

The title of the first message is, *“Temptations Facing Husbands and Wives.”*

Some years ago I was teaching on marriage in a fairly interactive setting. In the middle of a message about husbands loving and cherishing their wives, one of the women stood up and began criticizing her husband in front of everyone.

There were a number of good things I could've said at that moment:

- *Let's talk about this after the meeting.*
- *Why don't we take a moment and pray for you both.*
- *Could we meet together sometime later this week and discuss this in private?*

But because I was so caught off-guard by her actions, I did the worst thing imaginable: I simply stood there with my mouth wide open. This allowed her to go on...and on...and on...and on.

After that I decided that whenever I taught on marriage, I would make a few points at the beginning. So please look at Lesson 1...

## **LESSON 1: AS WE BEGIN, MAKE THE DECISION TO: (PART I) FOCUS ON YOUR WEAKNESSES MORE THAN YOUR SPOUSE'S.**

The standard God sets for husbands and wives is very high. It's so high that:

- If you're a husband it's easy to listen to what's said to wives and start getting upset your wife isn't more like God Word says she should be.
- If you're a wife, it's easy to listen to what's said to husbands and start getting upset your husband isn't more like God's Word says husbands should be.

The point of this marriage retreat is to improve marriages, not arm couples to go home and have WWII.

So let's remember we all have plenty of weaknesses, and keep our minds from getting fixated on those things we think our spouses need to change.

Instead of focusing on what your spouse does wrong and how you shouldn't be treated the way you're treated think:

- How can I help my husband or wife be a better spouse?
- Is there anything I can do that will make being married to me easier? And if you can't think of anything, you're not thinking hard enough!

So if you start to feel frustrated toward your spouse, there are two things you can do:

1. First, you can remember those times you've failed and how much grace and forgiveness you need.
2. The second thing you can do brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

## LESSON 1: AS WE BEGIN, MAKE THE DECISION TO (PART II) TURN YOUR FRUSTRATIONS INTO PRAYER.

Over the next five messages, take any frustrations you feel toward your spouse and turn them into prayer. When one of your spouse's weaknesses or struggles come to mind, instead of getting upset, pray for God – and you – to help your spouse grow in that area.

Because here's the truth...

There are plenty of other things people do WAY more than pray for their spouse:

- Complain about their spouse.
- Yell at their spouse.
- Threaten their spouse.
- Ignore their spouse.

But if we prayed for our spouses as much as we do these other things, our marriages would be much better.

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And there's one more thing I'd like you to keep in mind as we begin...

## LESSON 1: AS WE BEGIN, MAKE THE DECISION TO (PART III) RECOGNIZE YOUR MARRIAGE IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

Our relationships w/ our spouses say a lot about our relationships w/ Christ.

There's a certain lie we can be tempted to believe at times, and the lie is: *"I can be a strong Christian and a bad spouse."*

That is a lie, because:

- Our Christianity - or our relationship w/ Christ - is directly related to our relationship w/ our spouse.
- Our relationship w/ our spouse is an outpouring of our relationships w/ Christ.
- We treat our spouses the way we do B/C OF OUR RELATIONSHIP W/ CHRIST.

The truth is that if we love Christ we'll treat our spouses well b/c we know that's what He wants.

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Let me briefly address the husbands first...

Husbands are commanded to love their wives just as Christ loved the church.

We don't love and cherish our wives...

- b/c they're perfect...
- or b/c they deserve it...
- or b/c they always respect us...
- or b/c they're so lovable...

We love our wives b/c we love Christ.

The way we love and cherish our wives - or don't love and cherish our wives – isn't so much a reflection of our wives. It's a reflection of our relationships w/ Christ.

If a man says, *"I'm not going to love and cherish my wife b/c she..."*

- He's not making his wife look bad, he's making himself look bad.
- He's saying something about his relationship w/ his wife, but more importantly he's saying something about his relationship w/ Christ.

Similarly for wives...

Wives are commanded to submit to their husbands, but here's the truth...

Wives aren't expected to submit to their husbands:

- b/c they're perfect...
- or b/c they deserve it...
- or b/c they always make the right decisions...
- or b/c they always love you the way you want to be loved...

Wives are expected to submit to their husbands b/c they want to submit to Christ.

If a wife says, *"I'm not going to submit to my husband b/c he..."*

- She isn't making her husband look bad, she's making herself look bad.
- She's saying something about her relationship w/ her husband, but more importantly she's saying something about her relationship w/ Christ.

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This is why...

- There's no such thing as a spiritually mature, godly man...who DOESN'T love his wife.
- And there's no such thing as a spiritually mature, godly woman...who DOESN'T submit to her husband.
- If you're a husband you can't love Christ w/o loving your wife.
- If you're a wife, you can't be submissive to Christ w/o submitting to your husband.

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So let me make a little commitment to you as we begin...

I won't try to...

- Convince husbands they should love and cherish their wives b/c their wives deserve it.
- And I won't try to convince wives they should submit to their husbands b/c their husbands deserve it.

The fact is we're all sinners and we don't deserve our spouse's love or submission.

But who is worthy of our love and submission? Christ is!

The reason I stress this is there will be times your relationship w/ your spouse isn't enough to make you want to obey God's commands! Then you have to draw on your relationship w/ Christ for the strength you need.

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Now let's turn to **Gen 2:16**...

**16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."**

We know these verses, but in particular I'd like you to notice it says **God commanded the man**.

God gave the command to Adam before Eve was created. He didn't have to do it this way: He could've given the command to them after Eve was created. But God did it this way so...

- Adam had to take the command and give it to Eve.
- And since Eve never heard the command from God, she simply had to trust her husband.

This is part of God establishing Adam's headship in the marriage relationship, and since sin hasn't come into the world yet this teaches us something important that we'll need to keep in mind for the other four messages...

## **LESSON 2: GOD CREATED HEADSHIP BEFORE THE FALL.**

This is important, b/c if you think headship began after The Fall, you see it as part of the Curse. But if you understand headship began at Creation, you see it as part of God's natural, healthy, divine plan for husbands and wives.

With Adam's headship established, please look at **Gen 3:1** to see what Satan attacks. We know these verses well so I'm going to go through them quickly...

**Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And (Now notice this...) HE SAID TO THE WOMAN, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"**

**2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"**

**4 Then (Now notice this...) THE SERPENT SAID TO THE WOMAN, "You will not surely die.**

Notice the important contrast:

- **Gen 2:16 The LORD God commanded the man.**
- **Gen 3:1 and 3:4 [The serpent] said to the woman.**
- God spoke to Adam, but the devil spoke to Eve.
- God established Adam's headship and then the devil attacked it.

**5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**

Right here Eve had a choice:

- Submit to her husband who gave her the command.
- Submit to the devil.

Sadly, we know what happened...

**6 So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.**

Right here Adam had a choice:

- Obey God who gave him the command; submit to Him.
- Obey his wife and submit to her.

Sadly, we know what happened here too.

Skip to verse 9...

**9 Then the LORD God CALLED TO ADAM and said to him, “Where *are* you?”**

**10 So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”**

**11 And He said (God is still speaking to Adam), “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”**

**12 Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave *to be* with me (pretty serious blameshifting), she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”**

Notice God didn't even address Eve. He went to Adam, b/c:

- He was the one given the command...
- He was the head of the relationship...

As a result God held Adam more responsible:

- **Rom 5:12-22 Through ONE MAN sin entered the world...15 By the ONE MAN'S OFFENSE many died...17 By ONE MAN'S OFFENSE death reigned...18 Through ONE MAN'S OFFENSE judgment came...19 By ONE MAN'S DISOBEDIENCE.**
- **1 Cor 15:21 BY MAN came death...22 In ADAM all die.**

The odd thing is since Eve sinned first, you'd expect to hear sin and death came through her, but God put the blame squarely on Adam's shoulders.

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Since the Fall has taken place and sin has been introduced into the world, Adam and Eve's relationship is going to be VERY different now...and by extension ours too!

**Gen 3:16-17** discuss the Curse put on all of creation. We're going to look at the part that deals w/ marriage. These verses describe what marriage will be like in a fallen world.

The Fall affected both sides of the marriage relationship: husbands and wives received sinful natures. And here's what you need to know...

There are some temptations that are more common to men and other temptations that are more common to women. That's not my opinion: God says as much when He speaks to Adam and Eve.

Men and women are different, and part of those differences is facing temptations that are stronger for one than the other.

Look at **Gen 3:16** so we can see the temptations common to women...

**Gen 3:16 To the woman He said:**

**“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Your desire *shall be* for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you.”**

In particular notice the words **your desire shall be for your husband.**

Considering this is a curse and not a blessing, it doesn't mean wives are going to desire their husbands in some positive or godly way. These words are referring to a wife's desire to control her husband...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

### **LESSON 3: WIVES ARE TEMPTED TO (PART I) CONTROL THEIR HUSBANDS.**

Prior to the Fall, women would've readily and easily submitted to their husbands, but now that will be a real struggle.

One of the basic rules of Bible interpretation – and one I'd like to encourage you to remember for your times reading the Word – is you can often learn the meaning of words by considering how they're used elsewhere in Scripture. If you can find the word in the same book, that's even better, b/c then you're often seeing the way the way the same human author used it both times.

The Hebrew word for **desire** is only used three times in Scripture:

- Once in Song of Solomon.
- Twice in Genesis: it's used in **Gen 3:16** and again in **Gen 4:7.**

If you write in your bible, you can circle the words **desire** in **Gen 3:16** and write, “**Gen 4:7.**”

Please turn to **Gen 4:4**...

**4 Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering, 5 but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.**

When Cain's offering was rejected, he faced two choices, and they're the same choices we face when we sin:

- Repent and do what's right, which means getting the sin out of our lives.
- Be prideful and get angry, which means letting the sin stay in our lives.

God sees this happening w/ Cain so He graciously warns him about what sin wants to do to him...

**6 So the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. (Notice this...) And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."**

You see the similarity between **Gen 3:16** and **Gen 4:7**

- **Gen 3:16** Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you
- **Gen 4:7** [Sin's] desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it

The same Hebrew words are used in both verses to make the parallelism even stronger.

Now here's the question...

God told Cain sin **desired** him, and what sort of **desire** did sin have for Cain?

Was it a loving, kind, supportive, desire? No...

- It was a desire to control him.
- It was a desire to take over his mind and actions.
- It was a desire to make him do things.

The point is:

- Just like sin had a desire to control Cain, wives have a desire to control their husbands.
- Just like Cain was supposed rule over – or have authority over – sin instead, husbands are supposed to have authority over their wives.

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And this temptation for wives to control their husbands often manifests itself a certain way, and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 3...

### **LESSON 3: WIVES ARE TEMPTED TO (PART II) NAG THEIR HUSBANDS.**

We have to think outside **Gen 3** to find the support for this temptation women face. Is there a book of the bible that comes to mind that presents women nagging their husbands?

Proverbs!

- **Pro 19:13b The contentions (or nagging) of a wife are a continual dripping.**
- **Pro 21:9 & 25:24 Better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious (or nagging) woman.** The idea is a woman's nagging could be so bad a man would rather sit on the corner of a rooftop and experience terrible weather versus having to put up w/ another moment w/ his wife.
- **Pro 21:19 Better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious (or nagging) and angry woman.** This time the husband would rather be in the **wilderness** w/ any number of wild animals than in the house w/ his wife.

These Proverbs describe the effect nagging has on a husband: it makes him want to get as FAR AWAY from his wife as possible.

**Pro 27:15-16 A continual dripping on a very rainy day and a contentious (or nagging) woman are alike; 16 Whoever restrains her restrains the wind, and grasps oil with his right hand.**

This verse says you can't restrain a nagging wife; it's like trying to restrain the wind or pick up oil w/ your hand.

Why would God say that?

Because when you respond to a nagging or contentious wife and try to restrain her, it just makes her more contentious; it makes her argue or nag even more.

The definition of nagging is, "*continually faultfinding, complaining, or petulant; persistently recurring; unrelenting.*"

- Ladies, let me ask you a tough question: is this how your husband would describe you?
- If you really want to know, ask him to answer you honestly.

I put some discussion questions for each message in your folders, and I hope you might engage in them together at a later time. This is one of the questions.

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Now one of the reasons nagging doesn't work on husbands actually relates to one of the temptations men face.

Any guesses?

Nagging doesn't work on men b/c they struggle w/ stubbornness.

This brings us to Lesson 4...

## **LESSON 4: HUSBANDS ARE TEMPTED TO (PART I) BE STUBBORN.**

The definition of stubborn is, "*Unreasonably obstinate; obstinately unmoving. Fixed or set in purpose or opinion. Difficult to manage or suppress. Stiff. Difficult to shape or work.*"

- Gentlemen, is this how your wife would describe you?
- If you really want to know, ask her later to answer you honestly.

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Follow me for a moment...

In **Gen 1**, six times after God created on each day it says, “**God saw that it was good.**”

But at one point he looked out and saw something that was not good: man being alone.

Briefly look at **Gen 2:18**...

**Gen 2:18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”**

It’s interesting to read this if we consider The Fall hadn’t taken place yet. We don’t normally think of anything being **not good** until after The Fall. In fact, we normally think of everything before The Fall being perfect and wonderful.

Since Adam hadn’t sinned yet, it wasn’t Adam himself that wasn’t good and it wasn’t anything he had done or hadn’t done that wasn’t good. God tells us exactly what it was that was **not good**: man being alone.

It’s unfortunate how many women take offense at being called their husband’s helper. They think this is a criticism of them, but it’s actually the opposite. The title “helper,” is an acknowledgment of a man’s inadequacy and insufficiency. God looked and said, “This guy needs help! He’s not going to make it!”

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One of the main ways wives help their husbands is by sharing their thoughts and counsel.

Prior to the Fall husbands would’ve easily and readily listened to their wives thoughts, but now they’ll struggle w/ stubbornness!

Additionally – and I’m not making excuses for men’s stubbornness – but b/c God created men to be leaders, they’re naturally less receptive to being controlled or told what to do by their wives.

And here are two unfortunate truths:

1. Men struggle w/ stubbornness...and they seem to struggle w/ stubbornness even more when they’re being nagged.
2. Women struggle w/ nagging...and they seem to struggle w/ nagging even more when they feel like their husbands are being stubborn.

So it creates a vicious cycle that sucks the joy out of marriages.

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Let me get you to look back at the words “**he shall rule over you.**”

It looks like these words are unnecessary, b/c God already established Adam's headship in the previous chapter. So why would He say this?

He's not establishing Adam's headship again. He's identifying one of the struggles men will have as a result of The Fall. Some other Bibles translate these words as **he will dominate you**.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 4...

#### LESSON 4: HUSBANDS ARE TEMPTED TO (PART II) DOMINATE THEIR WIVES.

**Col 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and DO NOT BE HARSH WITH THEM.**

Why does it say this? Because men can struggle with harshness!

God called man to lead before the Fall:

- If The Fall had never taken place, man would've led w/ perfect love and compassion.
- After The Fall man is still expected to lead, but now we will struggle w/ being harsh and overbearing.

Please listen to these two quotes on **verse 16**:

- John MacArthur said, *"As the woman tends toward rebellion, the man tends toward [tyranny]."*
- Matthew Henry said, *"If the woman had not sinned, she always would have obeyed with humility and meekness. If the man had not sinned, he would always have ruled with wisdom and love."*

The Fall is when the Battle of the Sexes really began:

- The world says the Women's Lib began in the 60s, but it actually began at The Fall w/ wives desiring to control their husband's and reject the headship over them.
- The Fall is also the beginning of male chauvinism, w/ men being cruel and domineering.

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Now look at **verse 17** to see another area of temptation for men...

**17a Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':**

We recognize Adam's sin was eating the fruit, but before God rebuked him for that, He first pointed out that Adam **heeded the voice of his wife**.

God confronted Adam about doing this...and it brings us to the next part of Lesson 4...

#### LESSON 4: HUSBANDS ARE TEMPTED TO (PART III) BE PASSIVE.

I want to share an observation w/ you, and I'll first say maybe this isn't what you've observed, but this is what I've seen somewhat frequently...

We all know submission gets criticized:

- Nobody criticizes husbands being commanded to love their wives
- But submission is criticized in the world and unfortunately it's even criticized in some churches.

Since submission receives so much criticism, you'd think the biggest complaint I'd hear from women would be:

- *My husband wants me to submit and I hate it.*
- *I can't handle this whole submission thing.*

You'd think women would be coming in for counseling every week complaining about their husbands expecting them to submit.

But that's not the complaint I hear most often. The complaint I hear most often is actually the opposite: *"My husband won't lead."*

For many men, their greatest struggle isn't harshness or being domineering. For them it's passiveness or laziness. You could say their greatest temptation is not leading at all.

And the important thing to know is BOTH of these temptations have serious consequences:

- It's terrible when men mistreat their wives through harshness or cruelty.
- But it's also terrible when men mistreat their wives by not leading.

And here's the interesting question to consider...

Between these two temptations men face, which one do we see men commit more frequently?

This is a little bit of a trick question, b/c in many parts of the world, the common sin is cruelty. Our minds go immediately to Muslim countries where animals receive better treatment than women.

But in our country – while there are definitely some cruel men – the more common sin seems to be passiveness or laziness.

Why is this the case?

My suspicion is it relates to acceptability:

- The world and the church think it's unacceptable for men to be cruel to women...and it is unacceptable.
- But it's generally accepted – or even encouraged – in our country – and sadly even in some churches – for men to be passive when it comes to leadership in the home.

Let's consider how this plays out...

It's really impossible for someone NOT to lead. The only way there could be a couple w/o anyone leading is if you had two people who did absolutely nothing. If a couple does anything, no matter how small or insignificant:

- Someone had to lead.
- Someone had to have the idea that got them doing something.

And I mention this b/c if men aren't going to lead – if they're going to be passive and lazy – someone will end up leading and it will be the wife.

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So please make sure you notice something important about The Fall...

We know Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit, but it's important to notice HOW the sin took place...and it involved a reversal of the roles:

- God established Adam's headship in **Gen 2**.
- Satan attacked that headship in **Gen 3** by going after the woman.
- Eve succumbed to the devil, and in the process usurped her husband's authority by ignoring the command he had given her.
- Adam then chose not to lead but submitted to his wife, ignoring the command God gave him.

So you see when Adam and Eve sinned, they both violated God's commands for the relationship and reversed the roles God gave them.

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## TRANSITION TO CONCLUSION

Here's what I'd like you to notice as we approach our last lesson...

Prior to The Fall there was perfect peace and harmony between Adam and Eve, but sin turned God's ordained roles into struggles of pride and selfishness:

- Husbands and wives are supposed to be lifelong companions, but now we have these sinful natures at work trying to destroy what God has joined together.
- We will literally have to fight...not to fight.
- We will have to fight for each other.
- We have to fight to have the marriages that would've existed if The Fall hadn't taken place.

So here's the question:

- How can marriages survive this kind of conflict?
- How can marriages survive two people living together who both have sinful natures?

Can the effects of The Fall be reversed in our marriages or are we doomed to constant grief and conflict?

This brings us to our last lesson...

## LESSON 5: REVERSE THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL BY OBEYING GOD'S COMMANDS FOR MARRIAGE.

We have a recipe for reversing the effects of The Fall in our marriages, and it's the commands God has graciously given us in His Word.

Tomorrow we're going to start looking at these commands, and hopefully apply them to our relationships, because let me be honest with you...

The Fall has the potential to ruin any marriage. And when we resist God's commands:

- We're giving ourselves over to The Fall.
- We're giving ourselves over to our sinful natures.
- Just like Cain, we're letting sin rule in our marriages.

But if we will submit ourselves to God's commands, the effects of The Fall can be reversed in our marriages:

- God's commands can take chauvinistic, harsh, unloving, passive men and make them loving, tender, compassionate, godly leaders.
- God's commands can take controlling, manipulative, domineering women, and make them submissive, respectful, and gentle.

And with the power of the Gospel at work in our hearts and lives, we have the power we need to obey these commands.

Let's pray.