## The Husband’s Role in Marriage

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Bible Text: Ephesians 5:21-33

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- occasionally over the years I’ve mentioned the steep decline in attendance in evangelical or Bible-believing churches across our culture…

- its another reason to thank the Lord that up to this point we have not been impacted in that same way – but it’s important for us to know what’s occurring and to think about why…

- recently several articles have been published that highlight a particular aspect of that trend – that women are leaving the church at a more rapid rate then men…

- Shane Morris made the point a few weeks ago in a blog on Breakpoint …he wrote in part…

One of the oldest features of Christianity is its appeal among women. Women swelled the ranks of the Early Church as it reflected how Jesus had treated them. He talked to [women in public](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%209%3A20-22&version=ESV), [defended them against accusers](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+8%3A1-11&version=ESV), and [appeared to them first](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+20%3A11-18&version=ESV) after His resurrection. All this at a time when women were widely treated as inferior to men.

Today, however, women in America seem to be abandoning Christian observance more quickly than men. Political scientist Ryan Burge, co-author of [*The Great De-Churching*](https://zondervanacademic.com/products/the-great-dechurching)*,*[recently shared survey data](https://www.graphsaboutreligion.com/p/highly-educated-men-are-more-likely) showing that college-educated men are now more likely to attend church weekly than college-educated women. In 2008, 36% of women with at least a four-year degree attended church weekly, compared with 34% of men with a degree. By 2023, just 27% of college-educated women attended church weekly, compared with 32% of men…

Obviously, church attendance has declined significantly for both sexes. However, the drop among educated women is disproportionately high, and it coincides with the leftward lurch in how women identify, politically…

It’s possible there’s something about higher education itself that is radicalizing women politically and driving them away from the Church. Also, the decline of marriage has historically correlated with women adopting more progressive beliefs. Pew Research [reported last year](https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/06/28/a-record-high-share-of-40-year-olds-in-the-us-have-never-been-married/) that the share of 40-year-olds who have never been married is at a historic high, and childbearing, partly as a result, [is near a record low](https://ifstudies.org/blog/the-us-marriage-rate-rebounds-to-its-pre-pandemic-level).

Marriage and family are the most basic of all the “mediating institutions” in society that form individuals and buffer them from the state. With these institutions in decline, it’s inevitable that people, especially women, would look increasingly to the government for provision, protection, and influence…

Also, the rise of social media may play a role in women’s exodus from church and toward progressivism. [Women spend more time on social media than men,](https://www.oberlo.com/statistics/social-media-usage-by-gender) regardless of age. A particular kind of social and political orthodoxy is ruthlessly enforced by mob rule on social media platforms. Not only do influencers seek to shape the beliefs of their followers, they often promote alternative forms of spirituality and views of “the good life.”

Whatever the causes are, leaving the Church and becoming more progressive has not served women well. [A 2023 survey by the Centers for Disease Control](https://www.psychiatrist.com/news/cdc-girls-are-experiencing-an-unprecedented-mental-health-crisis/#:~:text=Almost%2060%20percent%20of%20teen,violence%20in%20the%20past%20year.) found that almost 60% of teenage girls reported feeling consistently sad or hopeless, and half of those seriously contemplated suicide. This represented a 20% increase in mental health problems among teen girls within a decade. Over the same period, teen boys saw a comparatively small but still alarming 8% increase in mental health issues.

It seems unlikely, then, that the peace so many young women are looking for will be found on TikTok or in left-wing politics. The [“God-shaped hole”](https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/801132-there-is-a-god-shaped-vacuum-in-the-heart-of-each) in every human heart becomes only more, not less, pronounced by rejecting organized religion. This means, at least in part, that any outreach to educated young women must include an appeal to tradition, to marriage, and to life beyond social media, as well as countering their counterfeits. It should also, as always, include appealing to our Savior, whose high view and treatment of women have brought so many to see His Church as a place of countercultural hope.

- this trend should cause a church like ours to do some real soul-searching…

- maybe the problem is that men have not done a good job of living out our biblical role and therefore it has not been as attractive to women as it once was…

- maybe women, or men, don’t have an interest in what God’s Word says about these matters…especially if it contradicts what the world around us believes…

- so what should a congregation like us do with this reality?...is the answer to stop teaching what Scripture says because of the risk of alienating someone or turning them off?...

- is the solution…teaching less of what the Word of God says?...

- before he died, Tim Keller, the longtime pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC was asked about how Christians interact with our culture on topics like these…you might want to sit back – you may not like some of this…

- “…most Christians are just nowhere nearly as deeply immersed in the scripture and in theology as they are in their respective social-media bubbles and News Feed bubbles. To be honest, I think the ‘woke’ evangelicals are just much more influenced by MSNBC and liberal Twitter. The conservative Christians are much more influenced by Fox News and their particular loops. And they’re [both] living in those things eight to 10 hours a day. They go to church once a week, and they’re just not immersed in the kind of biblical theological study that would nuance that stuff.”

- in other words…the answer isn’t less biblical truth…it’s more…

- he went on to talk about how that then would help us accomplish our mission in culture…

 - and he contrasted those who just want to abandon culture out of fear…

 - or others who want to take over culture out of anger…

**- “Both those evangelical strategies are wrong. Both of them are about power and saying, *How are we going to use power to live life the way we want?* They’re not enough about service; they’re not enough about serving the common good.**

**- “The proper cultural strategy is faithful presence within,” he added, “not pulling away from the culture, and not trying to take it over. ‘**[**Faithful presence within**](http://web.archive.org/web/20191206004211/https%3A/www.amazon.com/Change-World-Tragedy-Possibility-Christianity/dp/0199730806.)**’ means being faithful; it means we’re not going to assimilate, [but] we’re going to be distinctively Christian. It’s about an attitude of service, uncompromising in our beliefs, but not withdrawing and not trying to dominate.”**

- so what does it look like to be deeply immersed in the Scripture when it comes to the role of the husband and the role of the wife…and to live that out faithfully in the culture in which we’ve been placed?...

- with that in mind, please open your Bible to Ephesians chapter 5…page 152 of the back section (FW - page 1172) of the Bible under the chair in front of you…

- our theme this year is **Building on Our Heritage**…so we’ve been studying verse-by-verse through the of the book of Ephesians together…

- and we’re now at the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6 where Paul gives very specific and practical teaching about the Christian family…

 - we’ve titled this section… **Strengthening Unity in Our Relationships…**

- honestly, no one knows for sure what will happen to a church like ours that teaches principles like these…but we’re not pragmatists…making decisions on what we believe could be the temporal results…

- we do what we do because we believe it pleases God…and we’ll trust Him for the outcome…

- that brings us to a study of **The Husband’s Role in Marriage**…

- let’s read our text…Read Ephesians 5:21-33

- we’re looking for **3 aspects of a biblical husband’s role…**and I can hear someone who may not be familiar with Scripture saying – you just answered your own question…it’s passages like that that will motivate women to leave the church…

- understood properly, the instructions laid out here are equally challenging…and there are plenty of people here who would say – allowing Jesus Christ to give us the strength and power to understand and follow His Word on topics like this has made all the difference in the world in our life and marriage…

- that’s why we’re going to do something a little different today…

- I’ve asked three couples who have been long-time members of our church to talk to us about each of these three aspects of a husbands role…and specifically how this has guided them…

- we’re doing this for a couple of reasons…

- for one, on the occasion of our 60th anniversary, it provides an opportunity to acquaint you with some of our long-time members…

- but also for an opportunity for all of us to thank the Lord for His timeless Word…

- and we do understand that not everyone in our community will accept this and will instead seek other sources of truth…

- but these testimonies will remind us that, as Peter said quoting Isa 40, **1 Peter 1:24–25 - For, “All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you.**

- wise men and women build their lives and relationships on truth like this…

- so 3 aspects of a husband’s biblical role…

## I. Glorify God by Leading His Wife (Eph 5:23)

 - it’s very apparent from this and many other passages in God’s Word that…

### A. God gave men leadership responsibilities

- and that should bring everybody great relief…because if you’ve ever been in a situation where no one was leading…and leadership was clearly necessary…it’s chaos, and frustrating…

- think back to all the places you’ve been in the last week…and its likely that in practically every one of them, there had to be some kind of leadership…

- and I don’t know about you – but I like it when someone else is leading…

 - as a random example – our grandsons are in soccer leagues this fall…

- all I do is show up…somebody else made the schedule, someone else recruited the coaches, someone else made the rules, someone else mowed the grass…

- now you might say – why did God decide the husband should be the leader?...

 - one reason is “order of creation…”…and someone might say – “So?”

**1. He created Adam first (Genesis 1-2; I Timothy 2:11-15)**

- apparently this is very important to the Lord because the issue of “order of creation” comes up when discussing roles in the church…

- **1 Timothy 2:12–13 - But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve.**

- this is one of the many reasons we don’t have female pastors here…

 - and it doesn’t matter if you or I like this, or don’t like it…

- what matters…or at least what should matter, is what God’s Word says…clearly…

**2. He declared the husband to be the leader in the home (Ephesians 5:23; I Corinthians 11:1-3)**

**- Ephesians 5:23 - For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.**

- however, the key here is understanding and applying the “as Christ also is” part of this…

- I have never heard a man or woman complain or be troubled that Jesus is the head of the church…why is that?...

### B. The biblical view of the husband’s leadership (Matthew 20:25-28)

 - because Christ-like leadership is servant leadership…

 - time doesn’t allow us to totally unpack Matthew 20, but this is where Jesus taught…

**- Matthew 20:25–28 - But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

 - so,

**1. Biblical leadership is not dictatorship (vs. 25-26a)**

- it’s looking for ways to serve…and needs to meet…

- but in any relationship, someone has to have the axe over his neck…if there’s an impasse, someone has to make the final call…so…

**2. Biblical leadership is service and sacrifice (vs. 26-28)**

- for every 1 wife I’ve ever heard say that she felt her husband’s leadership was dictatorial, I’ve had 10 say…I just wish my husband would lead…

- so what does that really look like…let’s listen to Chester and Betty Bankes…

**Video – Chester and Betty Bankes**

- what a beautiful picture of 1 Peter 1:24-25 – the grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever…and the practical questions become clear…

 - husbands, are you leading your wife and family, even when it’s hard?…

- wives, are you making it easy as possible for your husband to fulfill that responsibility?...secondly…

## II. Glorify God by Loving His Wife (Ephesians 5:25-33)

- this too is clearly emphasized in the passage…at a level that should give all husbands pause…

**- Ephesians 5:25–26 - Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,**

- there’s not a man in this room who would say that we’ve got that one mastered…

- there are reasons why, of everything that could have been said about marriage, these particular areas are especially emphasized…

 - women struggle following the leadership they are given…if that’s not true in your particular case, praise the Lord…

- men struggle with either not leading, or doing so in ways that are selfish…which is why it’s so important to remember that…

### A. Biblical love is a choice to give sacrificially

 - for God so loved the world, that He gave…

**1. That is the love Christ displayed on the cross for us!**

- it would be wise for many if not all of us as husbands to spend time meditating on the cross-work of Christ and comparing that to our love for our wives or anyone…

- I think we’ll find it to be terribly convicting…

**2. Emotions will come and go, but godly love ‘never fails’ ‘(1 Corinthians 13:8)**

- what an incredible promise for those who seek to follow God’s Word in this matter…

- when we make that comparison, what do we learn?...

### B. Biblical love is patterned after Christ’s love for us:

**1. First**

**1 John 4:19 “We love, because He first loved us.”**

- I can close my eyes and hear Pastor Goode saying about a man who complained that his home wasn’t a very loving place – “well, you better get with it”…

- we’re to love first, and we’re to love…

**2. Most**

**John 15:13 “Greater love has no man than this . . .”**

- it’s not 50 / 50…Can you imagine if Christ’s love for us was conditioned by our love for Him?...and to love…

**3. Sacrificially**

**Ephesians 5:25 “…as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her”**

- husbands, can you point to areas of sacrifice for your wife and family?...and are there specific steps that could and should be taken in that direction?...

**4. In spite of faults**

**Romans 5:8**

- But God commended His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners…

**5. Regardless of rejection**

- did you place your faith and trust in Christ the very first time you learned of his love?...

- probably not…yet, what did He keep doing, anyway?...

- let’s listen to how this concept has guided Jeff and Lori Walters…

**Video – Jeff and Lori Walters**

- I realize the world would strongly criticize much of what we’re studying this morning…but at the risk of sounding redundant…the grass withers, and the flower fades…but the Word of our God stands forever…

- now for any man who would say – wow, this is hard…we really haven’t gotten to the hard part yet…

- because we always have to remember the unity principle…Scripture interprets Scripture…

- so however we interpret our core passage in Ephesians 5 – it has to bear the weight of the rest of the Bible…

- or, it has to be interpreted in a way that is consistent with what the rest of God’s Word says…including that we’re to…

## III. Glorify God by Learning about and Honoring his wife (1 Peter 3:7).

- surely one of the most challenging verses in the Bible for husbands is… **1 Peter 3:7 - You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.**

 - so it’s very clear, isn’t it…?

### A. A husband is commanded to learnabout his wife.

- which is…

**1. A command that takes time and effort**

- no husband can throw up his arms and say this is impossible…we can’t do that with any of God’s commands…which is why all of this, for both husbands and wives should cause us to regularly run to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace during our time of need…it’s…

**2. A command that includes being mindful of her weaknesses**

- you have to decide what you believe Peter meant with the phrase…as with someone weaker…

- we have to be very careful with that one…because I don’t know about you, but I’ve seen a lot more women pushing their husband’s wheelchairs than the other way around…

- but it has to mean something, and it ought to result in sensitivity and patience…

- then Peter says…

### B. A husband is commanded to honor his wife.

 **1. Honoring her includes respect, thankfulness, and appreciation.**

- we men would be wise to ask what we could start doing, or stop doing, to live more in line with this concept…

- and I hope for any women who are here…you’d say, the more I listen to this, the more I see that Scripture is equally challenging and equally convicting…

- you can imagine how this would have impacted the first century world where ideas like this were practically unheard of…

- now wonder women flocked to the church of Jesus Christ…

**2. Honoring her because she shares the same inheritance.**

 - a fellow heir of the grace of life…and then even this warning…

**C. The prayers of those who refuse these commands are hindered**

 - so that your prayers will not be hindered…

- these three key words – leader, lover, and learner have guided so many of our brothers and sisters here…

- let’s listen now to Jeff and Jana Kessler…

**Video – Jeff and Jana Kessler**

- we started this morning with an article entitled – Why are educated women leaving the church?...

- it could be because men are not doing a very good job at fulfilling our roles…

- or women just not wanting to hear what God says about theirs…

- but the answer can’t be to stop teaching what Scripture says on matters like this…

- our culture needs followers of Jesus Christ who have stories like Chester and Betty’s, and Jeff and Lori’s, and Jeff and Jana’s…

 - all who would be quick to say that they are far from perfect…

 - but they long ago decided what their source of truth was going to be…

- because the grass withers, and the flower fades away…but the Word of our God, stands forever…