

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-3-22

The portion of God's Word before us right now is in the Book of Ephesians, Chapter 5, where we continue through the whole book, but we are in a section within the book now. There is a series of six paragraphs that all teach us how to live in relationships with other people in certain settings and in different roles.

There is a keynote—or, a theme—for this whole section of Chapter 5, Verse 22, through Chapter 6, Verse 9; it is Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 21, at the end of that sentence that begins with the two-pronged command: "Do not get drunk with wine"—that's a waste—"but be filled with the Spirit" (vs. 18, NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). The last evidence of the filling that is listed in that sentence is: "being subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (LSB). Everything said in the rest of this section is an elaboration on that theme of submitting "to one another" in the Body of Christ.

Submitting to one another is arguably the most *visible* result of allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, you are going to be a blessing to the people around you (cf. Gal. 5:22-23).

For wives, that means voluntary submission to husbands; we studied that last week in Verses 22 through 24 (cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-6). For husbands, submission to the needs of a wife takes a different expression: It means being a leader in love. For a husband to meet his wife's needs is summed up in one simple command, our first verse for today: Chapter 5, Verse 25—"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Now, that's a simple command; it is not always easy to fulfill. As a matter of fact, as I thought about how to flesh that out—and I studied over this passage when I first preached on it many years ago, and I've repeated that study many times—I pore over and over it, and I come to the conclusion: This is really a one-point passage; the one point here is: Love Your Wife.

But to help us grasp that point, we can see here, as Paul elaborates a little bit, three aspects of Spirit-led leadership in loving for a husband to give to his wife. The one point is: Love Your Wife. How? Well, Sacrificial Love (vs. 25); Sanctifying Love (vss. 26-27); and Nurturing Love (vss. 28-33). So, let's see how God phrased these instructions to husbands for how to fulfill the role of being a godly husband.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." The word that is translated "loved" there is that familiar Greek word *agapaō*. You may know the noun form: *agapē*—spelled just like "agape," but you put a different emphasis on it. It means "doing what is best for the wellbeing of someone else." *Agapē* love is *action* far more than it is *feelings*. When someone says, "I don't love my wife," or, "I don't love my husband," we *know* what they mean: "I don't have the whiz-bang *feelings* right now. As a matter of fact, I have some pretty negative feelings." But what is *really* being said by "I don't love my spouse" is: "I *won't* love my spouse," because biblical love is *action* based upon *commitment*; it is *not* primarily feelings. Oh, feelings *are* involved—I understand that; but the feelings are going to be much more healthy when you do the right actions.

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
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So, with the Holy Spirit in you—the Holy "Spirit...poured out within our hearts" (Rom. 5:5) for "the love of the brethren" (1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22)—you can love anyone, if you will; and you are commanded to do it (e.g., Lk. 10:27; Matt. 5:44).

Now, as I say, there *are* feelings involved in every relationship; and there is not always perfect congruence between having affectionate feelings or physical attraction, or even a desire to be with someone, and actually showing love to that person. The fleeting nature of positive feelings is why marriage is not based on feelings, it is based on *commitment*; it's based on a *covenant*. Feelings ebb and flow, and they are a terrible basis for a relationship; but *commitment*—that's what sees you through hard times, and through the times when the feelings are not what you wish they were. That is why the commitments of marriage are described here, attached to the teaching about being "filled with"—being under the control of—the Holy Spirit; it's a matter of what you are committed to.

I have shared this in a couple of different contexts, so pardon me if you have heard this already; but Marsha's sister and her husband were out to dinner for one of their recent anniversaries—it was like 47 or 48, or something like that. And the server knew that it was a special occasion, and said, "Happy Anniversary! How long have you been married?" And they said something like, "48 years"—almost triple the lifespan of the young lady that was asking. And she said, "Wow! How did you *do that*?" Well, my brother-in-law is pretty quick, and he just said, "We said 'I do,' so we *did*!" End of Ephesians—let's close in prayer! It's a matter of what you are *committed to* in fulfilling God's design within a relationship.

Now, the same pattern is given to the husbands that is given to the wives; not the same *role* in the relationship, but the same *pattern* of obedience. "Husbands" are to "love...as Christ" loves (vs. 25). "Wives" are to submit "as the church" does "to Christ" (vs. 24) and Christ does to the Father (1 Cor. 11:3; cf. Phil. 2:8).

In *both* cases—in both roles, in both parts of the relationship—doing the right thing toward a spouse is part of the demonstration of your worship and your obedience to Christ. Like Spirit-led wives submit as part of their worshipful obedience to Christ, husbands love wives "as Christ loved the church."

Guys, your wife deserves to be as confident of your love as she is of Christ's love for her. Now, you take that and you think about it for a minute, and you say, "Where's the ripcord? I can't live up to that!" No—not perfectly, you can't. But she needs to know that that's your commitment. She ought to be able to say, "My husband loves me so thoroughly, and he looks out for my interests so consistently, *it's a joy* to partner with him! *It's a joy* to adapt myself to him!" Now, how can you ever get your wife to that point? Well it's right there: loving her "as Christ loves the church." "Well, how do I do *that*?" Well, keep reading: "and gave Himself up for her."

"Gave Himself up" is the translation of an interesting word that means "to give over," "to hand over," "to deliver over," "to commit." "He is so committed to me, how could I ever want anything else?"

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And it's another of those words that is worded in a form that grammatically says two things. One is: This is a voluntary act—"I *choose* to live this way." The other part of the grammar is: This is an ongoing practice. This is not just something that you *do*—you know, "I'll do this every Sunday night at 8, and that ought to get her through the week until next week, when I'll do it again." No, you're called to be so intent upon pleasing your God by meeting the needs of your wife that you'll set aside your own interests, if it's in her best interest.

There are a lot of books about marriage—"Christian" and otherwise—that put most of the responsibility on *wives* to make it work. I would say that, in the Scriptures *it's the husband—he* is the one who is responsible for setting the tone: *he* establishes the spiritual climate, *he* is the example of how to love, *he* is the leader. In many ways, a wife can only be as successful—as a wife or a mother—as her husband allows her to, by his leadership.

And of course, there is a flipside: If a wife is *unwilling* to devote herself to *her* role, her husband cannot fulfil *his*! You need *both* of them! God designed this *whole thing*! For submission to be what it should be in practice, that necessitates spiritual leadership. And if your wife doesn't have a Spirit-controlled leader, then the best she can do is submit to what she thinks is right in God's eyes, and hope that it won't cause a problem.

And when men talk about what kind of authority they have in their homes—and you can say, "Well, I heard my pastor say there are always two roles: there's authority and submission—she has to submit, so *I'm the one in authority here!*" No. I'll tell you *exactly* what authority you have in your home: You have the authority to "love" your wife "as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her." *That* is the authority that you have; love your wife with a sacrificial love—the same kind of love Christ has for you. Lead the way for your family in sacrifice.

It is not a matter of *handing down edicts* from your throne! You need to be trying as hard as you can—led by the Holy Spirit, trusting Him—but you need to be trying as hard as you can to make your wife *boast* that you are more than she deserves!

Husbands, Love Your Wife: Number 1—with a Sacrificial Love.

Number 2—with a Sanctifying Love.

You love should not only be patterned after Christ in the sense of being sacrificial, it should want to make the one you love want to be more like Jesus. Ephesians 5:26-27—"so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

The word "sanctify"—one of those words that doesn't get used a whole lot in everyday speech in our world—but it means: "set apart"; especially, "set apart for sacred use" (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:21; cf. Ex. 30:10; Lev. 27:21, etc.). You should want to help your wife grow in Christlikeness, grow in sanctification.

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Now, I do not suggest that you handle that process by sitting her down and saying, "Honey, I love you so much, I'm going to make you more holy." No—*lead her* in the direction of greater holiness. If Nike wrote this passage, he would say: "No, don't lecture—*just do it.*" Show her how to grow in Christlikeness. It doesn't mean you make up rules for her to keep; God has given you everything you need in the Scripture. It means leading her into pure and edifying things. Be her example. Be a man of prayer. Make worship a nonnegotiable priority for your family. Immerse *yourself* in God's Word.

If you need some cues for the kinds of things to spread to your wife and to your family, perhaps you want to go to Philippians Chapter 4, Verse 8, and memorize this: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things" (NASB-1977). If you set that kind of tone in your marriage and in your home, good things will happen for the glory of God.

Jesus did this "so that He might sanctify her"—His Church—"having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory" (vss. 26-27). "Cleansed" is the negative side of "sanctify"; "cleansing" gets rid of the dirty thing, "sanctifying" replaces it with holy things. So you want to protect her from corrupting influences. Keep her away from that which would be defiling, and build her up in those things that you want to be thinking of all the time.

And Jesus did it for us in His Church with "the washing of water with the word." Some people read that and they think, "Well, that must be a reference to baptism—except that that isn't anywhere *near* the context here. The key to understanding this is the reference to "the word": "wash" her "with the word," lead her in an environment in which the Word of God is foremost (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5). Think of that cross-reference to Ephesians 5:18; it's Colossians 3:16. The parallel command to "be filled with the" Holy "Spirit" is: "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you"; or, as Jesus prayed for us before He went to the Cross: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth."

You want her to be sanctified to head toward the *ultimate* goal, which is: "in all her glory" (vs. 27), just as Jesus wants to present the Bride to Himself "in all her glory." So, think in terms of cooperating with Jesus in His plan for the members of our families—especially, starting with the wife—as He prepares us to be with her for eternity.

Now, I think Paul had some imagery in mind when he wrote that; I'm quite sure he did. Let me give you a little introduction to—or, refresher course in—the Jewish marriage customs, which Paul would have thought of when he talked about husbands and wives. Jewish marriages actually came in five stages:

The first is *betrothal*. That is what we would say is like engagement, only it was more than that. The terms of the agreement were accepted in the presence of witnesses, and God's blessing was pronounced on the plans for this couple to be married. In other words: They took their vows at the front-end of the engagement; they said, "This is what we are going to do."

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Then came an *interval* between the betrothal and the wedding feast. During that time—which would last roughly a year—the groom might use that time to pay a dowry to the bride's father, if that had not been done already. That was sometimes also the time that a young man would get his business started, or even build a house for he and his bride to be in. There were different ways that it was applied.

That commitment during that time was so high that, as with Mary and Joseph—remember, they were in that interval; they were "betrothed" (Matt. 1:18)—only a formal "divorce" could end that (vs. 19, ESV); it was a *serious* commitment.

Then came the *procession* to the wedding feast. The bride got herself all gussied up, and she had her friends with her. The groom put on his best clothes, and he would be accompanied by his friends; and he would proceed through the town, making a big deal out of it, to go pick up his bride-to-be.

And that led to the *wedding feast*. He would receive the bride at her home, there would be another procession to the place where the feast was; and that was the *grand* party! We would call it the "wedding reception."

The wedding feast was such a big deal that, if the parties involved could handle it, it could last for *days*. And that is the picture behind the idea of "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in Revelation Chapter 19 (vs. 9), when you elevate it to the ultimate spiritual level.

And the final stage is: The marriage is *consummated*, and a new home is established; and you have left "father" and "mother," and now you are united to each other (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

Now, in the relationship between Christ and the Church, we are the "Bride" (Jn. 3:29; Rev. 19:7); we are in that "interval" (cf. Rom. 8:23; 1 Jn. 3:2); we look forward to the "procession" (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17) and "the wedding feast" (cf. Rev. 19:9); but, here is the point: As Christ cares for the Church by providing all that she needs, to be as beautiful and perfect as possible for the consummation of our relationship, so ought the husband to do for his wife; *lead her* in the things that delight our "Bridegroom," Christ (Matt. 9:15; 25:10; Jn. 3:29).

And so, as He wants to present the Church "in all her glory," well, Christ is preparing the Church for "the wedding feast" in splendid, glorious costume (Rev. 19:8; cf. Phil. 2:13); He holds the Church in the highest honor, and so a husband should want the same for his wife—for her to be adorned *not only* in the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9; cf. Is. 61:10), but in the "good works" that He "prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10), so people "see" us and "glorify" our "Father" for our "good works" (Matt. 5:16)—"having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." *That* is the definition of what it means to be "presented in glory."

Well, now that he has stated the theological truth, Paul applies the analogy directly to husbands. Look at Verse 28—"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself."

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Two key words there: "so" and "ought." "So" means: In the same manner as Christ loves the Church, a husband should imitate His love and apply it to his wife. The word "ought" is a word that describes owing a debt. You said, "I do"—*so do it!* It is your *obligation!* This is part of how you worship God—you take the *best possible care* of that "helper" that He made perfectly for you (Gen. 2:18).

"Husbands ought also to love their own wives *as their own bodies*"; that's telling you that to love your wife, you should love her as you love your own body. *You take care of your body!* You feed it, you groom it, you try to make it look as good as it can—or, as the least bad as it can; you *care* about it.

And remember the word picture in this passage: In the home, you are the "head" and she is like the "body"; just as in the "church," "Christ" is "the head" and we are "the body" (Eph. 5:23). If you don't take good care of her, both the body and the head will be disgraced. "He who loves his own wife loves *himself*"—you are "one flesh" together (Matt. 19:5) in a *real*, spiritual way with your wife. And the relationship of the head and the body is so inextricable that to love her is to love yourself. Marriage is not just a merger of interests; it is the comingling of two lives into a new entity. It is more than the two individuals could ever be on their own.

Now, I think it is safe to say that, generally speaking, if you do man-on-the-street / woman-on-the-street—or, in the pew—interviews, husbands are usually more satisfied with their marriages than the wives. There are a couple of reasons for that. I think primarily, it is because men are relationally underdeveloped; that's a polite way to put it. We just don't *think* that way. But something I've seen far too many men miss until it is way too late is *one simple idea*: You and she are *one!* You are *inseparable!*

Early in my ministry, I had a guy pouring out his heart to me one time. His wife said they had a problem, and he didn't see that they had a problem; he didn't *think* that they had a problem. And I blurted this out—and then I realized later, "That was wise beyond your years!"—I said to him: "If your wife *thinks* there is a problem in your marriage, *you have a problem*, because the two of you are not on the same page."

It doesn't matter *what* the issue is; it doesn't ultimately matter if you saw it first or she saw it first; it doesn't *really* matter if you *agree* with it or not; you have to face it and understand it and realize: *you* have to take the lead in working through it, because *she is part of you!* You are not complete without her! *And* that's a pretty good indication: she probably isn't seeing the love of God flowing through you.

The sad truth is that when it comes to doing wise maintenance on marriages, men start out from the default position of *clueless*. And for most men, unless they are willing to take and heed wise advice, they will let a marriage deteriorate until the need isn't just for maintenance—it needs major repairs. You know, "You don't *have* to go through that silly notion of changing the oil in your car every several thousand miles! You can just ignore it! I mean, *it'll keep going!*"—*until it doesn't!* And this is a *much* more serious relationship than you and your car!

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Date: 7-3-22

You know, my head doesn't say, "Oh, that's just a broken ankle. *I* don't have a problem! It's *fine* up here on top!" No, head and body are inseparable.

And that leads logically to the third aspect of the kind of love that husbands are called to have for their wives: It's Nurturing Love. We'll pick it up at the beginning of the sentence at Verse 28—"So husbands ought"—in other words: in this like manner, here is your responsibility, here's your debt—"So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church." Do you see that over and over again? Just as Christ, just as Christ, unto Christ, for Him.

"Nourish" means "to supply with food," "to nurture," "to bring up"—we are going to see that again when we get to children in Chapter 6. In the same way, a husband is responsible to be the leader in spiritually and emotionally nourishing his wife toward greater and greater glory. Now, she is not a child; you are not her *superior*, you are not her *manager*; but you are her *example*. And you are inextricably joined to her by a "covenant" before "God" (Prov. 2:17). "Cherish" means "to provide heat," "to give warmth"; its metaphorical use in regard to relationships means "to tenderly make someone feel warmed and accepted and wanted."

I'll come back to that; but before we do, let's look at the simple, profound conclusion to this passage. It summarizes everything that we have studied on wives and husbands. Look at it, starting at Verse 30—"because we are members of His body." Why does Christ care for us so rigorously? Because *we are family!* We *belong to each other* (Sol. 2:16; 6:3). We are the "body" of which He is the "head." As Christ is to the Church, husbands ought to be to their wives (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3b).

Then, Verse 31: well, it's a quote straight out of Genesis Chapter 2, Verse 24—"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." That's God's design from the very "beginning" (Mk. 10:6); it's the divine foundation from which all of these things are derived principles. We *depart* from former relationships, and we *glue* ourselves together to a new one when we marry. That doesn't mean you disown your parents when you get married; but the relationship changes—it moves into a lower priority than the husband-and-wife relationship.

Then Chapter 5, Verse 32—"This mystery is great"—and most of the guys are saying, "Oh, he *finally* understands what I'm dealing with!" No, a "mystery" is something not formerly revealed, and now made known (Rom. 16:25-26; Col. 1:26). "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church." That relationship is *equally important* in both directions: Christ and the Church, husband and wife; one illustrates the other, they both illustrate *each other*. Same analogy, that is restated as clearly as it possibly could be.

And then, Verse 33—"Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband." Do you see the individuality there: "each individual...his own wife"? Remember last week: "your own" idiomatic "husband"—the unique one that God has put you together with (cf. Eph. 1:11).

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-3-22

He has chosen *you* and *you* to come together to be *this new entity* that He is going to be developing for His glory. That summarizes everything from Verse 22, starting with wives, down through Verse 32.

Now, let's wrap it up by going back to the idea of "nourishing" and "cherishing." There is a companion verse to this section that is stated in a similar context by Paul's cohort, Peter: First Peter Chapter 3, Verse 7. It reads: "You husbands likewise..." It is interesting to go through First Peter and see the "likewises." He said some amazing things to wives about living with husbands, "even if" they are "disobedient to the word" (vs. 1); and then he says, "You husbands likewise..." In other words: "Everything I said to the wife applies to you, *and this also*." And then he does more likewises later, about other relationships; and we will probably go there as we move along through Ephesians.

"You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way"—that literally means "according to knowledge"; you need to know this unique one that God has made you one with (cf. Deut. 24:5). "Live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (NASB-1977).

You are more responsible! You are the one who *is* going to give account to God for the standard of love in your household, for the standard of sacrifice, for the commitment, for how you look out for each other, how you care for the one that God has given to you as a suitable "helper."

And she *is* a "weaker vessel" in some respects. We are not talking about *emotionally* here, we're talking about just the way God made men and women. You have a greater responsibility.

"And grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life..." You are *co-heirs* with her in Christ (Rom. 8:17).

And, by the way, he just tosses in there: "so that your prayers may not be hindered." That's kind of a way of saying: Don't even *think* you are spiritual, if you are ignoring the spiritual health of your wife!

Now, to obey that is to demonstrate that you submit to the Lord by accepting leadership in loving your wife and your family, and showing her how to love.

There are some thoughts there for the proper care and feeding of a "weaker vessel":

The key to it: Your *own* submission to the Lord.

Remember that once you marry, you are not complete by yourself. You and your wife are two parts of a new whole. It is *perfectly* appropriate for anyone to refer to a spouse as "my better half," because that's the right attitude! "Without that half, I am not better. I am *so much better* with her! I am *so much better* with him!"

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Never abuse or demean your wife. Only a *deranged* person harms his or her own body. That's a *horrible* thing! That might seem too obvious to comment on, but unfortunately, it is not unknown among professing Christians. You know, you could say *all kinds* of sweet nothings to her, and about the one time you say "That's *stupid!*"—you just erased about 7,944 of the kind things that you said (cf. Ecc. 10:1). "Grant her honor"—*honor*—"as a fellow heir of the grace of life," "nourishing" and "cherishing."

Don't criticize your wife unless you have three things going for you: Number 1—A good reason. Not just: "I don't like that." A good reason, like: "This isn't healthy," or whatever. If you have a good reason, you have a constructive suggestion, and you're willing to help—*then* you can say, "There is something I think we would do well to talk about," and you can "nourish" her and "cherish" her and build her up along the way.

And *never* say anything derogatory about your wife in the presence of anyone else. *That is also* verbal abuse! It is just as destructive as physical abuse (cf. Prov. 18:19).

Do not neglect her; don't take her for granted. It is easy, and we are a very productive and prolific society, and it's easy to get trapped on the treadmill of what you do to put bread on the table and care for your family—and that is important, and you have to do that; but don't let yourself get so far drawn into your own world that she doesn't have a part in it, and you're not connecting.

Do not take her for granted. "Nourish" and "cherish" means you think of what will strengthen her, what will help her, what will bring her pleasure and joy, what will warm her soul (Deut. 24:5; Prov. 5:18; Ecc. 9:9).

Appreciate her. *Tell her* that you appreciate her, and let her catch you in the act of praising her to other people. As we read through Proverbs in our weekly Scripture reading, we are soon coming to Proverbs 31—that horribly intimidating passage for woman about how to be perfect. But notice, it says there that her "praise" is "in the gates" (vs. 31). What does *that* mean? Well, "in the gates" of the city is where the men do the business and the government of the city (vs. 23); and it says, when it's that "excellent wife" (vs. 10), her husband is praising her "in the gates." *Be that guy.*

Listen to her and talk to her. It is easy to become emotionally isolated, even from a person you live with; but guys, you *need* her perspective on things in your life. You *need* her insight and her prayers and her encouragement, and she needs yours. If you say, "Well, I don't think *my* wife needs that. I mean, I asked her that beck before Covid, and she didn't bring up anything."

A seasoned pastor that I met actually wrote a book about it, and he gets real practical in a marriage seminar with husbands; and he said, "Guys, I'm going to tell you three things to do to gain wisdom from God: Number 1—Ask your wife to go for a walk. Number 2—When you go for the walk, shut your mouth. Number 3—Hold her hand and keep walking. God will start giving you wisdom, tumbling across her lips, because magical things will happen when she starts talking to you."

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

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Date: 7-3-22

Guys, just make sure that you are *listening*—you want what she wants. And Ladies, remember: Your husband feels as puny right now as you did seven days ago, at this very minute, with this insurmountable job that he has. But remember that, as hard as he tries, he is as imperfect in obeying his commands as you are in yours.

So make sure you are on his team; make sure that you're cheering him on; make sure you're encouraging him and reinforcing his efforts. How easy are *you* to lead? Are your words positive, or negative? Are you generally uplifting, or critical? Do you help solve problems with your husband, or do you just attack him as if *he* is the problem? Remember: if you love Christ, that means you're going to adjust yourself to "your own" idiomatic "husband," who has been given *you*, and tasked with the proper care and feeding of you, as a "weaker vessel."

Over the years, I have preached series on marriage and family; I have preached through Ephesians a few times, I've preached through Colossians a few times, and dealt with three passages. And several people have told me that I tend to be harder on men than on women. Maybe so. One reason is: I'm a man, and I have a *little bit* of an idea of what I'm talking about! Marsha and I just celebrated: We've been trying this for *fifty years*, and we are kind of getting a handle on it...So we decided: celebrate halftime, and we're going to move on and keep right on going for the *next* fifty! I kind of have an idea *what* to say to the guys; I've never been a woman.

But I think there is another reason: Guys, our job is harder. No offense, Ladies! But we *don't have* an umbrella of protection that results from someone else being responsible. It is a high calling with high privileges, and corresponding responsibilities. And, Guys, *it is so important!* She *cannot submit* in the *best way*, unless you *lead* in the *right way!*

So, remember what you said. I always make couples do this; I just did it with my own son two weeks ago today: "I take you to be my (husband or wife), and I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful (wife or husband) in plenty and in want, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live." Let God's Spirit teach you how to live that way.

And let's pray:

Father, thank You again for Your marvelous grace. Thank You for Your very clear and completely sufficient Word. I pray for every wife in the room, for every husband in the room, that You would give us all the grace, the wisdom, the compassion to do as You would have us to do. I pray for those among us that aren't married, for those who have outlived a spouse—oh, we feel the pain; we try to understand. May Your comfort be sufficient, and may You bless them in this phase of their lives. Some have been mowed down by the speeding freight train of an unwanted divorce, and they've been crushed. Pick them up, put them together, we pray. If You would have them to be united yet again to another human being, may You cement these commitments to them. For those who are fulfilling that unthinkable difficult role of single parents; yearning that, oh, if only there was a dad, if only there was a mom, if only it could be like Scripture describes it.

Sermon Title: Spirit-Led Husbands
Scripture Text: Eph. 5:25-33 (Ephesians #41)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-3-22

Father, thank You for your sufficient grace to meet every one of us at our point of need. And please help us, as the Body of Christ, to accept those members of our body that need our extra attention and our extra help. Father, we want You to be glorified in our homes and in our families and in our church, and to that end we pray and ask for Your wisdom to live it out, in Jesus' name. Amen.