

That's life on life. Discipleship in marriage. It is focused in such a way that really is not shared in almost any other kind of human relationship. Other than maybe sort of end of life care or the raising up of small children. It's one of those places where you have a committed, constant 24 over seven kind of focus.

And I think Paul recognizes that when we talk about marriage, it's taking all these things he's been saying about the church, but now it's focusing in almost like a, like a, like a magnifying

glass. Focus is light rays from the sun. It becomes very intense, very focused and deeply committed. It's a beautiful thing, but it's also a difficult thing.

To see in marriage, two people are set aside before God, before the church and before the world to live in a commitment to one another. That is marked by respect and love. All right. Secondly, what then does he divided up into these two different calls? You know, the one call for wives and the one called for husbands? Why not just put them all together and say, if you're married, then do this.

See, I think this passage shows that Paul has a very compassionate awareness of the temptations and the needs of both spouses. Paul recognizes that men and women are different. They're different. They're different in some ways that are very obvious. They're just kind of biological. It's right there for everyone to see that there's a difference between men and women, and sometimes those differences are quite obvious and recognized and have been accommodated throughout all of human history.

As a matter of fact, it's sort of a peculiar irrationality of our modern day that people are kind of acting like there's not a difference. Everyone knows there's a difference. It's obvious Paul recognizes that. Two.

You see, men and women look different. They have different biological realities. They think and behave differently. Now, that's not as obvious. We have to be careful about making strict rules about how men and women think and behave, because we can fall into cultural stereotypes that are actually not shared in Scripture. So we have to be careful about that.

And yet we can say this, that by definition, being both made in the image of God, man and woman, both instances of the image of God who is one, right. That means by definition, we complement each other. It means, by definition, you don't get the fullness of the image of God until you consider both man and woman right.

There is a complement. They accommodate one another, and that accommodation is foundational for the human race. And I will tell you, the longer I live, the more men and women I meet in my life. The more I travel, the more churches I get to operate and minister in. It's incredible how true this really is. It works across culture.

It works across geographical place. You know, linguistic grounds, cross sociological grounds. There is just a difference. And Paul helps us understand this in this passage. So let's talk about the differences. Then I want to start with respect, which we could define as submission of the heart. Okay. Submission of the heart. Paul uniquely calls the wives to submit to respect their husbands.

And now I think he has to be referring back here to you wonder why. Why this? Why does he start here? And I think he has to be referring back to a passage that we find back in Genesis chapter three, verse 16. What part of the reason why I know he's thinking about Genesis is because at the end of this passage, he'll talk about how a man leaves the family, his mother and father, and cleaves to his wife.

And that's found in Genesis chapter two, where we get the foundation of marriage. By the way, isn't that interesting that it's man who leaves his family to cleave to his wife, not wife who leaves her family to cleave to her husband. It's just interesting how that goes. Okay. And so Paul shows us that when he's thinking about these things, he is thinking about the creation of humanity.

He's thinking about the fall of humanity and the aftermath of the fall. The curse. And if we go to that passage in Genesis 3:16, we find God, having now discovered the man in the woman having eaten of the fruit, and he's now delivering the curse, he's describing now the world that they have obtained for themselves by rejecting his lordship and laying hold of the fruit of the tree.

And notice what he says to the woman. It's right there at the opening of the curse against the woman in Genesis 3:16 he says, your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you. Now this is just a plain translation of the passage. There's lots of different translations, but this is just taking the words as they are trying to leave it as wooden as possible.

And it's a difficult passage because we don't know exactly what it means. What's the word desire mean here? And what does it say? What does it mean when it says, but he will rule over you in his plain Hebrew right there, that he will rule over you. And yet is it just describing a reality or is it prescribing a reality is a saying.

This is how it ought to be? Or is he just saying this is how it is? Okay, guys are bigger and stronger, so they're going to rule over you. Okay. I think we can say this. There is a desire here that is a result of the fall. It is an unhealthy, sinful desire that is in conflict with the ruling of the husband over the wife.

Okay. So there's a conflict there already. The desire is conflicted intention with the ruling. As a matter of fact, we have to ask ourselves why? Why would he say this to her? Why talk about her desire being for her husband? And it's possible here because of how this word is used, that this desire is a desire for mastery over the husband.

As a matter of fact, what did we just see Eve do in this story? It's always good in the Bible when you read a tough passage to say, what's the context? What's happening in the passage that might help shed some light on it? And what we just saw Eve do right before this passage is take of the fruit, eat of it, and then give it to her husband.

So it's possible that the desire here is a desire for mastery. Just as Eve had brought the fruit of the tree to Adam, there will be a desire to influence the husband in a sinful or unhealthy way. And Paul is sensitive to this human temptation. And so he reminds wives to respect and follow the lead of their husbands.

And in doing so, the wife recognizes that this has how we are called to love and to respect Jesus Christ our Savior. As a matter of fact, the respecting of the husband in the marriage is a kind of Christian discipleship for the woman, for the wife, and for the husband, drawing them both closer to Christ because they are his bride, the bride of Christ.

Now, I want to be clear here. This is not blind submission. This is not radical submission and obedience, where whatever a husband says, the wife is required to do better and better. I think it's to recognize the honor, the respect of the role of being husband. Kind of like earlier we had talked about the role of the father in the family.

We should honor the role of the father because God is father. Likewise, we should honor the role of the husband because the Lord calls us to respect and honor the role of the husband. And yet that doesn't mean that we reject, right, the role of our husband in Christ, right of our Lord and Savior. We don't honor the human husband and undermine or reject or in some way be disobedient to the love of God.

That would be to be flipping right this arrangement on its head by putting human marriage above our relationship with Christ. You see, in cases where the husband is in error or attempting to lead the wife into sin, or where there is abuse, one can respect the role of the husband, the office, as it were, of husband. But the wife at the same time, while respecting, can do everything actually because of her respect, because of her honor, doing everything she can to protect herself, to protect the family, to even rebuke the husband so that he is quickened and drawn to repentance.

There will even be cases in which the husband has unrepentantly abdicated his role as a husband. Jesus talks about these cases. It says that there are times when divorce, as tragic as it is, is authorized because of one or the other spouses rejecting or abdicating their role in the marriage. And you see, the church can and should be an aid in protecting wives from husbands who have given up their role as husbands.

But at the same time, we should recognize discipline. Church discipline can be both a means of protection, but also possibly prayerfully, a means of healing and restoration of the marriage. And of course, this too gets back to what we were saying about families earlier. When we are talking about fathers, in fact, the fathers are a gift to their families, but they can also be a great harm to their families.

That's how important the role is. Well, the same is true for the husband. Respect means honoring the role of the husband, even if that's difficult and it is difficult. We live in a world where there is kind of a war against husbands. I mean, you turn on most movies and most TV shows, and husbands are kind of presented like dopes, right? Doofus can't quite get their act together. They might be well-meaning. They've got a heart of gold. Okay, but they're kind of idiots. And this has been going on for a long time. I remember as a child watching a show that I still like a whole lot. Okay. The Dick Van Dike show, where every, every beginning of the Dick Van Dike show, what would happen.

He would walk in during the scene and what would happen? He tripped over that Ottoman every single time. Because he's kind of a dope. He's kind of a doof. He's lovable. Okay. Mary Tyler Moore loved him, but he was a doofus. Or you could be talking about, Oh, modern Family, where Mister Dumpy, the goofy dad, he's got a heart of gold.

He tries hard, but he's also kind of an idiot. You see, there's a bit of a war on husbands. Respecting means honoring who the Lord has made men to be as husbands. It's looking for admirable qualities and cultivating them and nurturing them and praising them, not looking for traits to mock and to ridicule and to belittle. Let me just give a brief sidebar here.

Sidebar on the topic of mansplaining. Okay, I'm going to mansplain mansplaining for a second. Okay, so bear with me now if you know what mansplaining is, you know what I'm talking about. If you don't know what it is, then let me just say it is the tendency of men to overexplain a topic, even when it's had. That explanation has not been asked for or solicited in any way.

Okay, I just came up with that definition. I think that works. Okay, women, I want you to know this, wives, I want you to know this. Do you know that men mansplain to each other? Do you know that this is just the thing we do? It goes all the way back to our childhood, where as young boys, we were told, one thing you need to do in life is be reliable, okay?

You need to be able to solve the problems when they arise. And so what do we do? As little boys, we started collecting knowledge about topics like collecting stones or marbles or G.I. Joe figures. You started collecting them and building out a network and a map of ideas. Okay, you had to because you wanted to be reliable. You wanted to be an expert.

You want to be able to help, to be a part of the solution, not a part of the problem. That's what little boys do. Do you know that when a guy is sitting there and giving you way more information than you possibly need on a topic, he if he's being condescending, that's on him. Okay. If he's being prideful and arrogant, that's on him.

But I just want you to know, don't just take the explanation as a sign of arrogance. We do it to each other. We are sharing this thing that we've developed, kind of like a garden, like a little

collection. We've developed it and we're sharing it with you because we think it's valuable. Okay. Be careful about just belittling someone when they're doing that.

Okay, listen, maybe you'll actually learn something new. Maybe it'll be something of help. You see, respect means looking for ways to celebrate, looking for ways to cultivate and to nurture. It ultimately means honoring God by seeking the best in your marriage. It's not blind obedience. It's not blind submission. It's cultivating the marriage relationship.

But then Paul notice, he turns and he goes to love and love. We talk about being the sincere affection of the heart. And he says to men, remember, we're both men, and women are supposed to be submitting and loving one another. Paul's already said that multiple times, but he says to men in the marriage, husbands, make sure you love. Make sure you have a sincere affection of your heart. I would again take you back to the garden, where we find the man and the woman right after the fall, and they've just eaten the fruit of the tree. And Adam is found there. And you remember the very first thing he says to the Lord, when the Lord holds him to account, there was Adam is to Adam, who was given this ruling.

Don't eat from the tree. And here he is eating from it. And the Lord holds him to account. What does he say? He says that that woman, that woman you gave me even blames God, doesn't he? That woman that you gave me, right. She made me eat the fruit. She. I think likewise, Paul is sensitive to the temptation of men, the temptation of husbands not to love their wives, the temptation to say that that's too emotional.

I'm not an emotional person. I just say things as they are. I just like to get things done right. I see things as they are. I'm not a an emotional person. And Paul is saying, no, no, no, no. Make sure you love. Make sure you love. And what does love do? Paul tells us elsewhere. It keeps no list of wrongs when she's feeling moody or she's feeling down, you don't just go, well, like, I can't handle this.

This isn't the way that I am. Paul says, no, you don't get the option to do that. You need to watch. You need to pay attention. You need to learn her beats in her rhythms, learn her patterns, learn how she responds to things so you can love her well. You need to pursue her. Does she need space? Give her space.

But not too long. You need to desire her. Seek her out. You don't get to throw your hands up in frustration and stomp out the door. She deserves your love, not your self-importance, not your need to always be thought of as the one who's right. You're supposed to love, cherish, admire, support and protect. You have to recognize that there's a cultural war against wives as well.

There's a cultural war against wives. And it's not just in this whole matter of transgender transgenderism in sports as we see it today. It's not all in that. It's rather a much older type. It's that call that comes from the culture to push for women to succeed in every area of life, both as

mothers and as wives, and as business leaders and as community leaders and as people doing the pick up from carpool line.

And for people who are involved in the school, in the local play and the local sports, women, we're told to lean in, but it left many of them feeling burnt out when we were told that they should have it all. But so many of them ended feeling thin and stretched out, being expected to succeed in areas that they couldn't possibly have succeeded in because they're just spread too thin.

Again, here, husband, the key is pursuit to pursue your wife and love. Cherish her, empower her, support her. Delight in your wife. As a matter of fact, you should be praying for, paying attention to, and listening and caring for your wife. Asking not just what does she say? You're asking yourself not just what is she saying to me, but how is she acting?

How is she behaving? Don't buy into the stereotype that men aren't emotional or sensitive to emotions. Your wife will tell you how she's doing by her words, but she will also tell you by her actions. Let me give another sidebar here, just briefly. You know, the Bible actually is loathe to tell us about those more hidden differences between men and women.

We actually find a whole variety of men and women living all kinds of different lives throughout the scripture. It's remarkable. Yes, there's clearly a difference. And yes, there's clearly a complementarity as they both image God as humans. And yet there's kind of a remarkable diversity of men and women throughout the scripture that actually calls out and breaks up many of our cultural stereotypes.

I would point out that in Scripture we find that God is affirming artistic men. Think about our greatest king, our greatest warrior in the old Testament, David is described as a small, ruddy youth who likes to play his harp and write songs while his brothers are out in battle with the army of Saul, David is back at home, tending to the sheep and writing worship songs to his Lord.

So we have God affirming artistic men and affirming brave and bold women like Deborah and J.L., who are bringing an end to the war with the Canaanites. In the Book of Judges, we see disciplined men who women rather who are in the workplace, like the Proverbs 31 woman. And then we also see wandering men out by themselves, living an ascetic life in John the Baptist.

And Jesus says, he really is the greatest of the kingdom. Okay, if there were great ones of the kingdom, he would be kind of the best. We see wise men and we see foolish women. We see wise women, and we see foolish men. You see, the Bible calls out our stereotypes, and that should mean something for the way we think about marriage.

Every marriage is different. The way that we apply this call to women to respect and submit to their husbands, and the way that husbands are called to love and respect and honor their wives.

The way that that gets worked out in each marriage is going to be different. All Christians are called to respect and love one another, but in marriage, this truth is more intense.

It's more focused, it's more committed. But it's going to look different from marriage to marriage. With that said, one thing we can be sure of wives are called to submit in respect to their husbands to follow his lead, to relish his love. Husbands are called especially to love their wives, to pursue her, to desire to seek the best for her.

This week I had the privilege of sitting in on a ministry that we have here at Briarwood. It's called Brothers on the Path, and it's gentlemen who have either lost their spouses or in the process of possibly losing their spouses during end of life care. And one of the brothers spoke up as we were kind of talking about where we were. And he talked about the privilege, the incredible privilege to shepherd his wife into her Savior's arms. I thought it was an incredible picture for marriage itself. Isn't that what we're doing, husbands? You're shepherding your wife in life, not just at end of life. Throughout life, you're shepherding her into her Savior's arms. Wives, what are you doing with your husband? You're pursuing together the Lord and savior of your lives that you might both usher one another into your Savior's arms. It's a beautiful picture of marriage. And what a privilege. What a gift. So husbands, live like someone who is easy to respect. Wives live like someone who is easy to love. Husbands and wives, commit yourself to drawing actively drawing your spouse closer to Christ.

Make your marriage a wonderful illustration to everyone around you that reality that Paul describes here. The reality of Christ and his church.

Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we consider such a great and wonderful mystery that is marriage and what it tells us about the even greater mystery of our relationship with you. Lord, I pray that we would be drawn to you, that we would seek you out, that those who do not know you would find their hearts strangely warmed and softened as they are drawn to their Savior, their Lord Jesus Christ.

It's in his name we pray. Amen.